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Community Calendar

Sunday, Aug. 2

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m., at Zion, 11 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
State B Legion Tournament in Madison

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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Monday, Aug. 3

Senior Menu: Salisbury Steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.
First day of soccer practice
Wrestling Camp, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., GHS Gym and Arena
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
State B Legion Tournament in Madison

Tuesday, Aug. 4

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes with ham, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.
Wrestling Camp, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., GHS Gym and Arena
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
State B Legion Tournament in Madison

New social studies teacher, replaces Scott Thorson

by Dorene Nelson

Sam Markley, originally from Sioux Falls, is the new social studies teacher at Groton High School. "I attended Sioux Falls Washington for high school and then the University of South Dakota to get my Bachelor's of Science degree in education," Markley explained.

"When I went to college, I had originally planned to become a lawyer," he said. "After working at a few summer camps and volunteering my time at various after school activities, I realized that my heart wanted me in the education system!"

"This is my first teaching job, and I'm excited about meeting all of the students and having smaller classes than I had in high school," he admitted. "I will be teaching government, history, geography, and social studies."

"One of the first things I'll have to do is learn my students' names as quickly as possible," Markley stated. "I should be able to do this since I'm used to larger classes."

"I live in Aberdeen and am looking forward to starting my teaching career here in Groton," Markley said. "I enjoy playing board games and card games and hope to get involved in the local game store in Aberdeen as well as participate in the community theatre."

"I decided to apply here in Groton for several reasons," Markley admitted. "Of course class size is important to me, but I also was seeking a position that fit my preferences of a smaller town, a smaller school, and a friendly, welcoming atmosphere."

"I am hoping that my classroom becomes a place where students look forward to attending," he stated, "not because it will be an easy class, but because they know it is a place that wants the best out of them with a teacher who truly cares."

"I'm eager to start my career and meet new people, both colleagues and students," Markley said. "I'm looking forward to getting to know how supporting the Groton community is as we join together and cheer our athletic teams on to victory!"



Sam Markley



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Names Released in Bon Homme County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash

Where: S.D. Highway 37 and S.D. Highway 52, 8 miles south of Tyndall, South Dakota

When: 8:00 a.m., Monday, July 27, 2026

Driver 1: Dustin ray Bothwell, 32-year-old male from Colman, South Dakota, minor injuries

Vehicle 1: 2020 Ford F-250

Seat Belt Used: No

Driver 2: Yeon Yu Choi, 49-year-old male from Omaha, Nebraska, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 2025 Honda Pilot

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger 1: Yoo Lim Kim, 47-year-old female from Omaha, Nebraska, life-threatening injuries

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Bon Homme County, S.D.- An Omaha, Nebraska man died Monday in a two-vehicle crash near Tyndall, South Dakota.

Preliminary crash information indicates Dustin Ray Bothwell, the driver of a 2020 Ford F-250, was traveling northbound on S.D. Highway 37 near the intersection of S.D. Highway 52. At the same time, Yeon Yu Choi, the driver of a 2025 Honda Pilot, was traveling westbound on Highway 52. He slowed for the stop sign and failed to yield to Bothwell's vehicle as he entered the intersection. The two vehicles collided.

All three people were taken to a Tyndall hospital. Choi died from his injuries. His passenger, Yoo Lim Kim, was taken to a Sioux Falls hospital via Life Flight with life-threatening injuries. Bothwell sustained minor injuries.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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Wilbur's Last Stand wins again!



Blaine Snyder, Jon Cutler, Jeff Howard and Brett Anderson (Wilbur's Last Stand) are pictured with the First Place Award and the People's Choice Award plaques presented at the Third Annual Rib Fest held Saturday at the Groton City Park. Howard presented the awards and he also donated the ribs for the event. This is the second consecutive year that this team has won. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



Cody Keller received the third place award from Jeff Howard. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Trevor Van Tilburg and his son, John, took second place at the Rib Fest with Jeff Howard presenting the award. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Suzie Easthouse (right) visits with one of the vendors, Hannah Estwick from Sisseton. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Chad Johnson's lucky ticket was drawn for the split pot cash drawing. Suzie Easthouse verifies the number. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Several vendors were on hand for the Rib Fest held Saturday at the Groton City Park. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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There were several teams at the Rib Fest again this year. 160 rib racks were donated by Jeff Howard. According to organizer Suzie Easthouse, all of the ribs were sold along with the 150 hot dogs. She said, "I was told by one new rib cook that he goes to a lot of these competitions and this was the best organized he's ever been too." (Photo by Paul Kosel)



More vendors are pictured above along with the Lions Eye Exam van. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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April Abeln and Mayor Scott Hanlon did a little dance at the Rib Fest activities. (Photo by Val Baker)



The inflatables were up at the south end of the City Park. There were a number of kids games going as well during the Rib Fest activities. (Groton, SD Lions Club facebook photo)

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2026 South Dakota American Legion State Class "B" Sr. Baseball Tournament

Friday - July 31, 2026

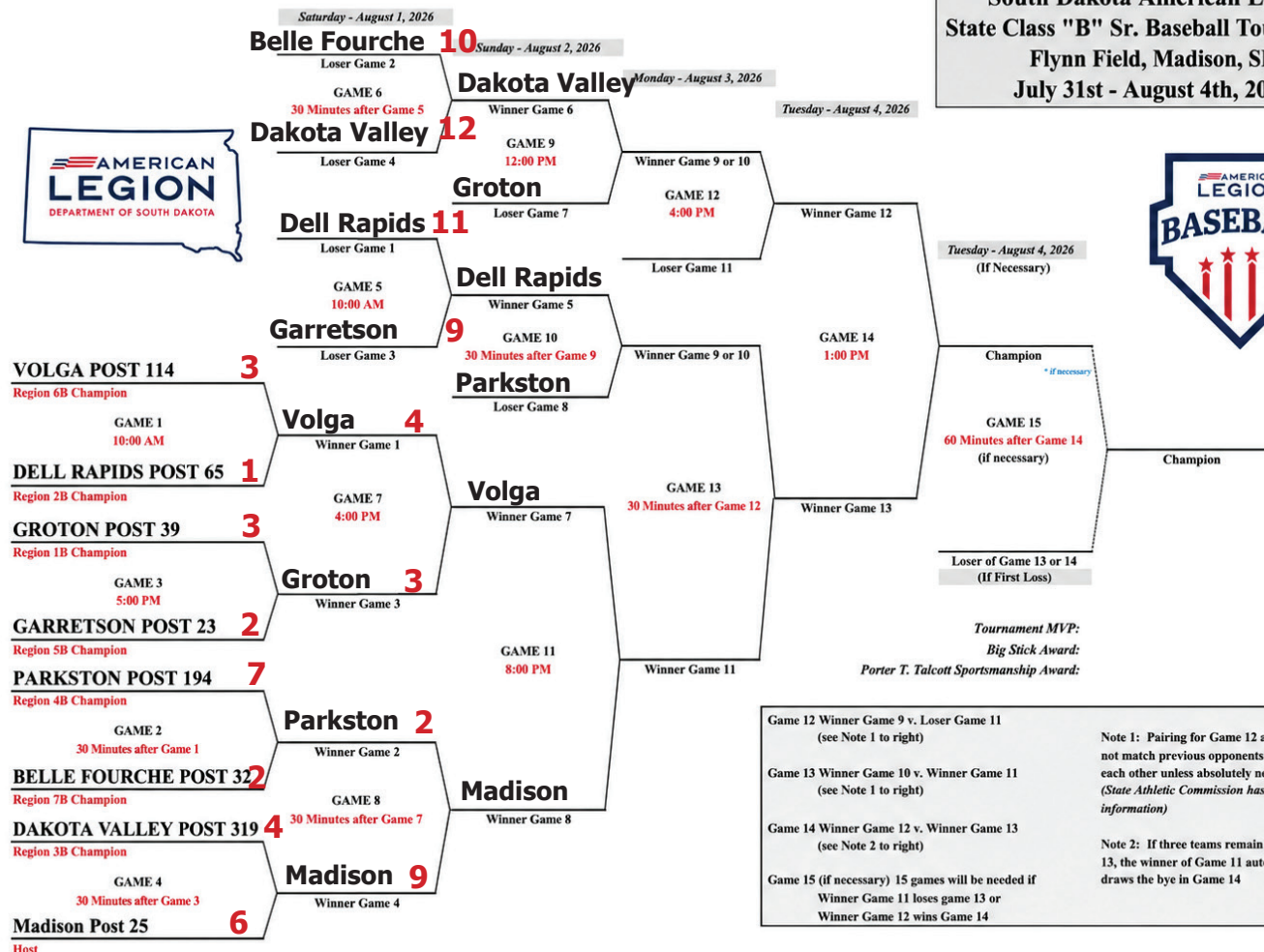
Saturday - August 1, 2026

Sunday - August 2, 2026

Monday - August 3, 2026

Tuesday - August 4, 2026

South Dakota American Legion
State Class "B" Sr. Baseball Tournament
Flynn Field, Madison, SD
July 31st - August 4th, 2026



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Groton rally falls one run short against Volga at state tournament

MADISON — Groton Post 39 battled back from an early four-run deficit and brought the potential winning run to the plate in the seventh inning, but Volga Post 114 held on for a 4-3 victory Saturday in the State B American Legion Senior Baseball Tournament.

The loss sends Groton into an elimination game against Dakota Valley at noon Sunday. Dakota Valley remained alive in the tournament with a 12-10 victory over Belle Fourche.

Volga did most of its damage before Groton came to bat. Isaac Skovlund reached on an error to begin the game, Broden Teske singled and Braden Danzeisen walked to load the bases. Wyatt Hardt then drove a triple to center field, clearing the bases and giving Volga a 3-0 advantage.

Volga added what proved to be the winning run in the fourth inning. Kellon Tucker walked, stole second and advanced to third on Skovlund's sacrifice bunt. Teske's groundout brought Tucker home for a 4-0 lead.

Groton began its comeback in the bottom half of the inning. Carter Simon walked and Gavin Englund doubled, putting runners at second and third with nobody out. TC Schuster followed with an RBI single to score Simon.

Nick Groeblichhoff singled to load the bases, but Volga pitcher Damon Uecker escaped further damage by recording three consecutive strikeouts.

Groton again threatened in the fifth. Alex Abeln walked and Jordan Schwan doubled before Simon reached on catcher's interference, loading the bases with nobody out.

After a flyout, Schuster delivered his second RBI single of the game, scoring Abeln and cutting the deficit to 4-2. Schwan then scored when Karsten Fliehs reached on an error, bringing Groton within one run.

Volga again avoided further damage, leaving the bases loaded and maintaining its 4-3 advantage.

Groton starter Abeln kept his team within striking distance throughout the game. After allowing the three-run triple in the opening inning, Abeln surrendered only one additional run and worked out of several scoring situations.

Volga loaded the bases with one out in the seventh inning, but Schuster caught a line drive and threw to Groeblichhoff at second for an inning-ending double play.

Groton made one final push in the bottom of the seventh. After the first two batters were retired, Schuster singled to left. Groeblichhoff and Fliehs then drew consecutive walks to load the bases.

Tristin McGannon put the ball in play, but Volga second baseman Kellon Tucker fielded it and forced Fliehs at second to end the game.

Schuster led Groton's offense with three hits and two RBIs. Abeln, Schwan, Englund and Groeblichhoff also collected hits, with Schwan and Englund each recording a double.

Hardt's first-inning triple accounted for three of Volga's four runs. Tate Steffensen collected two hits for Post 114.

Groton must defeat Dakota Valley on Sunday to remain alive in the double-elimination tournament.

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2026 Volga Sr Legion Post 114
Tourney

4 - 3

Groton Legion Post 39



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
▶ 2026	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	7	2
GRTN	0	0	0	1	2	0	-	3	6	2

[Box score](#) [Plays](#) [Info](#)

2026 Volga Sr Legion Post 114 Tourney

LINEUP	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Isaac Skovlund #7 (LF)	3	1	1	0	0	1
Broden Teske #16 (C)	3	0	1	1	0	0
Bret Milton #17 (1B)	4	1	1	0	0	1
Braden Danzeisen #1 (CF)	2	1	1	0	1	1
Wyatt Hardt #22 (3B)	3	0	1	3	0	0
Tate Steffensen #4 (SS)	3	0	1	0	0	0
Trentyn Schmit #24 (RF)	3	0	1	0	0	0
Miles Antonen #27 (DH)	3	0	0	0	0	2
Kellon Tucker #11 (2B)	2	1	0	0	1	0
TEAM	26	4	7	4	2	5

2B: Bret Milton
3B: Wyatt Hardt
TB: Wyatt Hardt 3, Bret Milton 2, Braden Danzeisen 1, Broden Teske 1, Isaac Skovlund 1, Tate Steffensen 1, Trentyn Schmit 1
HBP: Broden Teske
SB: Kellon Tucker
E: Broden Teske, Wyatt Hardt

PITCHING	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Damon Uecker #2	6.0	6	3	2	2	5
TEAM	6.0	6	3	2	2	5

Pitches-Strikes: Damon Uecker 104-64
Batters Faced: Damon Uecker 29

Groton Legion Post 39

LINEUP	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Alex Abeln #5 (P)	3	1	1	0	1	0
Jordan Schwan #11 (LF)	4	1	1	0	0	1
Carter Simon #4 (3B)	1	1	0	0	1	0
Gavin Englund #18 (1B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
TC Schuster #3 (SS)	3	0	2	2	0	0
Nick Groeblichhoff #13 (2B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
Karsten Fliehs #10 (C)	3	0	0	0	0	2
Tristin McGannon #22 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
Lincoln Krause #2 (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
TEAM	26	3	6	2	2	5

2B: Gavin Englund, Jordan Schwan
TB: Gavin Englund 2, Jordan Schwan 2, TC Schuster 2, Alex Abeln 1, Nick Groeblichhoff 1
E: Carter Simon, TC Schuster

PITCHING	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Alex Abeln #5	6.0	7	4	3	2	5
TEAM	6.0	7	4	3	2	5

HBP: Alex Abeln
Pitches-Strikes: Alex Abeln 84-62
Batters Faced: Alex Abeln 30

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

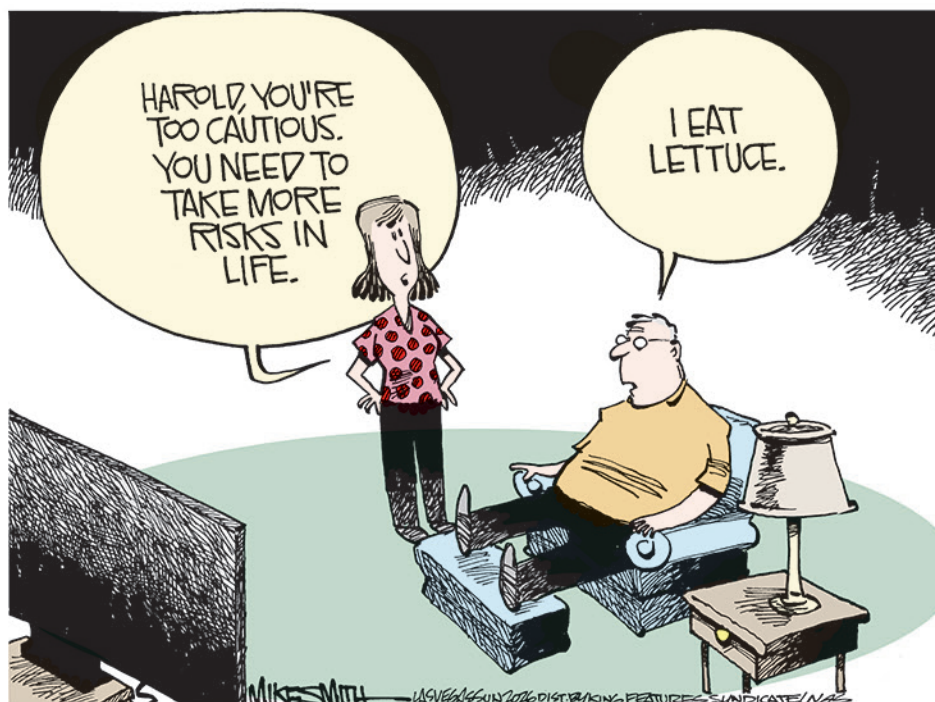
In his arrogance the wicked man
hunts down the weak, who are caught
in the schemes he devises. He boasts
about the cravings of his heart;
he blesses the greedy and reviles
the Lord. In his pride the wicked man
does not seek him; in all his thoughts
there is no room for God.

Psalms 10: 2-4



"Self-Portrait"
by Conrad Felixmüller (1921)

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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Zacchaeus (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From John 3, who came to Jesus under the cover of night? *Elijah, Amos, Nicodemus, Mesha*

3. What do the seven stars represent in Revelation 1:20? *Continents, Angels, Seas, Fruits*

4. From Psalms 68, with what are the dove's feathers covered? *Manna, Gold, Leaves, Blood*

5. How many people did Jesus Himself baptize? *0, 1, Dozens, Hundreds*

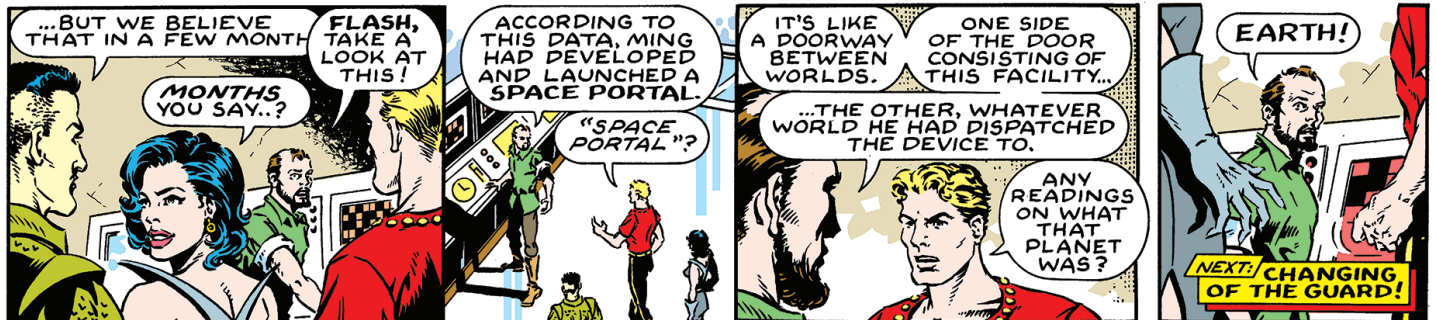
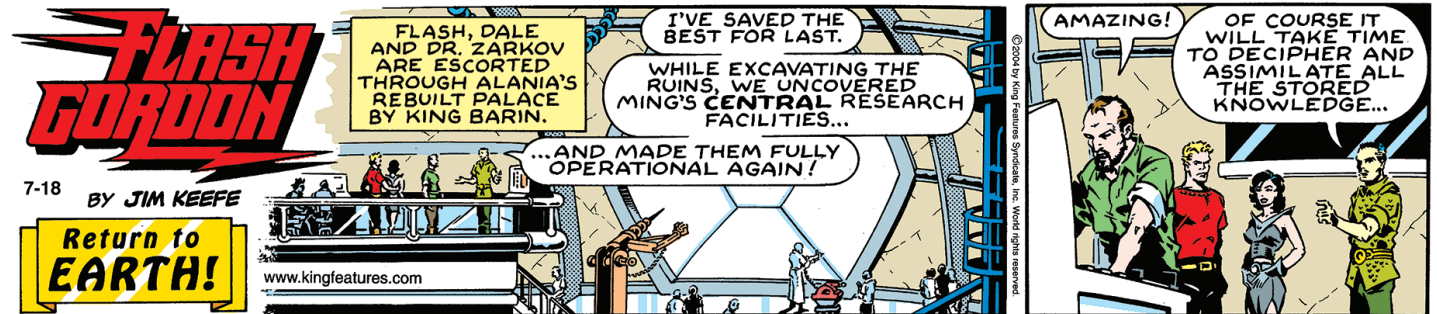
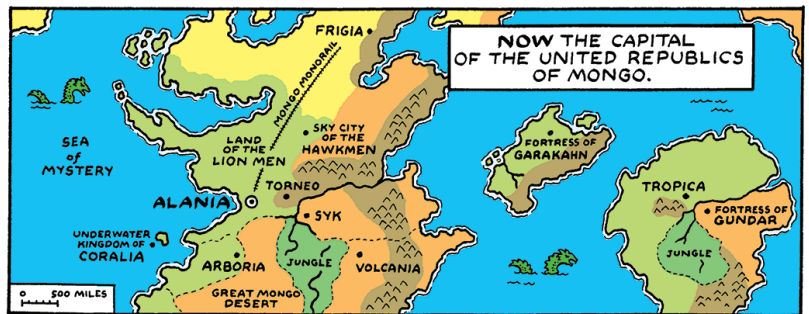
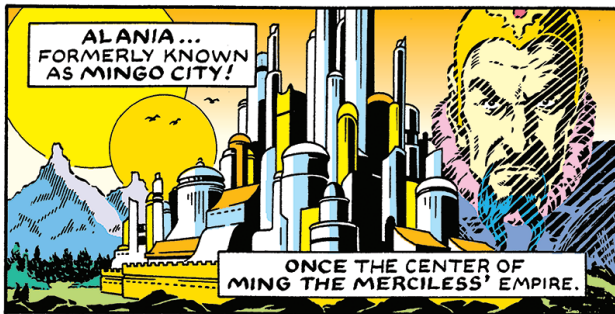
6. Who wrote the book of Galatians? *Paul, Peter, Isaac, Luke*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Nicodemus, 3) Angels, 4) Gold, 5) Zero, 6) Paul

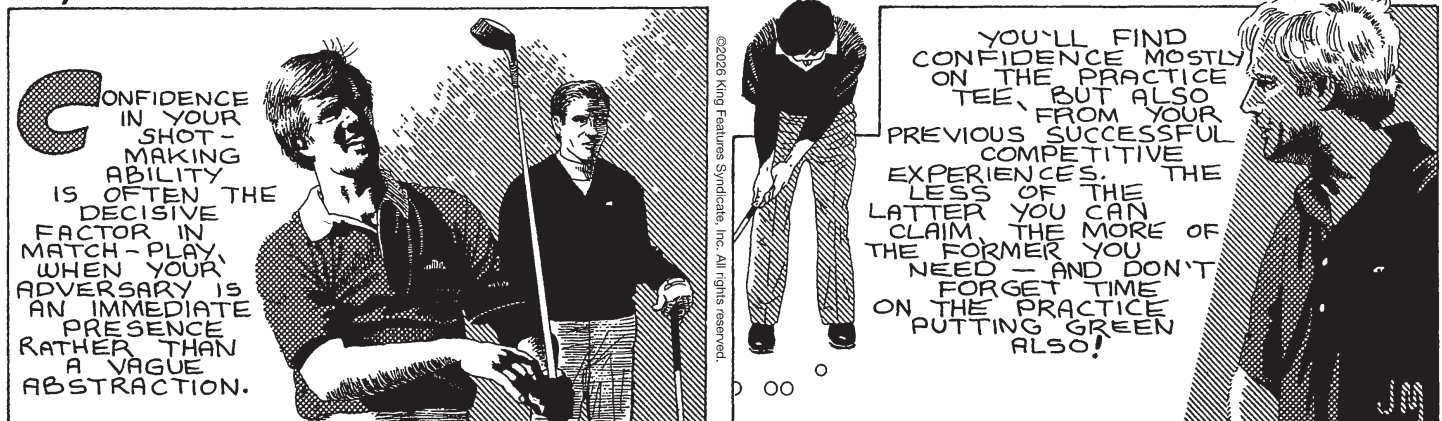
More than 1,200 brand-new trivia questions in Wilson Casey's latest book "Quest for Bible Knowledge" available in bookstores and online.

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





'Tumor Seeding' Very Rarely Occurs During Biopsies

DEAR DR. ROACH: I read your recent column on prostate biopsies. I'm not a doctor, but I'd advise against them. My boyfriend got a biopsy in 2012, which I believe caused his cancer to spread beyond his prostate into his bones. He died three years later in 2015.

Think about this: A needle is inserted to extract cells so that they can be tested. When the needle is pulled out with its open end, and cancer is present, cells in the needle can then come out of the open end, causing cancer to spread throughout the prostate. It may be rare, but this is documented (called tumor seeding). -- B.S.

ANSWER: I must disagree with you in the strongest possible terms. A biopsy is an essential piece of information to know how to treat a patient. Over decades and tens of millions of biopsies, there have been 42 total cases of seeding that were reported worldwide from the needle tract. This extremely rare event shouldn't prevent a man from understanding what the best treatment of his prostate cancer will be. Other studies haven't shown an association between a biopsy and a subsequent spread of the disease.

I'm very sorry about your boyfriend, but given the slow growth rate of prostate cancer, it's likely your boyfriend had prostate cancer that spread to his bones years before the biopsy was done.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I read about a new weight-loss drug that is still in its clinical trials. It's called retatrutide, and it may have the ability to reduce body weight by as much as 28% over a relatively short period of time. What are some of the dangers of losing weight too quickly? -- B.G.

ANSWER: I also read the initial studies on retatrutide, and I'm very impressed with the results. The level of weight loss that was seen is in the range of what's expected with bariatric surgery. It acts similar to semaglutide (Wegovy) by stimulating the GLP-1 receptor, but like tirzepatide (Zepbound), it also stimulates the GIP receptor.

Unlike either of these drugs, it also acts on a third receptor called glucagon, and this combined action has shown remarkable results, with nearly two-thirds of study subjects no longer being classified as obese while on the drug.

You're wise to ask about the side effects of so much weight loss at one time. Regardless of the underlying reason for the weight loss, there's the potential for harm whether you lose weight through medications, surgery, or careful adherence to diet and exercise. Gallstones are common during rapid weight loss, and some experts use medication to prevent them.

Bone mass can also be lost by both men and women during weight loss. Making sure that a person gets enough protein and vitamin D can reduce this, and people who are at risk (such as those who had low bone mass to begin with) may be recommended medications to prevent the progression to osteoporosis.

We've seen loss of muscle mass with the existing GLP-1 drugs. To some extent, this is because a person no longer carries around so much weight. Regular exercise, especially weight lifting, and adequate protein intake can help reduce muscle loss as well.

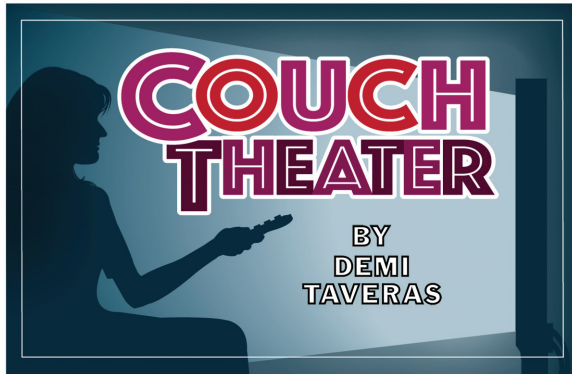
When eating only a few amount of calories to lose weight, a person needs to be careful that they get all the micronutrients they need. I recommend working with a registered dietician or nutritionist to avoid deficiencies.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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Halle Bailey, left, and Rege-Jean Page star in "You, Me & Tuscany." (Courtesy of MovieStillsDB)

"The Shards" (TV-MA) -- Teen drama lovers, you continue to be fed this year, and this latest thriller series hails from none other than creator Ryan Murphy ("The Beauty") and screenwriter Bret Easton Ellis ("American Psycho"). This series

is based on Ellis' semi-autobiographical novel from 2023 and takes place in 1981 Los Angeles. Igby Rigney ("Devil in Disguise: John Wayne Gacy") lands his first main role in a TV series as he plays 17-year-old Ellis during his senior year of prep school. He feels like he's on top of the world with his girlfriend and group of friends, until the arrival of a new student named Robert (Homer Gere) shakes up their dynamic. Simultaneous with Robert's arrival is the unexpected presence of a serial killer named the Trawler, who begins abducting people across the city. The first two episodes premiere on Aug. 5. (Hulu)

"The Devil's Mouth" (PG-13) -- Speaking of teen dramas, this survival thriller film features a cast with a couple of actors who got their big breaks in one! Lana Condor ("To All the Boys") and Gavin Casalegno ("The Summer I Turned Pretty") star alongside Kathryn Newton ("Ready or Not 2") as a group of friends who wish to have one last adventure together in Thailand before graduating from college. So, the friends decide to sign up for a guided swim tour through a cave system called The Devil's Mouth. All is well upon entering the cave, until they probe deeper into the cave and discover a deadly bull shark. With it out for blood, these amateur cave dwellers will have to play the longest waiting game of their lives to see if they can escape this hell in one piece. Out now. (Amazon Prime Video)

"You, Me & Tuscany" (PG-13) -- Halle Bailey ("The Color Purple") and Rege-Jean Page ("Black Bag") lead this oh-so-romantic comedy film premiering on Aug. 7. Bailey plays Anna, a young chef who put her culinary aspirations on hold after the death of her mother. After spending the night with an Italian man named Matteo (Lorenzo de Moor), who mistakenly tells her about his empty villa in Tuscany, Anna impulsively decides to fly to Tuscany and stay in Matteo's villa without his knowledge. Once there, she immediately gets caught by his relatives and, to save face, states that she's Matteo's fiancée. While this appeases his family momentarily, she also encounters Matteo's cousin, Michael (Page), and feels an intense romantic connection with him. Talk about trouble in Tuscany! (Peacock)

"Alley Cats" (TV-MA) -- This British adult-animated series comes from the mind of Ricky Gervais ("The Office"), which we all should know by now is a perverse and hysterical place. The series follows a gang of feral cats, led by a large orange cat named Gus (Gervais), as they spend their time frolicking in alleys, neighborhoods, cemeteries and parking lots. While these cats do ordinary cat things like play-fight, scratch up furniture, and jump on people, they also ponder their existence and what it really means to be a beautiful ball of fluff in such a dangerous world. The six-episode series premieres on Aug. 7. (Netflix)

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1. Name the singer-songwriter who penned "Me and Bobby McGee."

2. The Dovells made the Bristol Stomp famous. Name the other dance they created that was seen in the 1988 film "Hairspray."

3. Who wrote and released "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" in 1974?

4. Name the first Village People song to reach No. 1.

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "If I gave you time to change my mind, I'd find a way to leave the past behind."

Answers

1. Kris Kristofferson. Janis Joplin's version (recorded just days before her death) topped the charts when it was released posthumously in 1971.

2. The Continental, with the 1962 song "Do the New Continental."

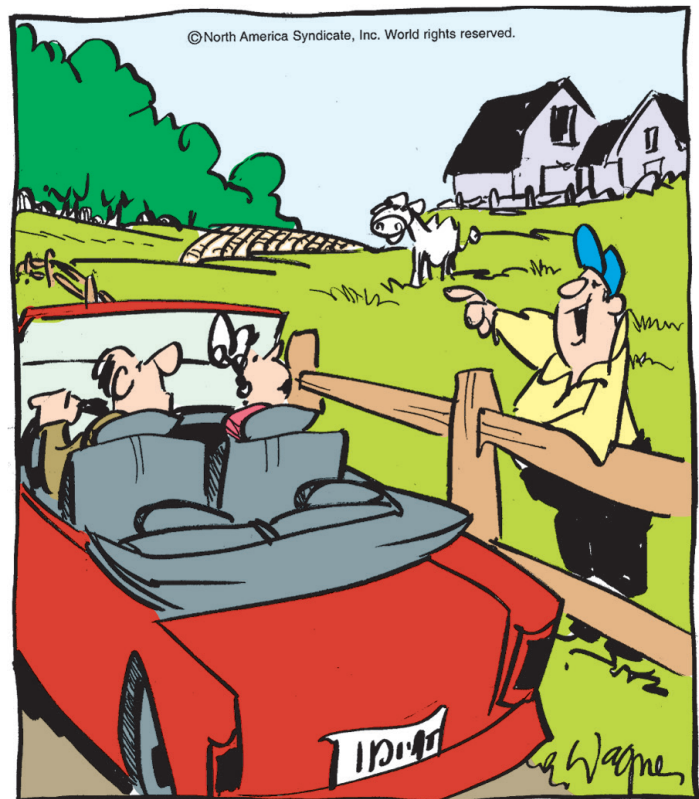
3. Elton John. He cowrote with Bernie Taupin, as he did with several other of his songs, including "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues," "Crocodile Rock" and "Candle in the Wind."

4. "San Francisco (You've Got Me)" in 1977 on the U.S. dance chart. But it was "Y.M.C.A." that topped the charts around the globe.

5. "Reason To Believe," by Tim Hardin, in 1965. The song became famous with Rod Stewart's cover in 1971. It's been covered by several others, including Peter, Paul and Mary.

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GRIN and BEAR IT *Wagner*



"It's about three gallons thataway."

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



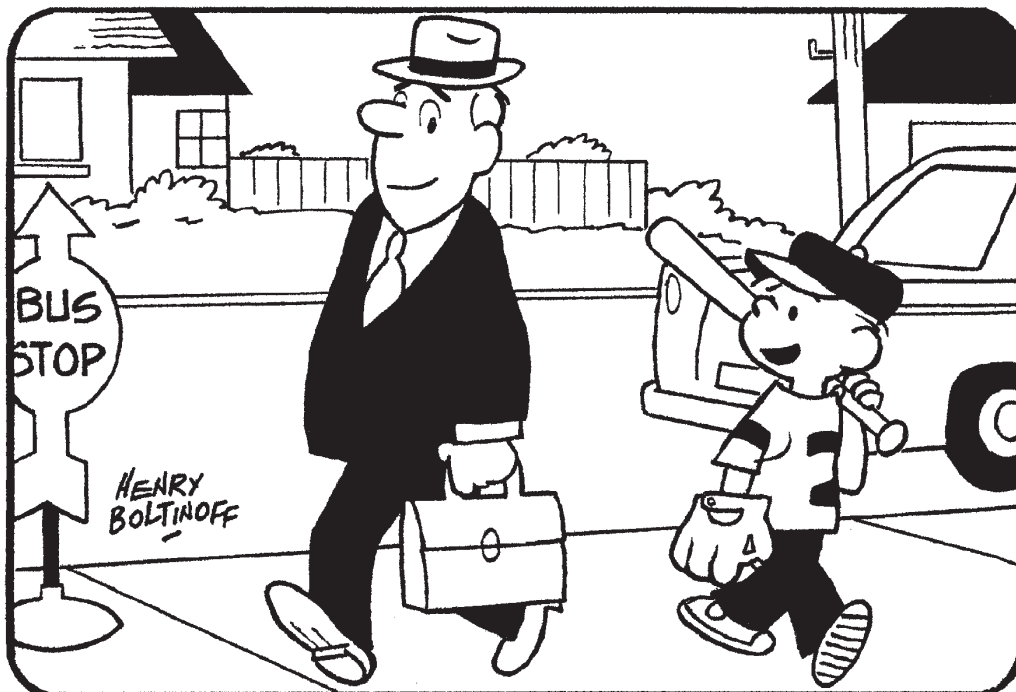
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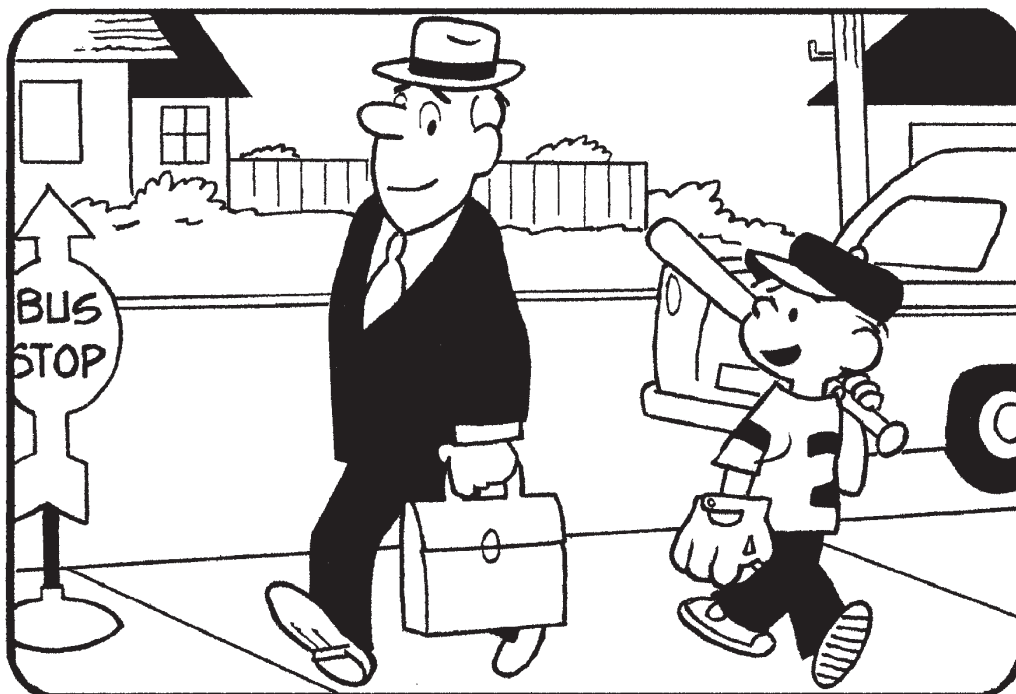
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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Line in sidewalk is moved. 2. Windowsill is missing. 3. Rear car window is smaller. 4. House window is moved. 5. Man is thinner. 6. Briefcase is larger.

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* "I have a pair of pants I wear to garden in. The knees wore out, naturally, and I went to sew patches on the knees. I left the top of the patch open, and when needed I slip a piece of foam rubber in the knee. Magical knee pads!" -- R.E. in Oregon

* Are you great behind the lens of your camera and love animals? Consider donating your time to your local animal shelter as a pet photographer. Showing Mittens and Fido off to their best advantage can mean the difference in finding a forever home. Check with your local rescue organizations, too!

* To clean your tarnished silver jewelry, simply line a tray or shallow bowl with aluminum foil, lay the pieces on the foil and fill with a hot water and detergent solution (NOT bleach-containing). You may also use baking soda and hot water. Swish

and allow the tarnish to transfer to the foil. Use a soft cloth to dry.

* "If your windshield or back window fogs over, try this trick, borrowed from the bathroom: Spread regular shaving cream over the window and wipe clean with a cloth. Buff off any streaks with newspaper. This will last a good while!" -- P.P. in South Carolina

* Now is the time to tighten your cane-bottomed chairs. Flip the chair over, then soak the cane with hot water and allow it to dry fully in the sun.

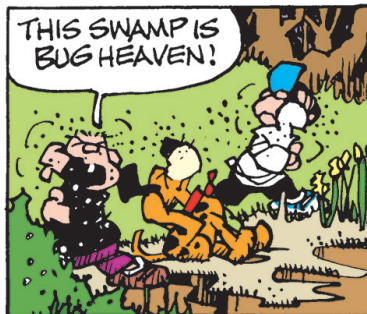
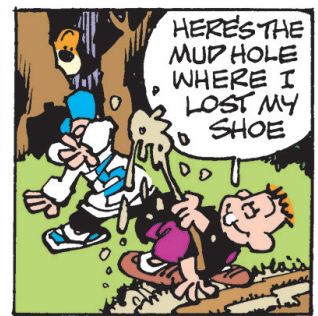
* "If your plastic wrap gets sticky, place it in the refrigerator. You can even store it there to keep it easy to unroll." -- L.K. in Arizona

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 1800 Pembroke Dr., Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32810.

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TIGER

by **BUD BLAKE**



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BUD BLAKE

Groton Daily Independent

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 URL ending
4 "Now I get it!"
7 Shimmering fabrics
12 Texter's "I think"
13 Young bloke
14 Mover's rental
15 H.S. proficiency test
16 Held in trust
18 Census stat
19 Wonderland visitor
20 Hindu deity
22 Moray, for one
23 Ski lift type
27 TV screen choice

- 29 Beekeeper's place
31 Blood line?
34 Sweetie
35 Monastery
37 Play part
38 Romanov ruler
39 College URL ender
41 Appear
45 Chopin piece
47 Roman
48 Branch of government
52 Puzzle
53 " — Called Wanda"

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14				
15				16			17					
18				19								
20			21		22				23	24	25	26
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31	32	33						34				
35					36		37					
38					39	40			41	42	43	44
				45				46		47		
48	49	50	51							52		
53						54				55		
56						57				58		

- 54 Actress Ruby
55 Before
56 Give up amateur status
57 Pink Floyd's Barrett
58 Rds.

DOWN

- 1 Humidor item
2 Alpha's opposite
3 Cable company device
4 — Romeo
5 Saluted
6 "Paper Moon" tyke
7 "Time" co-founder
8 Sushi fish
9 Goat's complaint
10 Where Lux. is
11 Devious
17 Bruins' sch.
21 Wedding setting
23 Leans
24 Sheepish "Hello!"
25 Branch
26 Bagel variety
28 One for the road?
30 Cpl.'s subordinate

- 31 Sternward
32 Hosp. areas
33 Estuary
36 Bigfoot's kin
37 Hollywood's Hepburn
40 Couples
42 Santa's crew
43 Tennis great Chris
44 Blends
45 Repeat
46 Sized up
48 Binge
49 "Avatar" craft
50 Chips go-with
51 Leb. neighbor

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Olive

— King Crossword — Answers

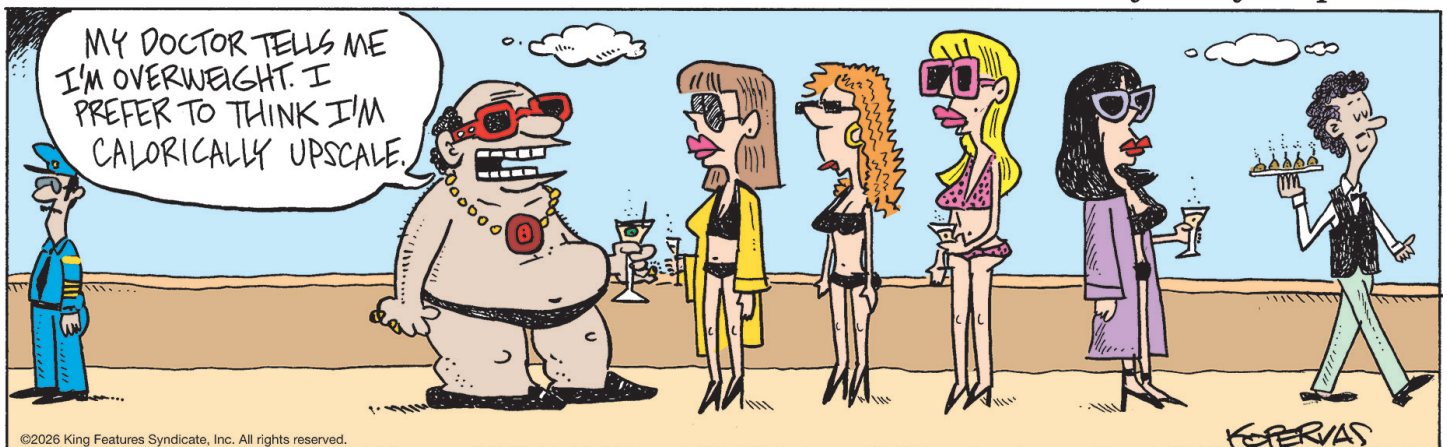
Solution time: 26 mins.

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A	G	E		A	L	I	C	E				
R	A	M	A		E	E	L		T	B	A	R
				L	C	D		A	P	I	A	R
A	O	R	T	A				F	L	A	M	E
F	R	I	A	R	Y			A	C	T		
T	S	A	R		E	D	U		S	E	E	M
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J	U	D	I	C	I	A	R	Y		V	E	X
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G	O	P	R	O		S	Y	D		S	T	S



Out on a Limb

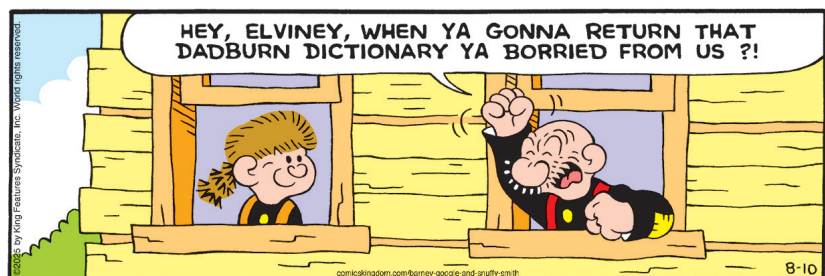
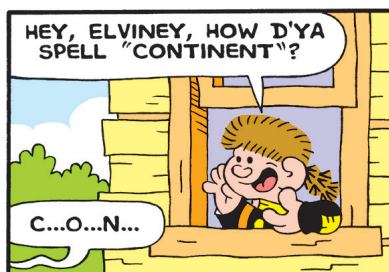
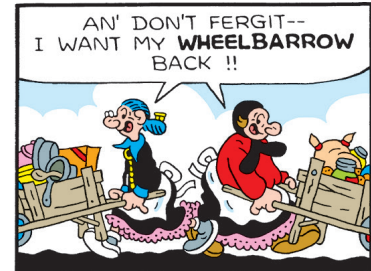
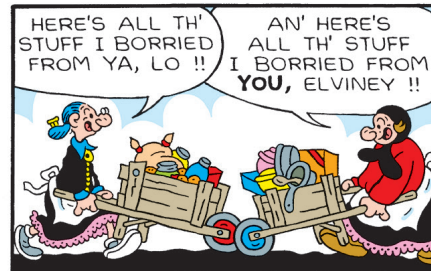
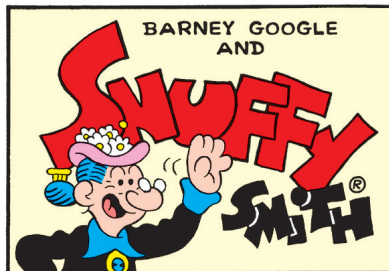
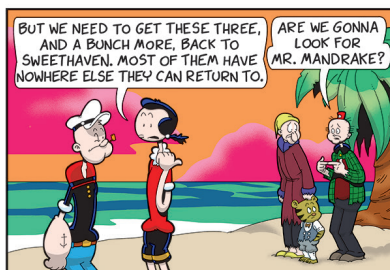
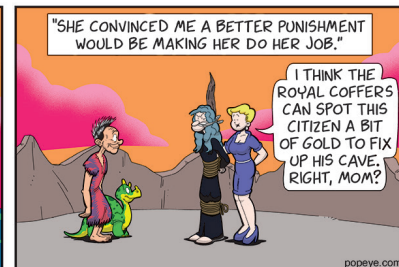
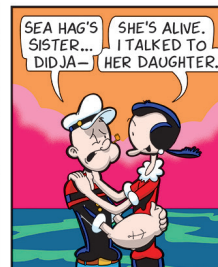
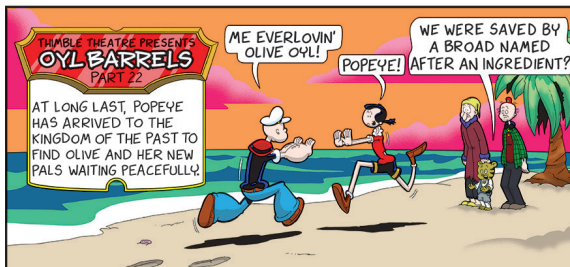
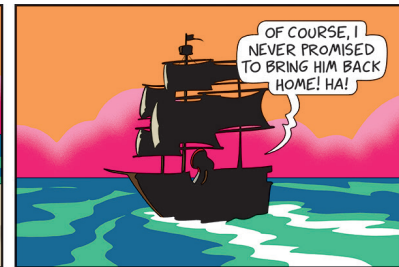
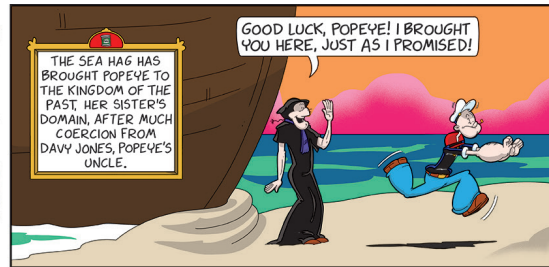
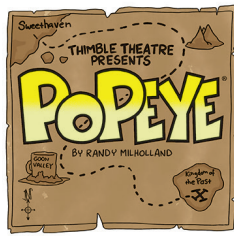
by Gary Kopervas



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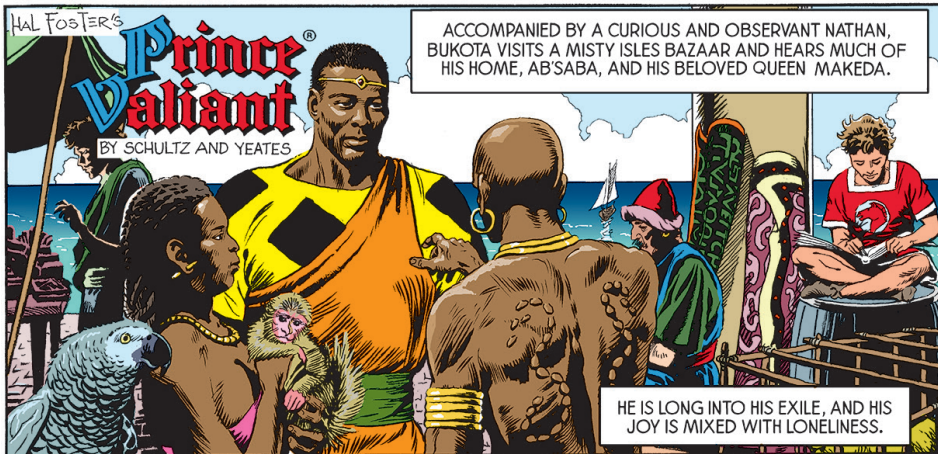
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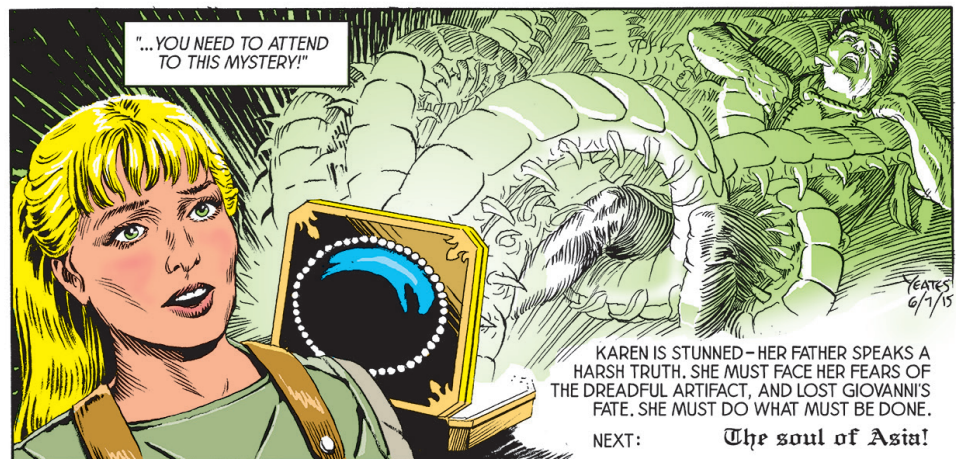


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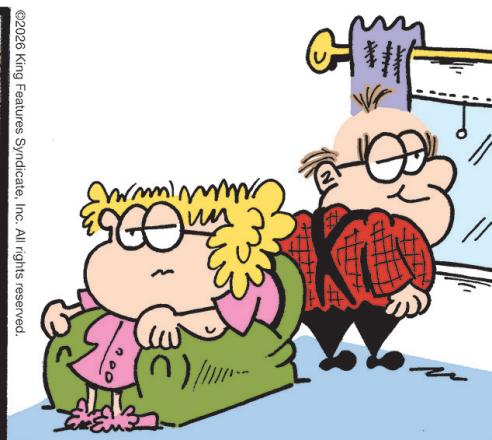
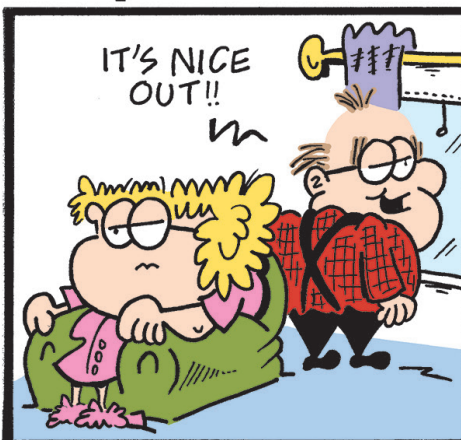


AT LAST, HE HAS HAD ENOUGH: "THIS IS ALL NONSENSE! YOU WASTE YOUR TIME AND YOUR ENERGY ON YOUR SISTER'S LOVE LIFE, WHILE YOUR HUSBAND REMAINS MISSING, AND YOUR MANSERVANT SITS GUARDING THAT TERRIBLE ARTIFACT HE LEFT BEHIND..."



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

The danger of old cookware

When I was expecting a large crowd I needed to pull out all of my old cookware and see if I had enough pieces.

Yes, I had enough pieces. No, I didn't just wash them up and start cooking. Some of the pots and pans were so old I was concerned about PFAS, PFOA and PTFE and whether my cookware was manufactured when use of those chemicals was common.

I went online, and boy, did I learn some things.

The label on my supposedly "free of PFOA" pans doesn't necessarily mean they're safe, because other chemicals could be present. It's the same with "free of PTFE," the nonstick compound used in pots and pans.

The reason: PFOA and PTFE are only two of 9,000 different PFAS chemicals.

To explain: PFAS is called a "forever chemical" because it takes nearly forever to break down in the environment and in our bodies. Long-term use can lead to serious health complications.

PFOA is where the age of some of my cookware became a problem. PFOA is now illegal to use in the manufacture of cookware and has been since 2015. A pan will be especially problematic if it has scratches or is used on high heat.

PTFE, on the other hand, is still used. It's the compound that makes our pans nonstick -- and it's unregulated. And, when you heat PTFE, you get PFAS and toxic fumes.

So what do we do (other than panic) when we clearly need to replace our kitchen cookware with something that's safe to use?

If we want to change our cookware, we need to be certain we purchase pieces that really are PTFE-free and PFAS-free. Best bets are stainless steel, titanium (no coating) and ceramic-coated pieces. Be sure to research each one you consider.

To get up to speed on these chemicals before you shop, see LeafScore.com, DefendOurHealth.org, MayoClinic.org or CANCER.org.

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1. In January 1958, Cincinnati Bearcats college basketball star Oscar Robertson scored 56 points in a 118-54 rout and singlehandedly outscored which team?

2. In what year did the NFL establish the rule that made it illegal to grab the facemask of any opposing player?

3. Which two American men won singles titles at the two Australian Open tennis tournaments held in 1977?

4. In June 2026, which Milwaukee Brewers hurler delivered a fastball at 105.5 mph, the fastest ever recorded by a starting pitcher in Major League Baseball history?

5. Name the Georgia Bulldogs quarterback who threw four touchdowns and ran for two more in the team's 65-7 rout of the TCU Horned Frogs in the 2023 College Football Playoff national championship game.

6. What was the home arena for the San Jose Sharks during their first two NHL seasons from 1991-93?

7. Rudolf Dassler Schuhfabrik, an athletic shoe company founded in Germany in 1948, evolved into which world-famous sportswear brand?



by Ryan A. Berenz

Answers

1. The Seton Hall Pirates.

2. 1962 (previously, it was legal to grab only the ball carrier's mask).

3. Roscoe Tanner and Vitas Gerulaitis.

4. Jacob Misiorowski.

5. Stetson Bennett IV.

6. The Cow Palace in Daly City, California.

7. Puma.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Itchy allergies have this hound howling

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My 2-year-old Bassett Hound, "Harlan," is allergic to something, but we aren't sure what it is. He's got hot spots, especially on his stomach and hind quarters, and he's broken the skin in some places from scratching and biting. Our veterinarian says to treat him for fleas and has prescribed an antibiotic for the scratches. I'm wondering if there is more going on. What do you recommend? -- Jake S. in Wheeling, West Virginia

DEAR JAKE: I'm sorry to hear that Harlan is suffering. Allergies can be a real pain, and finding the source can take time.

Eliminating fleas and treating the sores and hot spots is the first step in the process of determining what is causing a pet's allergic reaction. If Harlan responds well to this treatment and has no further problems, that's great. If he doesn't, the next move is to gradually rule out other potential allergens until the culprit is found.

Dogs and cats can have histamine reactions -- redness, swelling, sneezing, itching -- to three primary culprits: fleas, food and environment. Some very effective flea treatments have been developed over the past several years, so this is the easiest allergy to treat. Food and environmental allergies are tougher.

I'll address food allergies in my next column. This week, what I recommend for pet owners who are dealing with the itching, hot spots and general misery of an allergy, is to contact their vet and follow their instructions on treatment. Reduce dust and pollen inside the home by vacuuming frequently. Treat all your furry pets for fleas, if you haven't done so yet.

And get out your notebook. You'll need to write down your pet's reaction, behaviors and symptoms to start forming a picture of the allergies they may have.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

- * First cousins may marry in Utah, but only after age 65.
- * The first Star Trek series was originally marketed as "Wagon Train to the Stars," after the popular 1957 western TV series "Wagon Train."
- * To cut down on high pollution levels, car owners in San Jose, Costa Rica, are prohibited from driving into the city one day out of the week. That day corresponds to the last number on their car's license plate.
- * Chickens can see color better than humans.

* Simply thinking about sex can trigger sneezing in some people. Scientists think this may be due to crossed nerve signals in the automatic nervous system.

* Los Angeles has more museums than any other city in the world.

* The sun is actually white. It appears yellow from Earth because our atmosphere tints it that hue.

* Cats don't have a sweet tooth. A genetic mutation prevents our feline friends from tasting sweetness, making them indifferent to sugary foods.

* After pornography, ancestry websites are the most commonly visited on the internet.

* In 1955, Vietnamese Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem printed his ballots on red paper, which the Vietnamese consider a very lucky color, and the ballots for his opponent on green paper, which is considered just the opposite. (He won, but not because of color.)

* Being in love and being high on cocaine activate the same portions of the brain.

* When psychologist Timothy Leary entered prison in 1971, he knew how to answer the psychology tests given to inmates because he'd helped design some of the questions. He then manipulated the answers to get a gardening job, which he used to escape.

* The U.S. Supreme Court has its own police force.

Thought for the Day: "You cannot have a positive life and a negative mind." -- Joyce Meyer

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Heat stress in plants

If the temperatures in your area are staying higher than normal, it's tempting to water your outdoor plants more often than you usually do to protect them from the heat. But this may not be helpful! Heat stress is not the same as drought, and too much water in the soil can cause fungal diseases and root rot. It may be more prudent to refresh your mulch. A three-inch-thick layer over the root zone can insulate the roots against the heat and help retain moisture in the soil longer.

— Brenda Weaver

Source: theprudentgarden.com



by Freddy Groves

Confusion over payment for non-VA medical care

Let's hear it for whistleblowers, especially when big money is involved, and most especially when some of that money should have gone into the pockets of veterans.

Specifically, starting in 2001, non-VA medical providers and veterans had 90 days to file for reimbursement for veterans who had sought emergency care. Then in 2022 the Cleland-Dole Act added the requirement that non-VA providers submit payment requests within 180 days for providing nonemergency care. However, there was no mention of veterans having that same 180-day time limit to file for reimbursement, or any time limit at all.

The VA continued, however, to apply the original 90-day payment limit.

Enter the VA Office of Inspector General because of the whistleblower. When asked, the VA identified 78,000 claims -- to the tune of \$373 million -- that had been denied because they didn't meet the 90-day limit. And no, they hadn't reviewed those 78,000 denied claims. Apparently there was confusion due to the fact that the law was written to give non-VA providers that 180 days, but not veterans.

Further confusion (or so it was said) arose because it wasn't clear whether the 90-day filing period should begin on the date of discharge, the date of a veteran's death during emergency treatment or the date it became clear that a third-party payer would not cover the claim. The VA sought clarification from the policy department ... and promptly dropped the ball, not pursuing answers.

The VA began processing those claims, leaving it to the individual claims processors to decide whether they would use the 90- or 180-day limitation.

If you need to get emergency care at a non-VA medical facility, there are some rules you need to know so it will be paid for. You can read the info at www.va.gov/resources/getting-emergency-care-at-non-vafacilities so you'll know what you should do in an emergency. For example, going to urgent care doesn't count. And someone needs to tell the VA within 72 hours that you've had a medical emergency. You can notify the VA at 844-724-7842.

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Wishing Well®

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E	N	B	V	U	L	E	L	E	E	S	S	T

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. GEOGRAPHY: How many countries border Argentina?
2. GAMES: What is a perfect score in a bowling game?
3. TELEVISION: In the animated series "Family Guy," what kind of creature is often fighting with Peter?
4. COMICS: What is the name of Batman's butler?
5. FOOD & DRINK: What ingredient gives the Greek liquor ouzo its distinctive taste?
6. LITERATURE: What are the names of Nancy Drew's best friends in the detective novel series?
7. MOVIES: What brand-name underwear does Marty McFly have in the movie "Back to the Future"?
8. SCIENCE: What is the Prime Meridian?
9. U.S. STATES: Which state is home to the Carlsbad Caverns National Park?
10. ASTRONOMY: What is the largest moon of Saturn?

Answers

1. Five: Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil
2. 300.
3. Ernie, the giant chicken.
4. Alfred Pennyworth.
5. Anise.
6. Bess and George.
7. Calvin Klein.
8. An imaginary line at 0-degree longitude.
9. New Mexico.
10. Titan.

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South Dakota Governor



Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Governor and Grandpa

Our family recently welcomed our tenth grandchild. There's nothing like being surrounded by my children while watching their own children grow. But it all started 45 years ago on the first day of August, when my bride, Sandy, and I committed to a life together rooted in faith and love. James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above." Looking back, I can see God's favor in so many ways, and one of His greatest gifts has been my wife and the family we've built together.

Sandy has been by my side while serving as First Lady of South Dakota for over 18 months now, but we've been building a life for 45 years. We have both spent a lifetime loving South Dakota – the state where we were born and raised. The best days in my family are certainly ahead of us. Celebrating each of my sons as they have become husbands and fathers always brings me to appreciate how we got here and what we've accomplished along the way. We served our community, built our church, held each other up, and pushed each other forward. But more importantly, the life we've built over the years is a testimony to God's faithfulness.

The same goes for our great state. Our best days are not in our rearview mirror – our windshield is far bigger. But we can't forget to take pride in the milestones we have met, the adversities we have overcome, the blessings our good Lord has provided, and the discipline it took to keep our core principles at the forefront of our decisions.

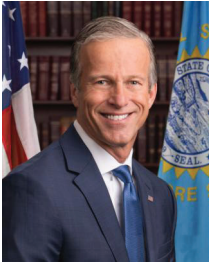
Because of our history and our results, South Dakota has surged to the second-best state in the nation in the latest U.S. News & World Report Best States rankings. This rise from the eighth spot last year is a testament to our positive direction. We're strong, safe, and free – and we're becoming more so every day!

South Dakota is precious to me. Sandy and I chose this state to build a life and raise a family. And I'm proud that all of my four sons have chosen to grow their own families here. As Sandy and I have traveled the state together, we have met so many people and families; some new to South Dakota and some who have lived here for generations. But we all have one thing in common – we love this state and want to see it cared for so our children and grandchildren can thrive.

Governor is a title I wear with honor, but there's no better title than Grandpa. I'm watching the creation of the next generation while holding the steering wheel for where we go next. I'm focused on both of these titles so we can keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free. I will continue to work hard to ensure future generations get to experience all the open opportunities across this great state – a state I have come to love more and more every day.

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JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

Democrats Go to Extremes

At the start of last year, a New York Times poll offered a warning to Democrats. The headline read, "Many Americans Say the Democratic Party Does Not Share Their Priorities." Just weeks after Democrats were rejected at the ballot box, the Times poll suggested that one of the reasons for their loss was that Americans thought that Democrats weren't concerned about the things that matter most to them.

A year and a half after that poll was taken, Democrats have had numerous opportunities to demonstrate some moderation to voters. But the record shows that they have not evolved a bit. Take for example the fact that radical transgender ideology remains an article of faith among Democrats and that they have repeatedly opposed efforts to keep biological men out of women's sports. One Democrat even called the recent unanimous Supreme Court decision upholding state laws protecting women's sports "unjust," as if making women compete against biological men is somehow just.

Of course, Democrats are still proudly pro-abortion, too. Democrats won't even support legislation to provide medical care to a baby born alive during a failed abortion or a bill to ensure a pregnant college student knows there are resources available to help her finish her degree and have her baby. Democrats directed small-business COVID relief funds to Planned Parenthood, even though that organization was not legally eligible to receive funding. And they are doing everything in their power to eliminate pregnancy resource centers simply because they won't recommend abortion.

It's not just on these issues. Far-left activists seem to be the audience for almost everything Democrats do these days. Twice in the last year, Democrats have caused a record-long government shutdown. While TSA lines snaked outside of airports and Americans were visiting food banks because they had to work without pay, the Democrat leader was quoted saying, "Every day gets better for us."

Then at the start of this year, Democrats shut down the U.S. Department of Homeland Security because they didn't want to fund law enforcement. A few years ago, defunding law enforcement was a fringe position. This year, it became the official position of Democrats as they tried to completely defund immigration enforcement and Border Patrol. Once again, it didn't matter to Democrats that Americans would be less safe with open borders, their audience was far-left activists.

Democrats have had numerous opportunities to work with Republicans on things that matter to the American people, but they have repeatedly chosen to follow members of their far-left base instead. Now it seems Democrats are poised to follow the far-left directly into socialism. Self-identified democratic socialists have been winning elections across the country. How long before there's no distinguishing between Democrats and democratic socialists?

Last year, many Americans said they didn't think Democrats share their priorities. Since then, Democrats have given them more reason to think so, and instead of moving toward the middle, Democrats are just getting more extreme.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

Maybe I Should Rob a Bank

Throughout my life, money has been quite a challenge. I was a pastor for almost 50 years, and as a pastor I did not get much of a salary, barely enough to get by on. But I didn't become a pastor for the money, or I would've become a televangelist. I didn't say that, did I?

Both The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I worked to be as frugal as possible with our budget. We tried our best not to spend our money on things we didn't really need. Then when the children came along, that certainly changed our budget.

As a young kid, I was frugal with my money. I didn't make very much money, but I made sure most of it went into my little piggy bank. Every week I would look at my piggy bank and count the money several times. I knew how much I had, but I enjoyed counting it and looking at it.

Now that I'm older, but not that much wiser, I check out my savings account every week. At least once a week, sometimes several times during the week, OK, every day. I enjoy looking at that money in my savings account. What I enjoy the most is seeing the interest I'm earning in my savings account. Like my father used to say, "A penny earned is a penny saved." I want all my pennies in my savings account to earn interest.

That money was for emergencies, and boy, when I had to take money out of my savings account, it was the hardest thing that I ever had to do. It was easy putting it in, but it was very difficult for me to pull it out. I know the savings account was for emergencies, but I had a hard time defining "emergencies." Sometimes The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage steps in and helps with that definition.

Every time something happened unexpectedly in the financial area of life, I really wrestled with drawing the money from the savings account. I know it had to be done, but I kicked it down the road as far as I could.

Just the other week, there was a mechanical problem with the Sissy Van. It was a problem that needed to be fixed, and it was around \$1000. I never kept that much in my checking account because I preferred most of my money to be in my savings account.

When I got the bill, I was very sad. I looked at my savings account and then looked at the bill for the Sissy Van, and I was not too happy about it. It was almost as much as my Social Security checks each month.

As I was looking at my savings account online, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came in and asked about getting her mechanic bill paid. We needed to go pick it up, and when we did, we needed to pay for the mechanical services.

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"You do have enough money to pay for that, don't you?" The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said.

I looked at her with very sad eyes and said, "Well, the money for the mechanical bill is in my savings account. I hate to transfer it to my checking account."

"You do have it in the savings account for emergencies, right?"

I looked at her, then looked back at my account on the computer, sighed very deeply, and said, "I'm going to have to move money over to my checking account, and you know how much I hate doing that."

With a very serious look on her face The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage looked at me and said, "Instead of taking it out of your savings account, why don't you just go and rob a bank this afternoon. Then you might have more money to put back into your savings account after you pay the mechanic bill."

I looked at her, chuckled, and said, "Did you say to go and rob a bank?"

I'm not sure what planet she was on at the time, but robbing a bank never came to mind as I was thinking of my money. Of course, it would make sense if I could rob a bank and get away with it.

"What if I get caught?" I asked her very seriously.

"Then," she said with a smile on her face, "you'll have free room and three meals a day and you won't have to pay for any of that. You do like free don't you?"

I just stared at her for a few moments and watched her smile back at me. It never occurred to me to rob a bank, but as I looked at my savings account, it didn't seem like a bad idea at the time.

I finally had to move the money from my savings account to my checking account. That is the hardest thing I ever did in life. I sighed very deeply and closed the computer, then I picked up my checkbook and said to The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, "Let's go and get your Sissy Van."

Later that day I read Ecclesiastes 5:10, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity."

As much money as I have in my savings account, there will always be some emergency that needs me to withdraw it.

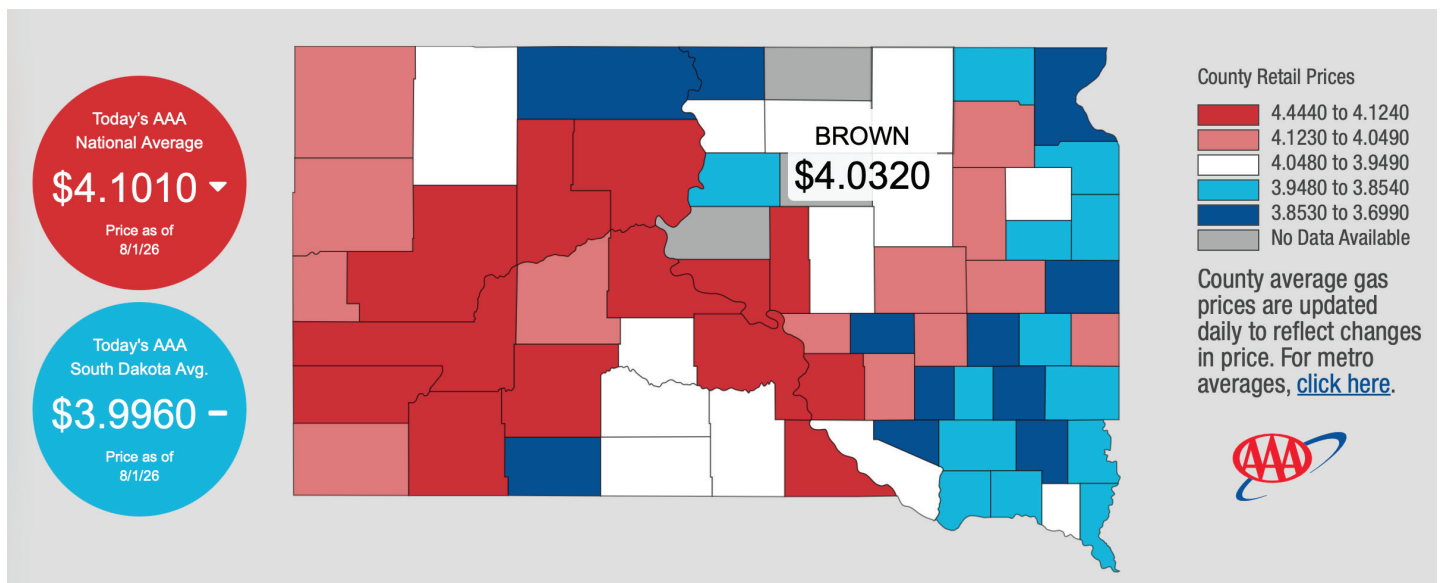
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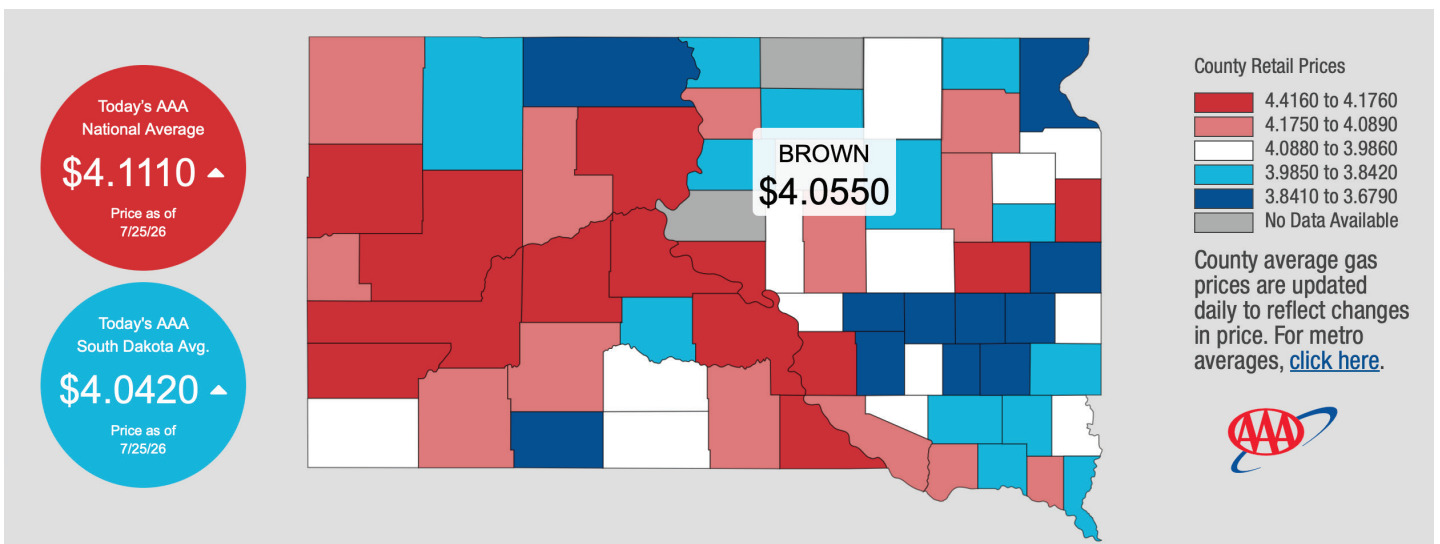
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.9960	\$4.2070	\$4.7020	\$4.8910
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.9960	\$4.1980	\$4.7070	\$4.8750
Week Ago Avg.	\$4.0420	\$4.2040	\$4.7180	\$4.8800
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.7300	\$3.9310	\$4.4180	\$4.2710
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.0540	\$3.2220	\$3.7090	\$3.3930

This Week

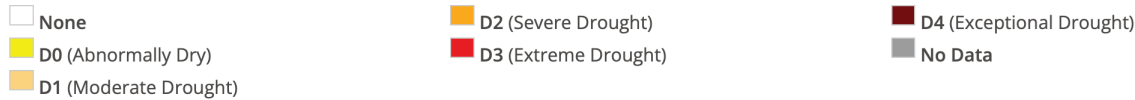


Last Week

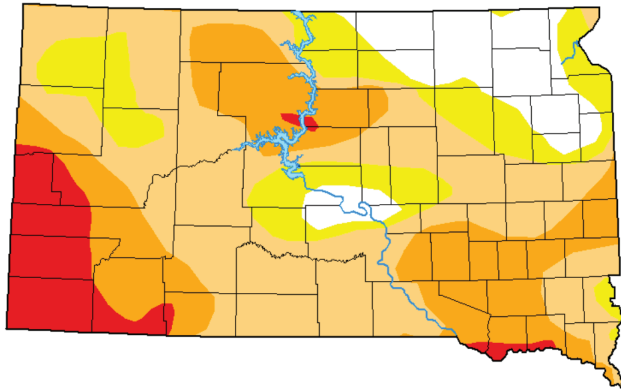


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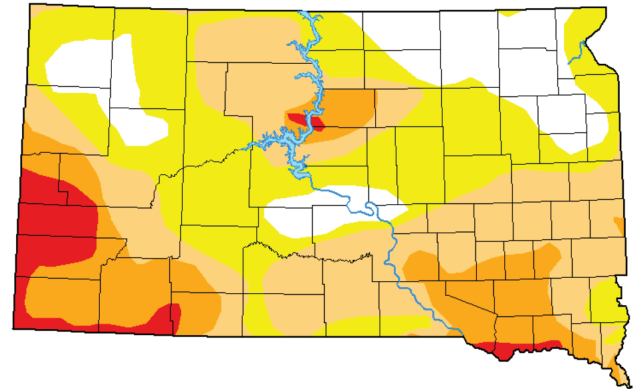
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Drought Monitor



July 28



July 21

For the week, drought-related conditions deteriorated across the region including in the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas where temperatures were well above normal, especially in western portions of the region where anomalies ranged from 3 to 9 °F above normal. NDMC's flash drought composite map (July 27) also showed flash drought conditions developing with numerous drought impact reports coming into the NDMC's Condition Monitoring Observer Report (CMOR) reporting system during the past 7-day period—especially in the Dakotas in relation to crop and rangeland conditions. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-day period, numerous locations ranked among their warmest or near warmest mean temperatures on record, including: Rapid City NWS Weather Forecast Office, SD (warmest on record; +8 °F departure); Custer, SD (3rd warmest; +6 °F departure); Bismarck, ND (5th warmest; +5 °F departure); and Fargo, ND (3rd warmest; +5 °F departure).

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EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: Why is the fur industry under fire for spreading disease? – Paul Moss, via email

For decades, the European and American fur farming industry has supported the evolving fashion industry. However, in recent years, the ethicality of fur farming has become increasingly questioned due to claims of animal cruelty. Even more recently in 2019, the fur farming industry was accused of spreading diseases when infected animals were found in Finnish mink fur farms.



Fur producers are under fire for creating unsanitary conditions at their processing facilities leading to the spread of disease. Credit: Pexels.com.

Finland would be joined by the Netherlands, the United States, and others, in reporting disease-carrying animals, partially due to the spread of COVID-19. In these countries, animals live in cramped spaces, leading to self-mutilation, fighting, and immunocompromising. In the wild, these animals do not live in restricted spaces. In particular, mink are individual and highly territorial animals. Given the first case of infected animals were mink, poor living conditions and inherent characteristics likely contribute to the rapid spread of disease. The disease-carrying capacity of these animals was linked with speculation of threats to public health due to their zoonotic capability.

To further understand the zoonotic (infectious illnesses that spread between animals and humans) potential of fur animals, a group of scientists conducted a mink study in 2020 based in China. It collected tissue samples from 450 mammals that died from 2021 to 2024 likely due to disease. The study found that 335 host samples had at least one virus species, which was a 60 percent increase in virus host range compared to previous knowledge. Of the virus species found, there were 15 that could be transmitted between different types of fur animals and 11 had zoonotic transmission potential.

Given these findings, experts proposed increased surveillance and research of high-priority species, namely mink, guinea pigs and raccoon dogs, as they were found to have the most virus species. While some claim that increased biosecurity measures could prevent disease from being transmitted to humans, others argue for the full restriction of the fur trade in America and Europe. In the U.S., the Mink VIRUS Act was proposed to minimize mink farming to prevent threats to public well-being. Various European countries have proposed shutting down all mink fur farming facilities temporarily in the past.

To support efforts to limit the spread of diseases in the fur industry, one can educate oneself about recent fur farming studies, including the one on mink in China. At the same time, one can minimize their purchasing of fur-containing fashion products and furniture. Policy-wise, Americans can encourage their state representative to pass the Mink VIRUS Act through Born Free USA to not only limit the zoonotic potential of mink but also help the United States become an exemplar for other countries to follow.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

Surpluses prove state lawmakers' eyes are bigger than their stomachs

by Dana Hess

There are two times a year when you can count on South Dakota politicians getting a little pumped up about their performance and taking a victory lap.

One is at the end of the legislative session when lawmakers pat themselves on the back about their ability to produce a balanced budget. They're right to take pride in their work. There are currently 10 states that run budget deficits. Balancing a budget is something that continues to elude the U.S. Congress.

On the other hand, a balanced budget is mandated by the state constitution. By balancing the budget, legislators are simply following the law. It's like they're congratulating themselves for driving the speed limit.

The other time you can count on a politician taking a bow is at the end of the state fiscal year in June. That's when the amount of the budget surplus is announced. It doesn't matter who is in the governor's office. The announcement of the surplus will be lauded as that administration's dedication to government efficiency. That's what happened this year when Gov. Larry Rhoden greeted the news by saying it was the result of "good stewardship of taxpayer dollars."

This year, a \$69 million budget surplus came from \$30 million in higher than anticipated revenue, including \$17 million in extra sales and use taxes. Another \$39 million came from underspending by state agencies.

The excess revenue may be a sign of a more robust than expected economy. It's disconcerting, however, that the state budget process, with dueling theories from the Legislature and the executive branch, goes to a great deal of trouble to predict how much revenue will be coming in. In this case, the state's budget experts looked into their crystal balls and managed to miss their target by \$30 million.

The \$39 million that went unspent by state agencies included \$32 million from the Department of Social Service. This raises the question of whether the people in society who need help the most are getting short shrift from the state agency specifically designed to help them.

That's not the case, according to Jim Terwilliger, commissioner of the state's Bureau of Finance and Management. In a South Dakota Searchlight story, Terwilliger said the department's underspending was the result of fewer than expected Medicaid patients and less use of substance abuse and mental health services at the Human Services Center in Yankton because it's understaffed.

"We're trying to predict how many people come to the hospital with various acute conditions and so on and so forth," Terwilliger told the Legislature's Appropriations Committee. "So it's not something that's easy to predict going forward."

Granted, predicting the state's economic future is hard work. The \$69 million budget surplus is less than 3% of the \$2.5 billion state general fund budget. The \$32 million returned to state government by the Department of Social Services represents less than 5% of the state general funds in the department's budget. Still, make \$69 million worth of budgeting errors in the private sector, and that thumping sound would be caused by heads rolling.

This year's \$69 million budget surplus is on the low end compared to the surpluses in the past five years. There was a surplus of \$63 million in 2025, \$80 million in 2024, \$96.8 million in 2023, \$115 million in 2022 and \$85.9 million in 2021. Some of that may be due to the increase in federal money during the pandemic.

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Still, there has to be a better way to ensure that the money in the budget has a chance to be spent for the betterment of South Dakotans or, if it's not needed, doesn't get put in the budget in the first place.

A state government known for its conservatism, both in the Legislature and the executive branch, should have a better budgetary record. Each year since 2001, the last time there was no surplus, appropriators' eyes have been bigger than their stomachs. They either budget more than they can spend or miss the clues about how revenue will play out in the coming year. Then in June, they declare the budget surplus is due to government efficiency. Government efficiency should start with a budgeting process that works, not end with an embarrassingly large surplus.

The matter-of-fact nature of the explanation of this year's budget surplus to the Appropriations Committee belies the fact that mistakes were made. It wasn't just a matter of the state departments' underspending. It certainly looks like it was a matter of the citizens of South Dakota being overtaxed. Now \$39 million that was earmarked for services for South Dakotans will instead linger in state government's budget reserves, which have swelled to a record \$325 million.

On some level it's reassuring to note that taxpayer dollars in the budget reserve may be used as one-time funds in state projects. However, it would do so much more to boost confidence in state government if lawmakers and the bureaucrats who work with them would just get the budget right the first time. That's something that's worthy of a victory lap.

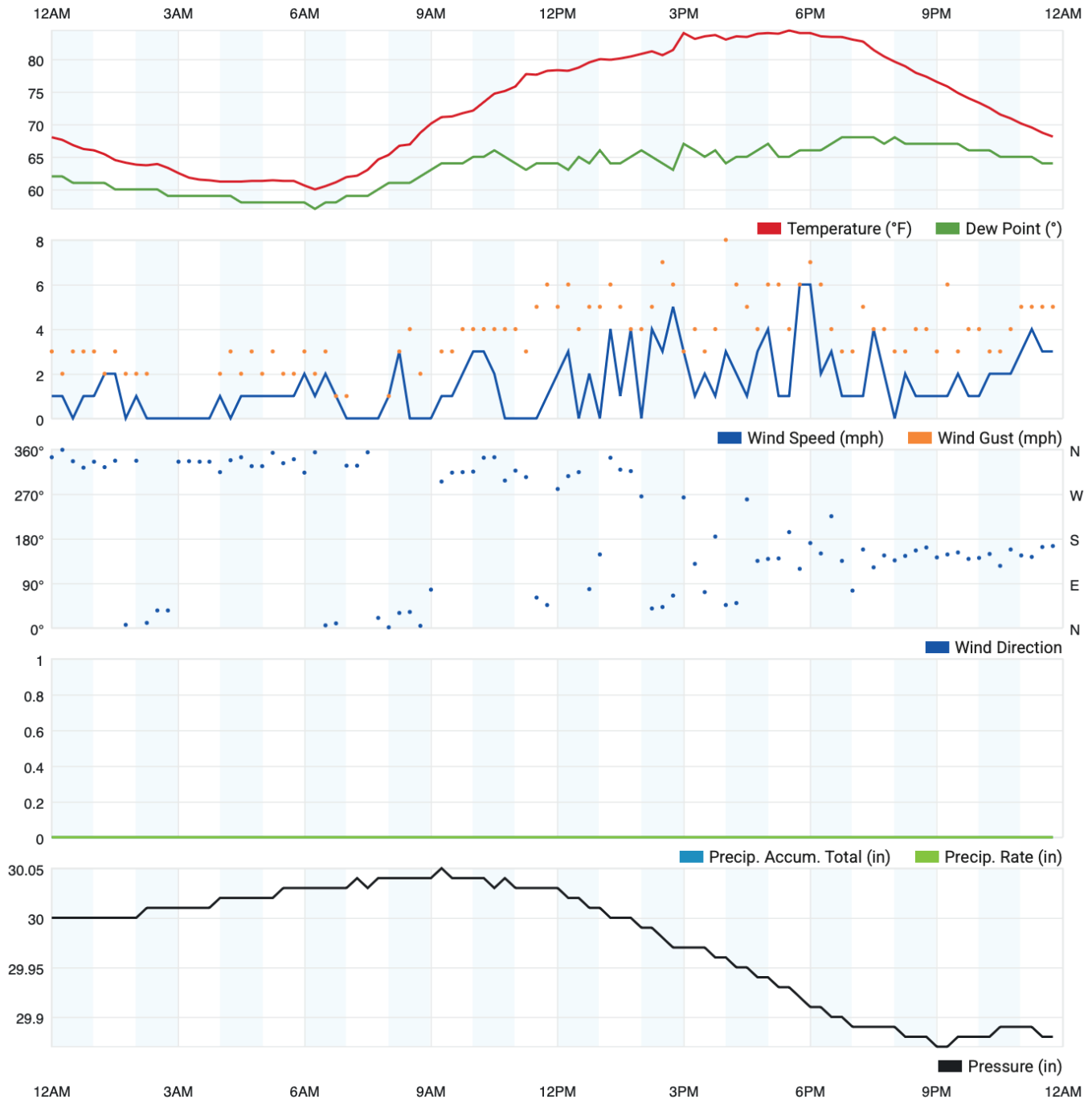
Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 1, 2026



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Today



High: 89 °F

Mostly Sunny
and Breezy

Tonight



Low: 67 °F

Partly Cloudy
and Breezy

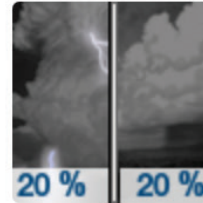
Monday



High: 88 °F

Slight Chance
Showers and
Breezy then
Mostly Sunny

Monday Night



Low: 55 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms and
Breezy then
Slight Chance
Showers

Tuesday



High: 77 °F

Sunny

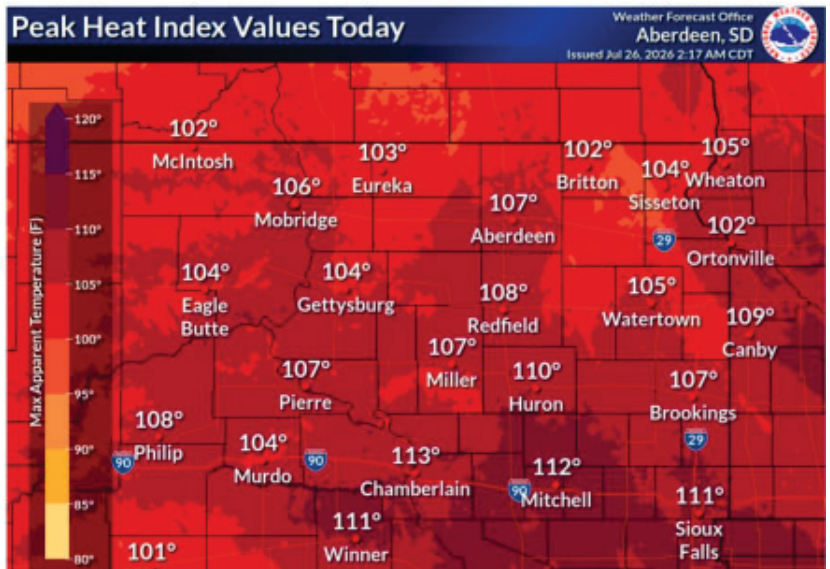


Extreme Heat Warning Today

July 26, 2026
5:40 AM

Dangerously Hot! Extreme Heat Warning until 9 PM Today

- **Extreme Heat Warning** through 9 PM CT Today
- **Heat Index Values peaking at 100 to 112° this afternoon.** High Temperatures in the upper 90s to 107°
- Slight Risk (level 2 out of 5) for severe storms this evening mainly along and east of I-29



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Increasing southerly winds gusting from 25 to 40 mph today will usher in hotter temperatures, especially over central SD where readings will rise into the upper 90s to low 100s. A Heat Advisory is in effect today for areas west of the Missouri River, where temperatures and heat indices will rise to 100-105 degrees. High to Very High fire danger will also be in place over central SD due to the strong south winds and humidity ranging from 20 to 30 percent.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 5:33 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 6:12 AM

Wind: 9 mph at 3:59 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1938

Record Low: 40 in 2018

Average High: 85

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in Aug.: 0.15

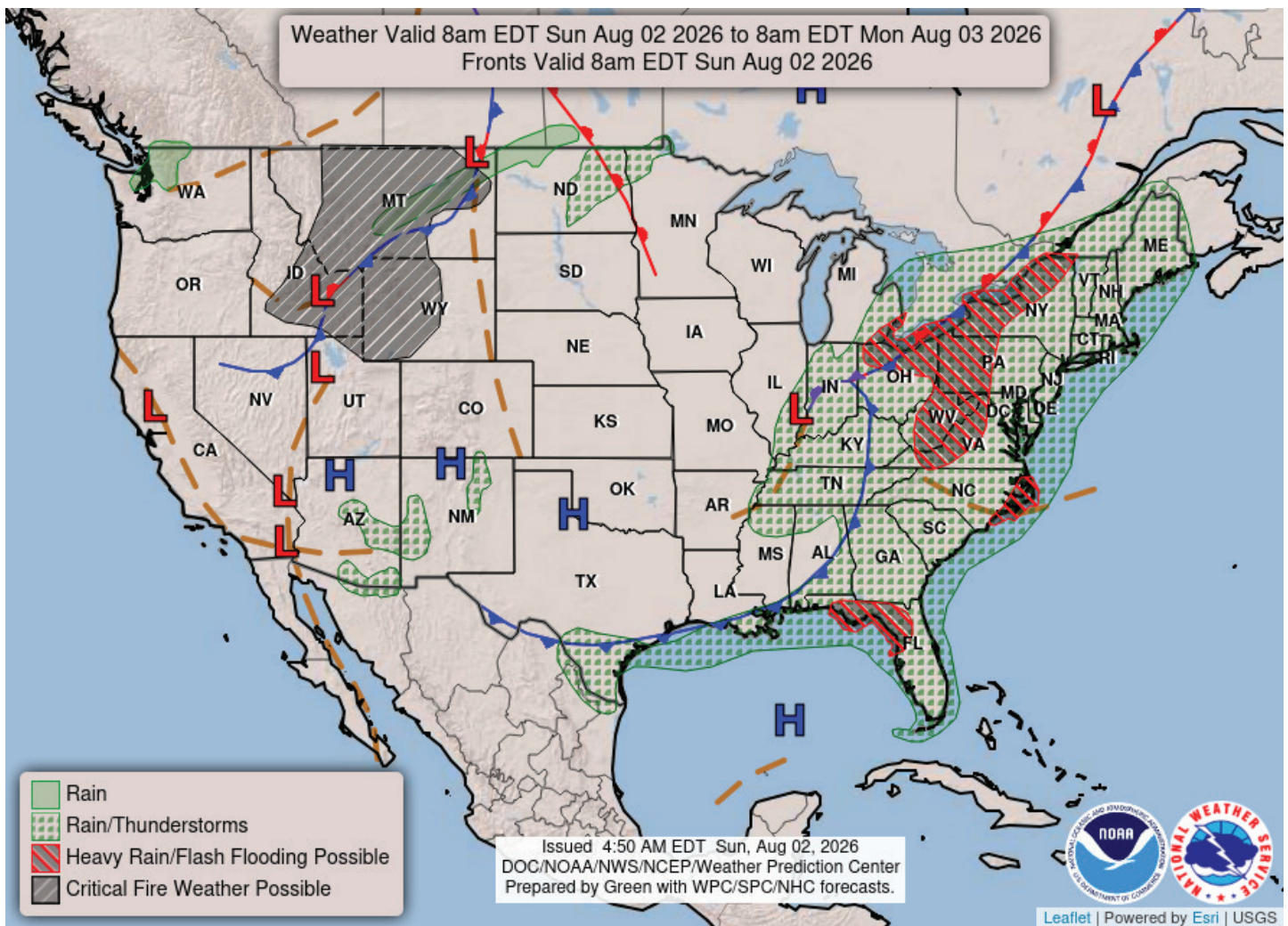
Precip to date in Aug.: 9.79

Average Precip to date: 14.25

Precip Year to Date: 19.26

Sunset Tonight: 8:59 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:18 am



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Today in Weather History

August 2, 1960: Hail, the size of a hen egg caused moderate damage to a total loss of corn, soybean, and grain crops on 50 to 75 farms in Marshall, Roberts, and Grant Counties. High winds caused damage to buildings and uprooted trees in Britton.

1954 — Severe thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail for thirty minutes in north central Kansas. One drift measured 200 feet long, seventy feet wide and three feet deep. (The Weather Channel)

1975 — Record heat gripped New England. Highs of 104 degrees at Providence, RI, and 107 degrees at Chester and New Bedford, MA, established state records. The heat along the coast of Maine was unprecedented, with afternoon highs of 101 degrees at Bar Harbor and 104 degrees at Jonesboro. (The Weather Channel)

1985: A strong and sudden wind gusts cause a plane crash at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport in Texas that kills 135 people. The rapid and unexpected formation of a supercell, an incredibly powerful form of a thunderstorm, led to the tragedy.

1987 — Hot weather continued in the central U.S. Fifteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Concordia KS with a reading of 106 degrees, and Downtown Kansas City, MO, with a high of 105 degrees. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Ohio Valley and the north central U.S. Thunderstorms in South Dakota produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Philip, and hail two inches in diameter at Faulkton. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Searing heat continued from the Middle and Upper Mississippi Valley to the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast States. Twenty-six cities reported record high temperatures for the date. Chicago IL reported a record seven days of 100 degree heat for the year. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Low pressure representing the remains of Hurricane Chantal deluged north central Texas with heavy rain. Up to 6.50 inches drenched Stephens County, and Wichita Falls reported 2.22 inches of rain in just one hour. Bismarck, ND, reported a record warm morning low of 75 degrees, and record hot afternoon high of 101 degrees, and evening thunderstorms in North Dakota produced wind gusts to 78 mph at Lakota. Early evening thunderstorms in Florida produced high winds which downed trees at Christmas. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2006: Johannesburg, South Africa residents see snow flurries for the first time in at least eight years.

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Daily Devotion

Both Ordinary and Miraculous

God is constantly at work in our life—in the mundane moments and in the miracles.

1 Kings 17:2-7: 2 The word of the LORD came to him, saying,

3 "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.

4 "It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."

5 So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.

6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.

7 It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

In Isaiah 55:8, God declared, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways." And in fact, one of the biggest challenges of the Christian life stems from a lack of understanding about God's ways. There are times when we could really use a miracle but He does not come through for us the way we think He should.

God works in both supernatural and ordinary ways, and He determines the method. For example, in today's passage, Elijah ate food miraculously delivered by ravens, but his water supply from a brook was natural. When it dried up, the Lord could have made more water spring from the ground, but He didn't.

Sometimes God uses ordinary means to move us in a new direction. The curtailment of Elijah's water supply opened the door for his next assignment. When the Lord withholds miraculous intervention and lets your "brook" dry up, then He has something else planned for you.

The work of God in the commonplace aspects of life is just as miraculous as His supernatural intervention. Look for His "fingerprint" in the day's mundane activities. He is there, opening and shutting doors, closing up one opportunity while also beginning another.

We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.01.26

15 18 31 32 47 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.31.26

4 18 26 43 51 4

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$60,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.01.26

14 17 27 33 36 10

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,300,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.01.26

6 16 20 30 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.01.26

10 32 33 54 64 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.01.26

6 17 27 48 50 5

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$748,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

French wildfire near Bordeaux contained as 1,500 firefighters battle separate blaze in Provence

By THOMAS ADAMSON and NICOLAS GARRIGA Associated Press

LACANAU, France (AP) — France's vast wildfire near Bordeaux, which scorched an area four times the size of Paris and forced 224,000 people to evacuate, remained contained Sunday but was still burning. Hundreds of kilometers (miles) away, a newer blaze in Provence had stopped advancing overnight but was not yet contained.

About 3,000 firefighters remained deployed across the two fronts, extinguishing hot spots, cutting fire-breaks and securing areas of burned forest as high temperatures and wind threatened to breathe new life into smoldering embers.

The fire in the Gironde region burned about 420 square kilometers (162 square miles) in just 10 days before authorities declared its advance stopped over the weekend.

"The fire is now fixed, which does not mean that the fire is extinguished," the Gironde prefecture said Sunday, using the French firefighting term for a blaze that has been contained within its perimeter.

The region remained under France's highest red forest-fire alert. Dry conditions and soaring temperatures in Bordeaux, along with afternoon winds, risked rekindling flames.

Additional firefighters from Ukraine, Lithuania and French Polynesia were expected Sunday and Monday to reinforce the operation.

Human-caused climate change doubled the chances of extreme fire conditions for the flames in France, scientists at World Weather Attribution calculated in a rapid analysis Thursday, conducted while fires were still burning.

Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing at twice the speed as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Blaze in Provence has stopped expanding but not yet contained

The Gironde blaze prompted one of the largest peacetime evacuations in modern French history. Many thousands of people remained displaced or unable to reach their homes.

In the southeastern Var department, meanwhile, nearly 1,500 firefighters were battling a separate fire that tore through roughly 18 square kilometers — seven square miles — in little more than a day.

Authorities said the blaze in the Gros Bessillon hills was stabilized Sunday morning, meaning its perimeter had not expanded overnight. But unlike the Gironde fire, it had not yet been declared contained.

Firefighting aircraft supported crews working to keep the flames away from villages set among the vineyards, olive groves and wooded hills of the region known as Green Provence.

About 2,500 people were evacuated as the fire threatened communities.

The blaze was the fourth major fire to strike the central Var since July 19. A separate, smaller fire near Brignoles earlier in the week forced Hollywood star George Clooney and his family, along with about 700 other residents, to evacuate before it was brought under control.

Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu said France's wildfires were generally under control but cautioned that conditions remained highly changeable.

Lecornu also announced the appointment of a national coordinator to oversee reconstruction in fire-ravaged areas. More than 1,170 square kilometers (452 square miles) have burned across France since the beginning of the year.

Republicans want voters to elect Kansas Supreme Court justices and move court to the right

By JOHN HANNA AP Political Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Kansas voters will decide Tuesday whether to elect state Supreme Court justices rather than have the governor appoint them, a push from conservatives who have chafed for years over court decisions they disagreed with on issues such as abortion, school funding and the death penalty.

If the constitutional amendment passes, supporters hope to elect at least four conservative, anti-abortion justices to the seven-member court by 2033.

Kansas is considering the change amid concerns that increasingly contentious and expensive judicial elections in other states are making their courts more partisan and less independent. Spending in a single state Supreme Court race in Wisconsin last year topped \$100 million.

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly, a term-limited Democrat who opposes the measure, said gerrymandering and dark money have put the Legislature out of step with the state and, "to think you can make the judicial branch a part of that dysfunctional system is frightening."

Republicans have a long list of rulings they question

GOP lawmakers cite multiple rulings by Kansas courts over the past two decades as reasons for change.

Most recently, a district court judge earlier this month reinstated a three-day grace period for voters to return mail ballots after Election Day, which GOP lawmakers had eliminated. Kansas Senate President Ty Masterson, seeking the Republican nomination for governor, called the decision "outrageous" and urged people to vote yes on the ballot question.

The same judge — a finalist to fill the most recent Supreme Court vacancy — blocked enforcement of a 2025 law banning gender-affirming care for transgender minors. Masterson described him as "radical."

The list of rulings Republicans criticize also includes rulings on education funding back to 2004. Supreme Court decisions forced lawmakers to increase funding to comply with the state constitution.

"If we elect our Supreme Court, they won't force you to spend money on schools," Masterson said in remarks in November to a conservative group, the Marion County Patriots for Liberty, the Marion County Record reported.

Abortion remains a key issue on both sides

Electing state Supreme Court justices gained currency among Republicans after a 2022 public vote affirming the high court's landmark 2019 decision that Kansas' bill of rights guarantees bodily autonomy and access to abortion. Total spending by both sides has exceeded \$12 million.

Legislators who worked to overturn the Supreme Court's protections, including Masterson, helped write this year's proposal.

Seven weeks after that 2022 vote, Attorney General Kris Kobach, then a GOP candidate for the office, told a Republican club in Wichita that electing justices would "slowly and quietly" put anti-abortion justices on the high court.

The vote-yes campaign's biggest donor — providing \$1.7 million toward the campaign's \$3.7 million in spending — is a Nashville-based nonprofit that supports Republican candidates, groups and causes. Kansans for Life, the state's most influential anti-abortion group, has spent at least \$87,000 over the past 11 days on mailers and texts.

"Kansans can bring an end to this reign of abortion by voting 'yes,'" Troy Newman, president of Operation Rescue, said in an editorial written by a staffer on the anti-abortion group's website.

Meanwhile, the national and state affiliates for abortion provider Planned Parenthood contributed another \$1.6 million toward the vote-no campaign's \$8 million-plus in spending.

Jamie Swan, an engineer and college teaching assistant who knocked on doors for abortion rights in 2022, is doing the same to try to halt the proposal.

"I really believe that this is just a power grab," she said.

Kansas legislators have no say in appointments

Backers of the Kansas proposal brush aside arguments that electing the justices will give wealthy donors

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control over the Supreme Court.

"Globally and over history, even in its imperfection, the best system is democracy," said Elizabeth Patton, state director of the low-tax, small-government group Americans for Prosperity, which has spent \$935,000 to promote the vote-yes campaign.

Twenty-two states elect their top court's judges, eight in partisan races. Governors in 26 states appoint them. In South Carolina and Virginia, legislators pick the justices.

Kansas elected justices for nearly 100 years before voters amended the state constitution in 1958. The governor now picks one of three finalists named by a nominating commission controlled by attorneys. Legislators have no role.

A review of every state's current and past constitutions shows that the last state to add an amendment like the one Kansas is contemplating was Mississippi in 1914. Since then, 18 states' amendments went the opposite way.

Voters weigh in every six years on whether a justice remains on the bench through a yes-or-no ballot question, but they've never booted a sitting justice. Conservatives say that means justices face no consequences for errant decisions.

Retirements and deaths allowed the term-limited Kelly to appoint four of the current justices. Recently, she picked a district court judge who blocked enforcement of longstanding abortion restrictions in 2023.

"We don't have a good way to fight back," said state Sen. Mike Thompson, a conservative Kansas City-area Republican, who backs the measure.

Trump says he will order halt to Iran strikes after parameters reached for deal to end war

By AAMER MADHANI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump says he will order American forces to hold off on new strikes against Iran, claiming Mideast allies have reached the parameters of a deal to end the 5-month old war.

The emerging deal "would include the Immediate, Complete, and Total OPENING OF THE HORMUZ STRAIT, and an end to Iran's nuclear threat," Trump wrote in a Saturday evening social media post.

"Based on this request, I have agreed, for the future benefit of the WORLD and, likewise, the survival of a successful and prosperous Iran, to cancel the attack, subject to being able to rapidly make a DEAL," Trump said.

Trump has announced halts to strikes in Iran on several occasions since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, only for things to unravel and fighting to resume again.

Iran's defense minister said on X that the country was "neither surprised nor passive" following Trump's announcement and said Iran continues to remain alert in the face of concrete threats from the U.S.

Newest proposal would bring sides back to negotiating table

A regional official says the proposal announced by Trump over the weekend calls for the U.S. and Iran to return to negotiations and continue working out many of the issues that have stymied prior progress on the deal.

The official, who is involved in the mediation efforts, said the proposal calls for reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and halting attacks across the region, including by Iranian-backed militias in Iraq on the Arab Gulf countries and Jordan.

The U.S., in exchange, will end its naval blockade on Iran and allow Tehran to export its oil as stated in the tentative ceasefire deal, he said.

No deal has been reached yet, but mediation efforts are underway, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to talk to the media.

Trump said that Israel is joining his commitment to end the war by implementing the ceasefire deal. Israel did not publicly comment on the announcement.

Saudis concerned about Iran retaliation

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Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto leader, spoke with Trump by phone Saturday and raised concerns about the U.S. potentially escalating the conflict with Iran, according to the Saudi press agency.

The Saudis, according to the person briefed on the substance of the call but not authorized to comment publicly, are concerned that Tehran could respond with attacks on the energy infrastructure of the kingdom and other Gulf countries. The call happened before Trump's social media announcement, the person said.

The crown prince sought clarity from Trump on what potential new action he was weighing to take against Iran, the person said.

A White House official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and requested anonymity, confirmed the leaders spoke Saturday but did not offer any detail.

Iran has repeatedly attacked vessels attempting to transit through the Strait of Hormuz without its authorization as part of its ongoing conflict with the U.S.

Overnight Israeli strikes kill 8 in Gaza, including two children, health officials say

In developments elsewhere in the Middle East, Israeli strikes on Sunday across Gaza killed at least eight Palestinians, including two children, and wounded over a dozen others, according to local health officials. Palestinians reported an increase in the scale of Israeli strikes across the enclave over the past few days.

A strike on a residential apartment in southern Gaza killed three family members, including their 4-year-old child, according to Nasser hospital, where the bodies arrived.

Another strike, also on a residential apartment, in Gaza City killed three family members, including their child, and wounded others, according to health officials at the Shifa hospital. The mother was six months pregnant, the hospital added. In central Gaza, a man and his wife were killed in an Israeli strike, which wounded four other people in the area, according to the main hospital serving central Gaza.

The Israeli military said the overnight strikes had targeted Hamas military operatives, without elaborating.

At least 1,222 Palestinians, including at least 260 children, have been killed since the October ceasefire, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Five Israeli soldiers have been killed in that time. Both Hamas and Israel continue to trade accusations of violating the ceasefire.

Elsewhere in the region

— The State Department issued new security alerts on Saturday urging U.S. citizens in the region to prepare for the possibility of flight cancellations, temporary airspace closures and other travel disruptions. The warnings covered Bahrain, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

Dodgers land Cy Young ace Tarik Skubal in a blockbuster deadline deal

By JOSH DUBOW AP Sports Writer

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The Los Angeles Dodgers have acquired the biggest prize on the trade deadline market, getting two-time reigning AL Cy Young Award winner Tarik Skubal from the Detroit Tigers on Saturday night.

Skubal got the news during the Tigers' 8-6 win over the Athletics and was emotional after the game as he prepared to leave the team that drafted him in 2018 and developed him into a star to join the two-time defending World Series champions.

"I'm excited to be a Dodger," he said. "I'm excited to get down there and meet all those guys and chase three championships in a row. That's hard to do, so I'm so excited to a part of that. But it's a lot of different emotions. Definitely kind of a roller coaster a little bit."

Skubal is the latest star to join the high-priced roster for the Dodgers that already has big-name players like Shohei Ohtani, Yoshinobu Yamamoto and Mookie Betts. If everyone is healthy, he could be part of a rotation with Ohtani, reigning World Series MVP Yamamoto, fellow two-time Cy Young Award winner Blake Snell and Tyler Glasnow. The Dodgers lead the majors with a 3.36 ERA from their starting pitchers and now add Skubal to the mix.

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The Dodgers are in first place in the NL West and were already the favorites to become the first team to three-peat since the New York Yankees from 1998-2000 before adding Skubal. They began the season with a \$323.3 million opening-day payroll for their 40-man roster and a \$163.7 million tax for a \$487.1 million total. They will pay Skubal about \$9.5 million for the remainder of the season.

ESPN first reported the deal and said the Tigers would receive three minor league prospects in right-handers River Ryan and Brady Smith and outfielder Zyhir Hope.

Skubal is eligible for free agency after the World Series. He has a \$32 million salary, a record total in arbitration, after the team offered \$19 million, and is expected to sign a massive contract in the offseason.

The 29-year-old lefty said in July that it was his preference to finish the season with the Tigers and to compete for a World Series championship, which has eluded the franchise since 1984. Skubal took the loss in the decisive Game 5 of the division series against Cleveland in 2024 and then got a no-decision in a 15-inning loss to Seattle in Game 5 of the division series last year.

He said it was "very tough" to leave the Tigers having fallen short of the goal of winning a title.

"Ever since that '24 Game 5, the failure that I experienced on the mound, I've used that as fuel to try and bring a World Series to the city of Detroit. I truly did," he said. "That whole offseason I've never been more motivated and then go in and we lose Game 5 again. That failure kind of sparks some more motivation, just to dig deeper and see how good you can truly be. The goal was always to win a World Series for the city, for the organization that took a chance on me. It's tough. I love all those guys in there. They're some of my best friends."

Detroit planned to contend again this season, bolstering the Skubal-led rotation by giving two-time All-Star pitcher Framber Valdez a \$115 million, three-year contract in free agency and retaining three-time All-Star infielder Gleyber Torres with a \$22 million deal.

The Tigers, though, got off to a rough start and are currently 2 1/2 games out of the last wild-card spot in the American League.

"It's crazy. Going into the season, this isn't what I planned on doing," Skubal said. "But circumstances change, situations change, and I'm very appreciative of everything the Tigers have done for me."

They bounced back in June and most of July to get into playoff contention with Skubal leading a rotation and three All-Stars in the lineup: rookie infielder Kevin McGonigle, catcher Dillon Dingler and outfielder Riley Greene.

With a chance to possibly persuade management to keep Skubal by improving its playoff positioning, Detroit lost ground by dropping four of its last five games at home, including Skubal's last start that was made even more memorable by a late-inning collapse.

The Tigers led Baltimore 7-0 after six innings Wednesday and lost 10-9 in 12 innings. Skubal started the game, recorded his 1,000th career strikeout and was cheered at every opportunity by a crowd of 34,406.

"I've watched this guy rise to the top of the sport," manager A.J. Hinch said. "He's carried us a lot. I'll forever be grateful that our paths crossed and the things that he did for this organization and for a couple of playoff teams. His presence, his work ethic, his example, his dominance. There's so much to go through, it's hard to capture in one quote or kind of one setting. But I'm very grateful that I was able to manage him for the time that I did."

Skubal is 7-5 this season with a 2.79 ERA and 116 strikeouts in 96 2/3 innings. He is 61-42 with a 3.04 ERA over seven seasons, all in Detroit. In two postseasons, Skubal is 2-1 with a 2.04 ERA in six starts.

Skubal had a minimally invasive surgery on May 6 to remove a loose body from his pitching elbow and returned to pitch on June 13.

"The way the surgery went is exactly how it was supposed to go," he said in July.

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Dry, hot summers are putting Dutch dikes at risk and threatening German river trade

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

WADDINXVEEN, Netherlands (AP) — Jeroen Wouda and Dirk Boom walk slowly along a Dutch dike, prodding at the bone dry surface with metal rods and scanning the parched grass for patches of green that could give away the location of a leak.

In a scene that brings to mind the fictional Dutch boy who heroically plugs a hole in a dike with his finger, the two men are hunting for cracks in the low-lying Netherlands' famed water defenses caused by a drought that is gripping Europe and has fueled raging wildfires in France and Spain and sent the Danube and Rhine rivers to record low levels.

Unlike the low-tech solution in American author Mary Mapes Dodge's 19th-century story, modern dike patrols are able to plot possible problems caused by drought in an app and send it to authorities who can then quickly carry out repairs.

In the Netherlands and neighboring Germany cargo ships that ply the Rhine and its offshoots have been forced to carry significantly less freight or risk running aground in shallow navigation channels. Farmers facing restrictions on irrigating their crops are warning of smaller fruit harvests and rising prices this season.

And for some houseboat owners, the drought has left their water-borne homes resting on sandy river bed.

Checking dikes for damage

Peter van Duijvendijk is a flood defense manager at the Schieland en de Krimpenerwaard water corporation, one of 21 such organizations covering the Netherlands that are responsible for issues including flood control.

He has a team of 140 volunteers who are responsible for checking about 100 kilometers (60 miles) of dikes, reporting any problems they find. So far this dry summer there have not discovered any major issues. But they remain alert now and likely into the fall.

The volunteers "are our eyes and ears on the dike," Van Duijvendijk told The Associated Press.

Like many inland dikes, the barrier in agricultural fields near the small town of Waddinxveen, east of The Hague, is made of peat that needs to be damp to be strong enough to hold back water. It is in one of the lowest points in the Netherlands, some 5 meters (16 feet) below sea level.

"Because it is so dry right now the peat loses moisture, and because of that it becomes weaker," Van Duijvendijk said. "If that peat becomes weaker, then there is a chance that water will flow through the dike and that waterway will drain into the polder," referring to reclaimed Dutch land.

Cargo traffic choked by low river levels

Europe's major rivers face a lack of water flow.

In Cologne, Germany, people walk along parts of the dried-up bed of the Rhine, a river that is a major highway for European freight traffic.

On Saturday, the Rhine's water level in Cologne dropped below the record low set in October 2018. Marcel Beck, manager of the western German ports of Neuss, Düsseldorf and Cologne at RheinCargo, a port and freight transport company, said the levels are having a "devastating impact" on shipping.

"A ship that would normally carry 2,000 to 2,500 metric tons of cargo can now only transport 400, perhaps 600, metric tons depending on the ship's design," he said. "This places an enormous burden on the entire transport chain to reorganize everything in order to still get the goods inland."

In the eastern Dutch city of Nijmegen, a rusted bicycle and shopping cart are exposed on the dried bed of the Waal — the main Dutch arm of the Rhine — and houseboats are left almost high and dry by receding water.

Frans Schilte has seen the summer periods of low water levels get longer in recent years. They used to last a month, but "now it's like three months," he said.

His steel-bottomed boat is now resting on the sandy river bed.

"It's a little out of level, it's not a big problem," said Schilte, who describes the drought as "the negative effect of climate change."

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Water levels are a Dutch dilemma

The Netherlands, about a third of which is below sea level, is involved in a balancing act between preventing winter floods and having enough water for crops and canals in the summer.

"Throughout the year, we have enough water in the Netherlands, there's no shortage," said Vince Kaandorp, a groundwater hydrologist at Deltares, an independent Dutch water research institute.

"But, of course, it is not evenly distributed over the seasons," Kaandorp said. "In the winter we drain it away quickly because we want to keep our feet dry and we don't want water on the land. How can you ensure that you do that slowly and give water time to sink into the ground?"

Such measures don't have to be high-tech, Kaandorp said. Adding something as simple as a hedge near a river slows down water and gives it time to seep deep into the ground. Authorities are studying how to turn soil into "sponges" to better hold water throughout the year.

The low-lying parts of the western Netherlands that are reclaimed land suffer increasingly from salinity in droughts, posing problems for farmers who grow fruit and vegetables in the fertile soil. Water authorities trying to maintain adequate supplies of fresh water have banned farmers in some parts of the country from pumping water out of canals to irrigate their crops.

"It is an extremely challenging year for growers," John Kusters, chair of the Netherlands Fruit Growers' Organization, said in a statement.

Idaho fast food restaurant shooting leaves 3 dead and 7 injured, city spokesman says

By REBECCA BOONE, MARTHA BELLISLE and SARAH RAZA Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Three people were killed and seven more were injured, some critically, in a shooting at an In-N-Out Burger restaurant in southern Idaho on Saturday afternoon, a Twin Falls city spokesman said.

Police who responded to the shooting found the body of the suspected gunman in an area near the restaurant, Twin Falls city public information officer Josh Palmer said. He did not know if the suspect was included in the fatality count.

Officials were still working on notifying the family members of victims and so were not yet releasing the names, ages or other details about the people hurt in the shooting, Palmer said. Some of the people injured are in critical condition, Palmer said.

Police were still trying to determine the shooter's identity and motive, Twin Falls Police Chief Matthew Hicks said in a news conference earlier Saturday.

"We believe the threat to the community is over," Hicks said. "It was a very chaotic scene."

Palmer said investigators were still interviewing witnesses to the shooting. The restaurant is in a busy shopping plaza, and hundreds of people were in the area when it happened around 2 p.m.

Lane Koehn, 34, said he was at a stoplight near the In-N-Out when he saw a person with an AR-style rifle emerge from the drive-thru. A man with a pistol started firing at the shooter.

He then saw someone in an In-N-Out uniform drag a person, also uniformed, bleeding from a gunshot wound in her chest across the parking lot. The employee, Koehn and the man with the pistol stayed until paramedics arrived for her.

"She was pretty bad off, but I don't know. I hope she made it," Koehn said.

Koehn said he was told by police to evacuate because the shooting was still active.

He also said the shooter fired at least three or four rounds and it was not clear whether or not anyone in particular was targeted.

Video taken by a driver from across the street captured a shooter, who appeared to be dressed in black, walking up to a white car carrying a long rifle, opening the driver-side door and popping the trunk. The person then walked to the trunk and reached inside. At that point the driver who shot the video left quickly, fearing that the man might be getting more weapons.

Twin Falls resident Haley Dodaro, 43, and her mother went to In-N-Out for lunch Saturday afternoon. While waiting in the drive-thru line, they saw people running across the road and workers bolting out of

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the restaurant. At first Dodaro thought there might have been a fire, but then a man directing traffic in a reflective vest said there was a shooter.

"So that's when we knew there was a shooting. People were running out crying and screaming. It was very scary," Dodaro said in a text message to The Associated Press.

Nayeli Rodriguez, 40, of Burley, was inside waiting for food with her daughters when she heard shots from the kitchen. An employee said it was a shooting and told people to get down. Rodriguez said an older man tried to protect her and her daughters, and they were among the last to run outside.

"We were trying to get as far as we could and some angels let us in their car," Rodriguez said, also via text message. "I left my car there in the parking lot."

The In-N-Out opened just about a week earlier, on July 24, as part of the company's recent expansion to Idaho.

Police said multiple people were taken to St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center. Hospital spokesperson Taylor Marschner said in a statement that it was "working closely with law enforcement and emergency responders as they manage the situation."

Twin Falls, a city of about 56,000 people, is about 130 miles (205 kilometers) southeast of Boise and about 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of the Nevada border.

Iran's leaders show a united front over the war but are divided over what the goal is

By AMIR-HUSSEIN RADJY and LEE KEATH Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — With escalating attacks against U.S. bases and its allies over the past week, Iran's leaders are showing considerable unity over their war strategy: hanging tough, determined to show Iran can endure more than America and its allies can.

But within the leadership, there are sharp differences over what the endgame should be.

On one side, the ultra-hardliners who oppose any negotiations with the United States are pressing for total victory in the war. Known as the "Paydari" movement — Persian for "stability" — they are hard-core ideologues who want to enforce the Islamic Republic's control over society.

On the other, those who support President Masoud Pezeshkian and powerful parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf — who doubles as Iran's chief negotiator — see military pressure as a way to win a negotiated deal with the United States. This camp is also spurred by concern over the economic toll Iran is suffering from the war and the need to adapt to social change in the country.

"Negotiation is a political tool and a complement to military action to force the enemy to a point of compulsion and extract real concessions," an adviser to Qalibaf, Mahdi Mohammadi, wrote on his Telegram channel Thursday.

The unusually open rivalry within the theocracy's leadership points to a struggle for control over Iran's postwar future. A huge question mark is where the new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, stands. Reportedly injured in the strike that killed his father in the opening minutes of the war on Feb. 28, Khamenei remains in hiding, and both sides have claimed his support.

Iran is determined to show strength

In a boost for Qalibaf and Pezeshkian, the ceasefire deal reached with the U.S. in April received strong backing in Iran's top leadership body, the Supreme National Security Council. Twelve of its 13 members approved it, including senior figures in the Revolutionary Guard and the military.

The lone vote against the deal is widely believed to have come from Saeed Jalili, the most prominent figure in the Paydari movement.

But the ceasefire crumbled as the two sides trade strikes and as Iran presses for control over passage through the Strait of Hormuz which before the war carried a fifth of the world's traded oil and gas. Iran was also frustrated that financial promises under the deal — including the release of billions of frozen assets — didn't materialize, and now the American blockade is back in place.

With no benefits from the deal, "there's no serious division" in the leadership over how to respond, said

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Ali Vaez, Iran project director at the International Crisis Group.

They believe U.S. President Donald Trump "only understands the language of force, and therefore, they would have to gain the upper hand in order to compel him to deliver," Vaez said.

The hard-liners are pressuring Iranians

The funeral for slain Iranian supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, earlier this month appeared to show the strength of the ultra-hardline Paydari. Crowds called for revenge on the U.S. and Israel for the war. Videos showed mourners in Tehran welcoming Jalili, while Pezeshkian was greeted at one point with insults and cries of "Death to the compromiser!"

The ultra-hardliners have used nightly rallies and their control of state television, known by the acronym IRIB, to drum up opposition to negotiations. At rallies and on TV, speakers have portrayed Iran as headed for total victory and denounced those who compromise with the Islamic Republic's archenemy, the United States.

State television cut off a June 30 live broadcast with Qalibaf as he discussed negotiations with Washington. Earlier this month, it cut off broadcasting a speech by Pezeshkian to businessmen seconds after he said that the elder Khamenei had given permission for renewed U.S. talks before his death.

Pezeshkian and his camp have pushed back, portraying IRIB as dividing the country at the time of war. The president accused the broadcaster of making it like "the military are on one side, and the government is on another side."

Last month, the president's media office condemned state television for what it described as "censoring" the president and other government heads, signaling an open rift.

The hard-liners have sought to press their influence in other ways. In past weeks, authorities shut down cafes in central Tehran that were popular with residents during the ceasefire. Videos on Iranian social media showed many women at the cafes flouting mandatory veiling laws, and crowds mixing freely.

The closures were brief but signaled that "religious extremist parties" were showing their influence, said Mohamad Ali Abtahi, a reformist cleric and an aide to former President Mohammad Khatami, who is still widely considered to be the leader of Iran's reformist groups.

While Jalili's supporters are a minority they are influential, said Vali Nasr, professor of International Affairs and Middle East Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

"They have a lot of money. They have a lot of power. They have put a lot of people in the bureaucracy" and developed connections in the Revolutionary Guard, Nasr said.

The pragmatists say the public must be heard

The more pragmatic camp argues that maintaining unity during the war requires addressing the public's unhappiness over the economy as well as political and social repression. This, as Iran's currency continues to slide, inflation spirals, and unemployment rises. A final agreement with the U.S. could bring Iran a huge windfall with the lifting of sanctions and the return of billions in assets.

Small flashes of impatience with the war have emerged. In July, over 250 former lawmakers, clerics, professors and other public figures signed an anti-war petition warning of the costs of the conflict. "We believe that the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people want peace and the right to a decent life," the statement read. Others have spoken out against stepped-up executions of protesters following wide-scale anti-government protests in January.

A top reformist party that assisted Pezeshkian's presidential campaign warned that the war's domestic toll was "undermining internal social cohesion." That brought a rebuke from Tasnim, a news agency close to the Revolutionary Guard, which said the statement amounted to blaming Iran for a war started by the United States.

In mid-July, the president's son and influential adviser, Youssef Pezeshkian, posted a series of messages about the need to balance realistic military aims with a weak economy. Referring to the decades of sanctions and confrontation with the West, he said Iran has "been prevented from growing and has suffered greatly. It has become sick."

Both sides are looking to what happens after the war

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Ultimately, both sides are jockeying for power after the war, given the unusual uncertainty brought on by the change in the supreme leadership. Abtahi, the reformist cleric, said Mojtaba Khamenei's real views are still not known, so while some believe he could be more radical than his father, others see the potential for him to bring moderate change.

The supreme leader, because of the power invested in him, could act as a "brake" to restrain the more extremist factions, Abtahi said. But over time, the confrontation with more radical factions could grow more dangerous "if that brake isn't used."

A woman with apparent heat stroke found dead while taking shelter in a car in quake-hit Japan

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — An elderly woman who developed heat stroke while taking shelter in a car is the latest fatality from a powerful earthquake that struck Japan's southwestern prefecture of Kumamoto last week, officials said Sunday as concerns over heat-related illnesses grow in an area that is also suffering extreme temperatures.

The woman in her 70s with apparent heat stroke was found in a car, Kumamoto officials said, as they raised the death toll from the quake to 36. The magnitude 7.1 hit Kumamoto Prefecture on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu on Tuesday.

This latest death was what officials and experts had worried about amid high temperatures. Kumamoto authorities were to start delivering leaflets to those taking shelter in their cars, urging them to stay in cool places and take sufficient liquids, and regularly take exercise to avoid blood clotting risks.

NHK public television said the woman was found dead Thursday in a car without gas.

"It's heartbreaking," said Kumamoto Gov. Takashi Kimura, referring to the death of the woman, as he called on evacuees taking shelter in their cars to keep refueling their vehicles to run air-conditioning, or consider moving to air-conditioned evacuation centers to avoid similar risks.

The prefecture's main challenge is the lack of fresh water still affecting nearly 47,000 homes, and fuel shortages as Japan suffers sweltering heat, stoking fears of heat-related illness.

Japan Meteorological Agency said temperatures reached an "extreme heat" level of 36.6 degrees Celsius (97.8 degrees Fahrenheit) in Kumamoto city Saturday and that they could go higher Sunday.

More than 9,000 people remain at crowded shelters, such as converted community centers, school gyms and classrooms, many of them lacking air-conditioning. Many others slept in cars parked at town hall parking lots and parks, or outside of their homes, for privacy.

Due to fuel supply shortages in hard-hit areas, there have been long lines of cars outside of gas stations that have resumed operations as fuel delivery gradually restarted.

Experts have long criticized Japan's crowded conditions at emergency shelters, arguing that a lack of sanitation and privacy creates additional stress and increases the risk of health problems for disaster-hit people.

Water, food and other necessities, including portable toilets, as well as air conditioners and partitions, were being delivered to improve conditions at the evacuation centers, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told a government task force meeting Saturday.

"The government is determined to do everything we can," Takaichi said.

On Saturday, authorities ended a massive dayslong search-and-rescue operation at the Aeon Mall, in the town of Kashima, after extracting five people and the bodies of seven others. The site was one of the hardest-hit sites, after an explosion that followed the quake caused the walls and a floor to collapse.

The explosion, which the company said it believes was due to a gas leak, occurred after about 3,000 shoppers had been evacuated to a parking lot following the quake, but some employees remained inside. The mall's second floor collapsed.

The overall number of missing in the hit prefecture remains unknown, and search operations pressed on, with thousands of Self Defense troops, police, rescue workers and sniffing dogs deployed.

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Takaichi urged rescue personnel not to leave anyone behind.

At another hard-hit site in Kumamoto Prefecture, a chimney collapsed at the Nippon Paper Industries factory in Yatsushiro city, trapping 11 employees. Nine have since been confirmed dead and two were rescued, officials said.

The earthquake has left 105 people injured in Kumamoto, authorities said, and two in addition to the reported deaths are being investigated to determine if they are quake-related.

The prefecture said reports of power loss have fallen to fewer than 900 households, but local power company serving Kyushu said it had no immediate reports of outages.

Over 180 homes were destroyed, officials said, and more than 3,800 buildings were damaged, with 20 of them severely affected, according to Kumamoto prefectural assessments.

Trump says Mideast allies have reached outlines of deal to end Iran war, says US to stop new strikes

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump in a Saturday evening social media post claimed that Mideast allies have reached the parameters of a deal to end the Iran war and said that he would hold off on ordering new strikes in the five-month old conflict for now.

Trump added that the emerging deal “would include the Immediate, Complete, and Total OPENING OF THE HORMUZ STRAIT, and an end to Iran’s nuclear threat.”

“Based on this request, I have agreed, for the future benefit of the WORLD and, likewise, the survival of a successful and prosperous Iran, to cancel the attack, subject to being able to rapidly make a DEAL,” Trump said.

He said that Israel has agreed to join the U.S. in the commitment to try to complete the agreement with Iran that would bring about an end to the war.

Iran did not offer any immediate public reaction to Trump’s announcement.

It’s the latest abrupt shift in the 5-month-old conflict

The president’s announcement marked another remarkable turn in the conflict — only a day after he suggested to reporters that he was close to resuming heavy military strikes to force the regime to come to the negotiating table.

The U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, starting a war that Trump said was aimed at destroying Tehran’s missile capabilities, preventing it from obtaining a nuclear weapon and ending its support for allied armed groups. But the stated goals and timelines for the conflict have repeatedly shifted.

An interim agreement reached in mid-June halted the fighting and was supposed to pave the way for a permanent deal, but it crumbled within weeks as Iran resumed attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

The announcement came after Trump’s call with Saudi crown prince

Earlier Saturday, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom’s de facto leader, in a phone call with Trump raised concerns about the U.S. potentially escalating the conflict with Iran, according to a person familiar with the leaders’ discussion.

The discussion, which was first reported on by the news outlet Axios, came as Trump weighed whether to carry out new strikes on Iran.

The Saudis, according to the person briefed on the substance of the call but not authorized to comment publicly, are concerned that if the U.S. targets Iran’s energy infrastructure or carries out massive strikes on bridges or power plants that Tehran could respond by carrying out attacks on the kingdom’s and other Gulf countries’ energy infrastructure.

The crown prince during Saturday’s call sought clarity from Trump on what potential new action he’s weighing to take against Iran, the person said.

A White House official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and requested anonymity, confirmed the leaders spoke on Saturday but did not offer any detail about their conversation.

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Saudi Arabia earlier this week joined the U.S. in striking multiple logistics and weapons sites used by Iranian-backed militias in Iraq, but has been urging the U.S. and Iran to get back to the negotiating table to find an endgame to the conflict.

The crown prince also dispatched his brother, Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman, to Washington on Wednesday for separate meetings with Trump and Vice President JD Vance to discuss Iran strategy.

And Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday at the White House, their first in-person meeting since launching the war in February. The Israeli leader has urged Trump to continue to prosecute the war against Iran.

The war is unpopular, and November midterms are looming

The stakes for continued U.S. military action are high for Trump and his party as the conflict, unpopular among many Americans, has jolted the world economy just months before critical midterm elections in November.

The president had vowed to take retaliatory action after the U.S. military thwarted a surprise attack earlier this week by Iran on a U.S. base in Jordan.

Trump on Friday displayed his growing frustration with the conflict, telling reporters that “we just want to win” in Iran and that the U.S. will hit Iran “very hard” until they can’t take it anymore. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt echoed the president, noting that Tehran last month signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. on a truce but then quickly “broke it, shot at commercial ships, and killed American soldiers.”

U.S. officials were on edge ahead of Trump’s Saturday evening statement. And Trump himself in his social media post said that the U.S. military was “locked and loaded” and prepared to display “levels of Military Terror, Strength, and Power not seen since World War II.”

Earlier in the day, the U.S. State Department issued new security alerts for Americans in 10 countries in the region to exercise heightened caution due to the escalating tensions with Iran.

The warnings — covering Bahrain, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates — urged U.S. citizens to prepare for the possibility of flight cancellations, temporary airspace closures and other travel disruptions.

Iran carries out new attacks in Gulf

Meanwhile, Kuwait’s military said Saturday that its forces responded to drone attacks by Iran.

In a statement, Maj. Gen. Saud Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, spokesperson for Kuwait’s Defense Ministry, said the drones hit “a number of vital facilities,” including a government structure in the country’s north. He said there were no casualties.

The British Navy said Saturday that a tanker was struck and a separate explosion hit close to a vessel in the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Oman. No casualties were reported in either incident, it said. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization said an unknown projectile hit the vessel on Friday 11 nautical miles northeast of Lima, Oman. The attack damaged the vessel’s engine room.

The group said that on Saturday a large splash and an explosion were reported close to another tanker while it was sailing 21 nautical miles northwest of Khasab city.

Heat wave brings record-breaking temps, heightened wildfire risk to parts of Western US

By TAMMY WEBBER and SARAH RAZA Associated Press

A heat wave gripped large swaths of the Western U.S. on Saturday as temperatures hovered near record highs, heightening wildfire risks in areas that already were dry or burning and prompting warnings for people to stay inside.

A ridge of high pressure was holding heat close to the ground — what’s known as a heat dome — from Arizona to Montana, though the good news was that it will be relatively short-lived, National Weather Service meteorologists said.

Dangerous heat and warnings were plaguing the region, and the National Weather Service on Saturday

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forecast a number of cities that were expected to hit record highs. By late afternoon, Las Vegas reached 115 Fahrenheit (46 Celsius), the hottest temperature of the year and just one degree off the daily record of 116 F (47 C).

Phoenix was expected to reach 116 F (47 C), while El Centro, California, was expected to hit a record 118 F (48 C). Even parts of Montana were expected to broil, with a record 104 F (40 C) forecast for Great Falls.

The high in Las Vegas was 10 degrees above normal, and meteorologists warned of dangerous heat through Sunday, when the high was expected to be 114 F (45 C), according to weather service meteorologist Morgan Stessman.

Overnight lows in the upper 80s to low 90s will make the situation especially dangerous because it does not allow people's bodies to recover. "There's just no relief overnight," Stessman said.

People were urged to stay indoors and keep hydrated.

At the Justa Center in Phoenix, which caters to seniors but opens to the public as a cooling center in the afternoon, the biggest challenge was keeping up with the need for water and electrolytes, operations director Rudy Soliz said. About 200 people come in daily.

"Anybody can come in, get a meal, sign up, get checked in through the cooling center, sit down, relax, watch a little TV, you know, catch themselves before they move on to another cooling center or their destination," Soliz said.

Several cities near record temps

The August record for Las Vegas is 116 F (47 C), while the hottest on record was 120 F (49 C) in July 2024, which also was the hottest summer on record, Stessman said.

In Montana the entire east side of the state was under an extreme heat warning, though by Sunday much of the state was forecast to be in the 70s, according to weather service meteorologist Jeff Kitsmiller.

Still it was not as bad as a heat wave in mid-July when some places broke all-time records, including Billings, which reached 111 F (44 C) on July 12, Kitsmiller said.

"That was a rare heat wave," he said. "This one fits for this time of year."

The Montana Rescue Mission, a homeless shelter in Billings, opened its doors earlier than usual to provide relief from the heat. Dozens of people were expected throughout the day, and the shelter planned to provide dinner, beds and breakfast, a receptionist said.

Great Falls Parks and Recreation's four swimming pools and three splash pads were crowded, said Katy Houseman, who works at one of the city's recreation centers.

"They're definitely hitting the pools and doing the splash pads outside and then trying to hide inside where there's air conditioning," Houseman said. "It's super, super hot today."

Heat exacerbates wildfire risks

Forecasters warned that this heat wave, combined with drying from past heat, will add to wildfire risks across the West.

"We're definitely worried about that" in Montana, where fires already were burning and high winds were forecast for the weekend, Kitsmiller said, adding that most of the state was under a red flag warning.

In Nevada, Stessman said, "with this heat dome setting up, we've lost some of the moisture that we did have — like relative humidity in the afternoon bottoming out in the single digits in quite a few places."

The U.S. Forest Service warned of enhanced wildfire risk through Sunday in most of Southern California except the coastline.

Extreme heat and drought also have created dangerous wildfire conditions in the Pacific Northwest.

Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson declared a state of emergency Saturday after unusually high temperatures and high winds exacerbated record wildfires across the state. He also banned most outdoor and agricultural burning through the end of September.

Ferguson's proclamation went into effect ahead of an unprecedented "particularly dangerous situation" red flag alert by the National Weather Service, which rated the weather risk as "extreme" across Eastern Washington.

The Old Trails Fire, a fast-moving wildfire driven by the strong winds and high temperatures, swept

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across northwest Spokane before jumping the Spokane River and prompting the evacuation of thousands of people.

A red flag alert also was issued for eastern Oregon, where crews battled several large fires including the Rowe Creek Complex blaze, which has grown to 490 square miles (1,269 square kilometers) with 57% containment.

Climate change makes heat waves and wildfires more frequent

Climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is causing larger, more intense and longer-lasting heat waves — which lead to more intense droughts and contribute to larger, more destructive wildfires.

This year's weather is also expected to be affected by an El Nino phenomenon, a natural warming of the equatorial Pacific that alters weather patterns and spikes temperatures across the globe.

The current El Nino is expected to rank as among the most intense since the weather service began tracking in 1950, experts said. It has already broken records for intensity at its early stages, United Nations officials said Friday.

'Sopranos' actor Vincent Pastore, known for playing mobsters and tough guys, dead at 80

NEW YORK (AP) — Vincent Pastore, a veteran actor who played mobsters and tough guys, and was best known for portraying Salvatore "Big Pussy" Bonpensiero on "The Sopranos," has died. He was 80.

Bob McGowan, who managed Pastore since his run on "The Sopranos," told The Associated Press that he learned of his death Saturday from another client and actor on the show, Vincent Curatola.

He said Pastore was found in his home on New York's City Island after not being heard from for a few days.

McGowan said he had been trying to reach Pastore about a possible job.

"He was the most loyal client, and he always gave to charity," McGowan said, "and he was the kind of guy who would help anybody, which is rare in my business."

Robert Attermann represented Pastore for more than 30 years, before his time on "The Sopranos." While Pastore will be remembered as "Big Pussy," he was so much more, Attermann said in an email to the AP.

"Vinny was one of the kindest, most generous people I have ever known," Attermann said. "He treated everyone with warmth and respect, never turning down a fan who wanted a photograph or an autograph. He genuinely appreciated the people who supported him and always made them feel valued."

Attermann said Pastore loved being an actor and was passionate about his craft while always encouraging young actors, "taking the time to offer guidance and support whenever he could."

Michael Imperioli, a longtime friend and collaborator, said on Instagram that it seemed as though he had known Pastore forever.

"We did lots of work together and traveled all over the USA as well as Italy and Australia. Lots of good times. Lots of laughs," Imperioli said. "Vinny was a kind-hearted brother who cared deeply about his family and friends. I will miss him always."

Pastore appeared in movies dating back to the 1980s including roles in big films such as "Goodfellas" and "Awakenings," both in 1990.

He often played gangsters. And it was one of those roles he is best known for: his 30-episode run as Bonpensiero, the friend of Tony Soprano who becomes an FBI informant.

Pastore was born in the Bronx and grew up in suburban New Rochelle, New York. He enlisted in the Navy during the Vietnam War and later attended Pace University, according to his biography on IMDb.

He is survived by his daughter, Renee Pastore.

Plane carrying European tourists crashes in Peru, killing 13 people on Nazca Lines viewing flight

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — A plane carrying European tourists to view the famed Nazca Lines crashed into a field Saturday outside the Peruvian city of Nazca, killing 13 people, local authorities said.

Nazca's municipal government said the plane departed from the nearby city of Ica and was operated by Peruvian company Aerodiana. On its website, the airline said that it has offered scenic flights over the Nazca lines for the past 14 years using Cessna Grand Caravan planes.

The Nazca Lines are a group of extensive geoglyphs scraped into the desert around Nazca hundreds of years ago by Peru's Indigenous inhabitants. The lines form images of animals that can only be fully appreciated from planes or viewing towers.

Among the dead were seven Italian citizens between the ages of 18 and 54, two 52-year-old Spaniards and two Germans of 77 and 78 years, Peru's Transportation Ministry said. The other two fatalities were the pilot Américo Salazar and copilot Irenka Guanilo del Carpio, it said in an official report.

President Keiko Fujimori expressed regret over the accident and said a "temporary suspension" of the airport was being considered, though the decision will be made once she receives reports from the relevant ministries.

Peruvian authorities said the accident is under investigation. Aerodiana was not immediately available for comment.

Trump stands to profit off US policy announcements by selling fast access to his social media posts

By BERNARD CONDON and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump knows the world hangs on his every word. Now he wants you to pay for it.

The social media posts of the world's most powerful man are going on sale Saturday when his Truth Social business begins offering sneak peeks of them to Wall Street traders willing to pay up. The move raises the prospect of big profits for Trump's company and big questions about insider trading and using public office for private gain.

Similar fast speed feeds are sold by other social media firms and media providers, but Truth Social doesn't just distribute the news, it makes it, regularly rattling markets as Trump posts policy changes on everything from war to central bank leadership to tariffs.

"If this was the CEO of a public company, this would be jail time," said Irene Aldridge, head of Able Alpha Trading, which doesn't plan to buy the service. "We have a President of the United States who has the front seat to all the action, who makes all the decisions, and he's disclosing this ahead of time to a select group."

Trump's company says critics just aren't capitalist enough

Asked about the propriety of the new service and whether White House lawyers had vetted it, Trump's press office declined to comment, referring questions to Truth Social's publicly traded parent. That company, Trump Media & Technology, issued a statement blasting Democratic critics for mischaracterizing the service "out of ideological opposition to free markets or a failure to grasp the distinction between public and nonpublic information — or, quite possibly, both."

A prolific poster, Trump has sent stocks, bonds and currencies soaring and plunging with his online musings and threats. That presents opportunities for so-called high frequency traders that specialize in buying and selling within milliseconds, exploiting tiny, fleeting difference in prices.

Profits aplenty betting on oil, stocks and currencies

Just this month, Trump has threatened on Truth Social to slap higher tariffs on Canada, kill a nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia and widen the Iran war. With advanced knowledge, traders betting on a plunge in the Canadian dollar, a drop in nuclear energy stocks and a jump in oil futures could have raked in big profits.

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"For the big guys, it's going to be something they need," said Joe Saluzzi, co-founder of Themis Trading, who estimates about 100 of high frequency firms might be willing to pay for the service. "It's market-moving information."

Dubbed Truth API, the service comes as these firms are spending more on feeds and servers that bypass slower internet connections with direct lines to news and data sources. The chance for profits is greater than ever thanks artificial intelligence's ability to read posts and articles more accurately for market-making changes and Trump's penchant for making news online.

When Trump makes surprise announcements, traders pounce

Traders profit when prices jump up and down, and with his taste for cliffhangers, threats and policy reversals America's first reality-TV president provides plenty of potentially market-moving content.

The reversals are especially profitable, allowing traders to win both ways — jumping ahead of stocks moving up or down to a post threatening something, then cashing out within thousands of a second, then betting the other way.

In addition to Trump, the service will include posts from other "high ranking" Truth Social contributors, including possibly his two oldest sons, Donald Jr. and Eric, who along with the father are heavily followed by users.

Truth Social has said that the information will be released to the traders and the general public at the same time so there really isn't an issue of fairness. But Themis Trading's Saluzzi, a critic of high speed trading, says that's a red herring because when the posts are received, not when they are released, is what matters.

"Somebody who buys the info and has a system built to process it will be able to act quicker than you and me," said Saluzzi, adding in reference to everyday, small stock buyers, "The loser is always the retail investor."

Trump posts about a company he likes, and stocks jump

Aside from policy scoops, another reason to sign up has emerged in recent months: Trump is posting more about publicly traded companies, praising ones he likes in a way that sets off buying frenzies.

"The pimping of specific companies — obviously Wall Street would like to know that before other people," said Dylan Hedler-Gaudette, a federal ethics rule expert at the watchdog Project on Government Oversight. "It's a real mess."

In April, moments after Trump praised Palantir Technologies in a post that included its stock symbol, the price briefly jumped the most it had in an entire year. Later that month, Trump posted, "Congratulations on Intel doing such a great job," and the stock immediately jumped in after-hours trading.

Just which firms are signing up for the feed is unclear. Asked for comment, none of the half dozen most well known high-speed traders such as Citadel Securities and XTX Markets replied. If just three sign up for the \$100,000 a month fee, that would double revenue at Trump Media, which reported taking in \$3.7 million last year.

Trump Media needs big money customers

The company can use their business.

Stock in the Truth Social parent has plunged 75% since Trump took office last year as the company keeps reporting hundreds of millions in losses despite the president's help driving traffic to its site by posting major decisions there.

In fact, the president breaks news on Truth Social so often that the White House press office will copy his posts into an email when responding to questions from the media seeking details on policies. If his posts aren't available yet, journalists are sometimes told, "Wait for the Truth."

Another problem for Truth Social is looming if the Democrats take control of Congress and launch investigations, as vowed by Massachusetts Senator Sen. Elizabeth Warren in a statement Friday specifically attacking the new service: "We will haul in those responsible for this open corruption to answer to the American people."

If the losses keep mounting for the company, though, some predict the president will push things further, using the platform even more for policy announcements.

"That's absolutely going to happen," warns Craig Holman, a lobbyist for the good government group Public Citizen. "Trump knows how to sell products."

Trump blasts Pirro after she refutes his claim that Reflecting Pool was damaged by vandals

By AAMER MADHANI and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Saturday sharply criticized U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro's assessment that damage to the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool was the result of shoddy construction and not the work of vandals, as he claims.

Pirro's office, in a court filing on Friday, moved to drop criminal charges against a former Olympian, David Hearn, who had been accused of deliberately damaging the pool after it underwent a renovation ahead of the nation's 250th birthday celebration last month.

Trump, in a posting on social media, acknowledged that there "may have been some contractor difficulty" in the installation of a new pool liner. But he continues to insist "the major damage was caused by VANDALS!"

"I disagree 100% with Jeanine Pirro, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, on the Reflecting Pool," Trump added in his post.

The dismissal was an embarrassing setback for a Justice Department that had previously echoed Trump's claims and billed the prosecution as accountability for damage at a Washington landmark, a pet project of Trump. Pirro's decision to drop the case is also a rare moment during Trump's second term of an aide or political appointee openly defying him.

The president, without providing any clear new evidence, continued to allege on Saturday that the majority of the damage to the pool was caused by vandals.

Government lawyers in their 20-page court filing on Friday said that additional documents provided by the Interior Department since the indictment of Hearn show that the damage was the result of a botched installation by a contractor as well as "the rush to complete the project prior to events associated with the America 250 celebration in the weeks surrounding Independence Day 2026."

In addition, a recent visual inspection revealed damage throughout the pool, including in the middle — where prosecutors say a vandal would not likely have attempted to peel the lining.

Hearn, a former Olympic canoeist, was accused of pulling up a two-foot square piece of the pool's lining.

"Given all of this newly discovered information, it is difficult to attribute the widespread damage to the Reflecting Pool to vandalism, let alone to establish that fact beyond a reasonable doubt," Pirro, a Trump appointee, said in her filing, which asked a judge to formally dismiss the case.

Pirro in the court filing also blamed the Interior Department for providing "less than fulsome information at the outset of the case."

The filing added that had "DOI been forthcoming with the information clearly in its possession, the government would not have sought a grand jury indictment." It was a jarring turn in position from Pirro, who claimed the government's case was built on "tremendous evidence" when she announced the indictment against Hearn last month.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum in a posting on X appeared to push back against Pirro's criticism, claiming some of the acts of vandalism were captured on video.

"We also provided the U.S. Attorney's office expert and eyewitness testimony to the damage done by vandals and provided every piece of evidence they asked for in the requested time line detailing each area of damage at the pool," Burgum added.

Hearn's legal team on Saturday criticized both Trump and Pirro and said it was weighing "legal remedies" on behalf of their client.

"Trump is mad at Pirro because she finally admitted what we made clear in our legal filings all along: Trump's botched renovation was responsible for the damage — not Davey Hearn," the legal team said in a statement. "However, her claim that she and her office were previously duped by Interior is nonsense."

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Starting immediately after the arraignment, our motions repeatedly proved that the administration was to blame for the Reflecting Pool failures, not Davey."

Trump on Saturday also posted a nearly four-minute video that appears to have been taken from a security camera, in which three individuals can be seen with their hands in the pool, including one for an extended period.

The president claimed the video shows "material is being cut with a knife or a box cutter, for all to see!"

It's not clear from the video, which appears to be shot from some distance, that any vandalism occurred. Workers can also be seen standing nearby and don't appear to notice the people sticking their hands in the water.

In May, Trump announced plans to beautify the Reflecting Pool this spring. Virginia-based Atlantic Industrial Coatings was awarded a \$14.7 million no-bid contract to repaint and waterproof the pool's concrete floor.

Atlantic Industrial Coatings did not respond to requests for comment.

Water was drained and Trump directed that the bottom be painted with what he called "American flag blue."

But problems emerged within days of the project's completion, with chunks of the new liner peeling off.

Trump was quick to blame vandals. And the National Park Service reported to the U.S. Park Police a June 9 incident in which it claimed a sharp knife or razor cut the pool's new liner.

The work on the Reflecting Pool is just one of a number of projects Trump has spearheaded across the nation's capital. Most prominently, he demolished the White House's East Wing to build a \$400 million ballroom and plans to build a towering arch between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery.

'I just want a chance': Moroccans sought better future in collective crossing to Spain territory

By SERGIO RODRIGO RUÍZ and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

CEUTA, Spain (AP) — When he heard the border had been breached, Abdulah Buji jumped on his motorbike and raced from his home in northern Morocco toward Ceuta, joining tens of thousands of people trying to swim into the tiny Spanish territory in North Africa.

Like many of his fellow countrymen, Buji was inspired by the thought that this collective crossing could somehow unlock his dream of reaching Spain and starting a new life in Europe.

"Spain gives you the chance to make your future, not like Morocco," said Buji, a 21-year-old who is studying to be a teacher. "I am a talented boy. I just want a chance."

But his elation at setting foot on Spanish soil was quickly followed by the disheartening realization that he was still far from his ultimate goal. Mainland Europe rested across the Mediterranean, and he and the new arrivals were unwanted. Spanish authorities ordered everyone to turn around and go back or face eventual expulsion.

Buji said he almost joined more than 50 people who died trying to reach Ceuta while swimming around a border fence. He made it across, but he lost his belongings and money in the crossing. When he realized that he would likely face legal limbo and detention, he turned around and headed back.

"I've spent perhaps 14 years studying, but there's nothing at home, and I'd have to work 12-hour shifts for a meager wage," Buji told The Associated Press. "That's why I came here, but I haven't found any opportunities here either, so I have to go back."

A surge in migrants created a humanitarian crisis

Of the 60,000 people who crossed between Thursday and Friday morning, some 45,000 had returned to Moroccan territory within hours after many spent the night on the streets of Ceuta amid startled locals and armed Spanish police and soldiers.

The massive influx of people, which totaled 70% of Ceuta's resident population, sparked calls by local Spanish authorities for police and the army to establish order. Locals were concerned by the thousands of mostly young men aimlessly walking the streets.

Ceuta's residents recalled a similar but smaller migration crisis in 2021, when the Moroccan government

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dropped its border controls and let several thousand people from Morocco and sub-Saharan countries into Ceuta over two days. The city faced a much larger humanitarian crisis this time.

People flee out of despair and wanting to help their families

As the first reports and videos of migrants reaching Ceuta spread on social media, more people headed north in hopes of reaching European Union territory. Train stations in Morocco's capital, Rabat, and in the country's largest city, Casablanca, were crowded with people trying to travel to the border with Ceuta. Local media showed police officers preventing some of them from boarding trains and buses.

It isn't clear what triggered the influx, but social media was awash with posts encouraging Moroccans to try to enter Ceuta days before it began, said Myriam Cherti, a senior researcher at the University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society. The posts included practical information on how to cross the border and what migrants should say to increase their chances of being allowed to stay.

Cherti said some of the migrants she interviewed over the past year had lost count of the number of times they had tried to cross the border.

"They're doing it out of despair, they're doing it because they've tried other ways to build a life and failed, they're doing it because they feel the obligation that they want to help their families and support them," she said. "And that's possible if they make it to Spain and not necessarily possible if they stay" in Morocco.

Ahmed Karim, 33, was among those who managed to cross into Ceuta. He doesn't have work and says the problem is compounded for many Moroccans due to the difficulty in traveling outside the country.

He said many Moroccans want to go to Europe or America, "but they don't have the opportunity."

Searching for loved ones in the chaos

Other people who crossed, however, were not coming to stay; they were searching for lost loved ones and hoping they were not among the dead.

Ikrra Khai, 33, is one of thousands of Moroccan women who regularly get temporary job permits to work on Spanish farms at harvest time.

On Friday she was in Ceuta looking for her sister's son.

"I don't know if he is dead or alive," she said. "I have his residency card. But I don't know where he is. I'm searching."

Russia hits Ukrainian capital with ballistic missiles and drones, killing at least 9

By VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched an intense barrage of ballistic missiles and drones overnight into Saturday, killing at least nine people and wounding 33 civilians in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, authorities said.

The strikes follow a major Russian attack two days earlier that killed at least 10 people and wounded more than 50 others across Ukraine, as Moscow apparently looks to exploit Kyiv's critical shortage of Western-supplied anti-ballistic missile defenses. The relentless cycle of attacks dims the potential of reaching a diplomatic end to Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion of its neighbor.

Deaths and damage across Kyiv

A five-story residential building in the city's Solomianskyi District was damaged by falling debris and a fire broke out. Rescue workers evacuated 35 people from the upper floors of the building and two people died, with eight reported injured, including two children, according to Ukraine's state emergency service.

In the Darnytskyi District of Kyiv, seven people were killed and another 14 injured after the attack caused fires and damage to houses, vehicles, an administrative and non-residential building, the emergency services said.

Elsewhere, emergency workers extinguished a fire in a non-residential building in the capital's Shevchenkivskyi district. There was no additional information about earlier reports by the district mayor that people were trapped in another residential building.

Damage to commercial and residential buildings was reported in two other city districts.

Lithuania's foreign minister said the country's embassy in Kyiv was damaged when missiles struck nearby

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overnight.

Russia's defense ministry said Saturday it had launched a "massive strike" against "Ukrainian military-industrial complex facilities and logistics centers in Kyiv."

Zelenskyy presses for more air defense

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pressed the United States and other Western partners over Ukraine's need for more Patriot anti-ballistic missile defense systems to counter missile attacks from Russia.

"Every package of ballistic missile interceptors saves the lives of our people. And every night without them results in more casualties," he wrote on X following the latest attacks.

The Ukrainian leader late Friday said he spoke to U.S. Vice President JD Vance and discussed a meeting with President Donald Trump earlier this week in Washington, which Zelenskyy described as "positive and productive."

"The Russian air strikes on our country continue and air defense, specifically interceptors for Patriot systems against ballistic missiles, remains a top priority," Zelenskyy said Friday in a post on Telegram.

At a NATO summit in Ankara in July, Trump said the U.S. would give Ukraine a license to make Patriot systems, but he appeared to move away from that commitment on Friday during a Cabinet meeting at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland, saying he had not yet made a final decision on the matter.

Resident describes more frequent attacks

From a basement shelter where she was taking cover as a second air alarm sounded for another wave, Liudmyla Nakonechna, 64, described how she was woken by loud explosions at 1:30 a.m.

"I ran into the corridor and was standing there when the bathroom door was blown off its hinges and struck me in the leg," said Nakonechna, whose health is poor after undergoing cancer treatment. "I heard the sound of shattering glass. My balcony was covered in glass and it was completely blown apart, while the windows in my bedroom were also blown out."

Nakonechna had not taken cover in a shelter since Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022, but the stress became too much, she said.

"It's getting worse by the day," Nakonechna said. "Whereas before there was an attack once every two weeks, or maybe once a week, now it happens practically every day. It is incredibly hard to bear this psychologically."

In other developments

— A Russian airstrike killed one person and wounded five more in the city of Kherson in southern Ukraine, local officials said Saturday.

— In Russian-occupied Crimea, the Moscow-appointed head of the city of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said Saturday that a 60-year-old woman was killed and two other people wounded in a drone attack on the city.

— Ukrainian drones struck three Russian oil refineries overnight in the Russian republic of Bashkortostan, Zelenskyy said Saturday. The refineries "process millions of tons of oil each year" and are located nearly 1,600 kilometers (994 miles) from Ukraine, Zelenskyy said on social media.

The Russian online news outlet Astra reported Saturday that a Ukrainian drone set an oil refinery in Ufa, the capital of Bashkortostan, ablaze. Local officials said debris from a downed drone caused "smoke" at an unnamed "industrial zone."

Ukraine's almost daily long-range drone and missile strikes using domestically developed weapons have battered Russian oil facilities for months. The operation has brought a fuel crisis that is embarrassing the Kremlin more than four years after Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbor.

— A sanctioned Russian container ship, the Yanina, sank in the Black Sea after being hit by Ukrainian drones, Zelenskyy said Saturday, listing the ship as among "facilities that sustain the war effort."

Russia's state nuclear energy company, Rosatom, whose shipping subsidiary FESCO operates the vessel, said the ship was carrying "civilian goods" such as frozen food and construction materials.

Spain installs sea barrier on Ceuta's border with Morocco after frontier rush that killed 67

By SERGIO RODRIGO RUÍZ, SUMAN NAISHADHAM and AKRAM OUBACHIR Associated Press

CEUTA, Spain (AP) — Spain on Saturday installed a 500-meter-long (1,600-foot) barrier on the sea border between its North African territory of Ceuta and neighboring Morocco after tens of thousands of migrants breached the frontier earlier in the week.

At least 67 migrants died, including some who drowned and others who were killed in a stampede to cross a breakwater barrier, the Spanish government said Saturday. The sudden arrival of 50,000 to 60,000 migrants in the territory on Thursday and Friday sparked a humanitarian crisis and reignited the immigration debate in Europe and beyond, though most of the migrants soon went back.

Critics of Spain's socialist government, notably right and far-right politicians, seized upon the dramatic images of crowds storming into Ceuta, which sits on the Strait of Gibraltar at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea and has been a Spanish possession since 1580. Spain's migration policy has focused on granting legal status to workers lacking authorization who entered the country before 2026 to boost its economy, in contrast with the anti-migration and pro-deportation policies promoted across much of the EU and in the U.S.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez slammed the reaction of some EU leaders to the events in Ceuta, saying calls for Spain to be suspended from the EU's borderless Schengen zone were "driven by prejudice, fake news, ignorance, or political interest." Despite the Ceuta crisis, Spain in recent years has had fewer illegal migrants cross into the country than Mediterranean neighbors Italy and Greece.

On Saturday morning, a handful of migrants who swam to Ceuta's urban Tarajal beach were met by soldiers who escorted them across the border.

"We are relentless against those who break the law," Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska told journalists.

Asked how the breach could have happened given the heavy security on both sides of the border and whether Morocco posed a threat to Ceuta, Marlaska defended the government in Rabat.

"The events require an evaluation by Spain and Morocco," he said. But it was the cooperation with its neighbors that allowed Spain "to revert the situation in 24 hours."

"Morocco is not a threat to Ceuta, or to the rest of Spain. It is a reliable partner," Marlaska said.

EU leaders call for coordinated response

Other European Union countries called for urgent talks and a coordinated response to the situation in Ceuta.

"We cannot allow uncontrolled mass crossings, the instrumentalization of migration or other hybrid threats to create the perception that illegal entry into the European Union is possible. That a migrant's illegal entry can turn into legal stay," a letter to top EU officials, released Saturday by the Danish prime minister's office, said. "Such a perception would encourage further attempts, undermine confidence in our common migration policy and have repercussions for all Member States."

Leaders of Italy, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden signed the letter asking the EU's current Irish presidency to convene a videoconference of interior ministers.

Sánchez also asked for a videoconference of EU interior ministers to "enable us to establish a common response to situations of this kind and reaffirm that the security of our external borders is a shared responsibility of all Member States, and not only of those on the Union's front line."

Italy has threatened to suspend the open-border Schengen agreement with Spain and was reimposing border controls for people arriving from Spain by air and sea. Ceuta is not part of the Schengen area, however, and border checks are carried out when traveling from the exclave to continental Spain or other European countries in the Schengen zone.

"In the current international context, the European Union cannot afford this kind of selfish, polarizing

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and unlawful reaction," Sánchez wrote in his letter.

Migrants head back into Morocco

Hundreds of migrants continued to make their way back to Morocco on Saturday. Hungry and angry, some barefoot or shirtless and others nursing visible injuries, they said they were leaving Ceuta after what they described as degrading treatment on the Spanish side of the border.

Migrants walked along a long stretch of wave breakers before slipping into Morocco through a small breach in the border fence. Most of the migrants were Moroccans, while a smaller number were from sub-Saharan Africa.

"I decided to come back on my own," said Ouail Lamzeiz. "I spent eight days in Ceuta, and I was about to get a bed at the migrant center, but I hadn't eaten for days. Even the Moroccans there didn't help," he added, showing a document supporting his account.

Migrants said they spent their nights sleeping in the forests around Ceuta because they could not find shelter, and that they often fought over food.

Othmane El Merzoug asked passersby for a phone call so he could reach his family and ask them to send money for the journey back to his hometown, about 189 miles (305 kilometers) from the border.

Life along the border was disrupted

Along Ceuta's Tarajal beach, sunbathers largely ignored the streams of migrants walking toward the border.

Ceuta resident Mohamed Abdelatif, 21, said the border rush had ruptured the city's peace.

"The reality is, it's not good," Abdelatif said, before wading into the water with his girlfriend.

To reach Ceuta, on the northern African coast, migrants often swim from the Moroccan town of Fnideq, covering about 3 miles (5 kilometers) to reach Spanish territory. In response to the influx, Spain deployed its armed forces and additional police in Ceuta. On the Moroccan side, security forces clashed with migrants. Authorities used water cannons, tear gas and warning shots to try to turn back migrants.

On Saturday, the road linking Fnideq to the border crossing bore the scars of the unrest. Burned-out vehicles sat along the roadside, while the acrid smell of smoke still hung in the air. Water cannons remained stationed nearby.

"Life in this city has been disrupted as a result of the border incident," said Ceuta President Juan Jesús Vivas. "The return of people has begun satisfactorily, but the process must be completed."

Some migrants remain determined to stay

But some who made it to Ceuta say they do not intend to go back. Among them was Mohamed Hatri, a 23-year-old Moroccan.

"They've closed everything down so that we can't buy anything to eat, to force us to return to our country," he said, adding that he and others were determined to stay "whether we're hungry or not."

— Oubachir reported from Fnideq, Morocco. Renata Brito in Barcelona, Spain and Elena Becatoros in Athens, Greece contributed to this report.

Democrats see a chance to flip a seat as focus on abuse claims mounts against Ohio Rep. Max Miller

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Faced with a narrow path to winning control of the U.S. House, Democrats are seeing fresh opportunity in a northeast Ohio congressional seat where the Republican incumbent is facing mounting pressure over domestic abuse allegations in a bitter and drawn-out dispute with his ex-wife.

Allegations against U.S. Rep. Max Miller, a White House adviser during President Donald Trump's first term, have been public for years but have recently drawn increased media scrutiny amid an escalating legal back-and-forth with his former spouse, who is the daughter of U.S. Sen. Bernie Moreno, R-Ohio. That has Democrats sensing Miller could be vulnerable in a district he won two years ago with just over 51% of the vote.

Over the past week, they have called for Miller to resign, requested a congressional ethics investigation and suggested more help could be directed in the fall toward his Democratic opponent, union ironworker

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Brian Poindexter. Miller has denied the abuse allegations and filed defamation lawsuits against his ex-wife and a second accuser.

The House Majority PAC, a super political action committee aimed at electing a Democratic majority, said it is monitoring the race's dynamics as part of its strategy to push deeper into GOP territory in this year's midterm elections.

"HMP is willing to do whatever it takes to take back the House, and nothing is off the table," spokesperson CJ Warnke said.

Republicans stick by Miller as Trump advisers keep tabs on the situation

Republicans have so far remained in Miller's corner, saying he has delivered for his district and is electable in November.

At the same time, the difficulties that Miller faces have not escaped the attention of the president's inner circle as they work to retain GOP control on Capitol Hill. Trump's closest advisers are actively monitoring the situation, according to a Republican with knowledge of White House discussions who requested anonymity to discuss the politically sensitive matter.

The deadline for replacing Miller on the ballot is Wednesday, though no Republican has publicly pushed to take that step. Republican Gov. Mike DeWine told Ohio's Capital Journal that the accusations were troubling and "very serious" but that Miller's fate should be up to voters.

The tension comes as Republicans are defending their narrow majority in the U.S. House in the November races.

Terry Casey, a longtime Republican consultant in Ohio, said Miller remains in a strong position to win the Republican-leaning district, which stretches south from Cleveland and was won decisively by Trump two years ago.

That is unless Poindexter, who has been endorsed by U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent, can attract money significant enough to step up his advertising in the 7th Congressional District's multiple media markets.

"Unless serious people are willing to put in serious money, I'd say beginning around \$2 million, it's all nothing but lip exercises," Casey said.

The National Republican Congressional Committee declined to discuss whether it would match any influx of Democratic cash. Miller has significantly outraised Poindexter, although the Democrat's campaign said it has seen a surge in social media followers in recent weeks.

Democrats call for an ethics investigation and some say Miller should resign

At issue in the couple's long-running dispute are claims leveled by Miller's ex-wife, Emily Moreno, that he scalded, hit and threatened her while they were married. Miller has denied the allegations.

A recent article in the magazine Mother Jones revealed a new point of contention in their legal battle: a broken collarbone on their 2-year-old daughter that led Moreno to contact authorities. The pair, who were married in 2022 and finalized their divorce last year, presented different theories about how the injury occurred, according to court filings and police reports reviewed by the magazine.

Earlier this week, U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown, a Cleveland Democrat, said it "would be wise" for Miller to resign. The House Democratic Women's Caucus called for an ethics investigation.

"The recent reports of domestic violence and child abuse against Representative Max Miller are deeply disturbing and Congress can't ignore them," Democratic Reps. Teresa Leger Fernández of New Mexico, Emilia Sykes of Ohio and Hillary Scholten of Michigan wrote in their letter. "Allegations of violence against women and children have to be met with the utmost seriousness."

Bernie Moreno declined to comment on the allegations raised by his daughter or on Miller's response, but his spokeswoman issued a statement saying the senator was focused on his family.

"Senator Moreno's top priority is the safety and well-being of his daughter and granddaughter," said the spokeswoman, Reagan McCarthy. "While he will not litigate these matters in the media or respond to baseless public attacks, he will do whatever it takes to ensure a just outcome for his family."

Miller's controversies escalated in July and he is facing a lawsuit by an ex-girlfriend

Miller has denied all allegations of abuse. He did not respond to inquiries left with his campaign, his

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Washington office or on his personal cellphone.

Last spring, his spokesperson provided documentation to The Associated Press that showed several allegations that he had abused his daughter had been investigated by the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services and were deemed unsubstantiated. He has sued Emily Moreno for defamation.

The couple's dispute escalated this week.

On Thursday, lawyers for Emily Moreno asked a judge for a temporary restraining order barring Miller from contact with her attorney, Andrew Zashin. The filing alleges that Miller shouted insults at Zashin and goaded him to "Come at me!" outside a court hearing last May, then physically grabbed Zashin during a different proceeding on Tuesday.

The court filing quotes Miller's own lawyer as saying his client "just can't control himself." The attorney did not return a call seeking comment.

Earlier this month, Miller's ex-girlfriend, former White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham, filed a lawsuit against him. She accused Miller of violating terms of a confidential settlement agreement they struck to resolve his 2021 lawsuit against her.

That lawsuit alleged Grisham defamed him in her book and in a Washington Post op-ed when she said a former White House staffer — later identified as Miller — had physically abused her while they were dating. While the book is vague on the specific allegations, Politico reported at the time that Grisham and Miller's relationship ended "when he pushed her against a wall and slapped her in the face in his Washington apartment after she accused him of cheating on her."

Grisham alleged in the new lawsuit filed July 7 that Miller dragged her name into his dispute with Moreno and violated their agreement not to disparage each other.

A campaign distraction for Miller that could turn off some voters

For Poindexter, the Democratic candidate, the accusations against Miller provide a possible path to an upset in November if some conservative-leaning voters opt for him or enough Republican voters are turned off by the domestic abuse allegations and stay home.

"These are serious allegations and deserve the full attention of law enforcement," Poindexter said in a statement. "If all the allegations against Congressman Miller prove to be true, Max Miller should be in jail, not worried about retaining a seat in Congress."

Jim Trakas, a former state lawmaker and GOP party chair in northeast Ohio, said Miller is not helped by the fresh developments so close to the election.

"It's a difficult year for any incumbent," he said. "Now you have to spend time on this when you want to focus on the main event, which is the pocketbook issues."

Trump's threat to push ahead on settlement fund injects new uncertainty into attorney general talks

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Saturday threatened to push forward with a fund to compensate his allies if two Republican holdouts do not support his nominee for attorney general, injecting fresh uncertainty into a Senate confirmation vote planned for next week and underscoring once more his interest in securing payouts for supporters who feel unjustly persecuted.

Trump asserted in his Truth Social post that he would keep acting Attorney General Todd Blanche in his current role and press ahead on the "Anti-Weaponization Fund" if Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and Thom Tillis of North Carolina refuse to back the former federal prosecutor who was a key member of Trump's defense team at a time when the Republican battled four indictments.

The administration needs their votes, but both lawmakers have protested Blanche's selection because of a lawsuit settlement that created a \$1.8 billion fund to compensate people who feel mistreated by the criminal justice system and provided Trump and family members with immunity from tax audits.

In a sign of apparent progress Friday, Trump pronounced the fund "dead." As negotiations continued into the night, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Chuck Grassley, rescheduled a com-

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mittee vote for Blanche that had been postponed earlier in the week.

A spokesperson for the committee said Grassley, R-Iowa, would like to see Blanche confirmed before the August recess and that putting the Tuesday vote on the calendar "gives more time for the White House to secure the votes for the President's nominee."

But by Saturday morning, those plans were in jeopardy with a new announcement from Trump that appeared to put the fund back on the table — and dinged the two senators who are leaving Capitol Hill when their terms end in January.

"If Senators Cornyn and Tillis, both upset because I wouldn't Endorse them (they lost, and quit, respectively!), aren't going to approve Todd Blanche, one of the most respected professionals, according to everybody, in the Country, to be the United States Attorney General, then I will keep Todd as Acting A.G., and push hard" to restore the fund. The president insisted, as he previously has, that the fund "takes care of those who have been so badly treated" during the administrations of Democratic Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Tillis, who is retiring, took note of the president's turnabout by saying in a post on X that despite Trump's comments Friday, he "clearly intends to resurrect the payout pot for punks either by inappropriately establishing another bogus fund or pushing Congress to vote for a bill that the majority of Republicans in the Senate would be against."

He added: "It's unfortunate that Todd Blanche, who I consider qualified for the job, will not be confirmed because of this reversal. Hopefully, we can resolve this by Tuesday."

Blanche had said at a hearing two months ago that the anti-weaponization fund would not move forward after Republican senators revolted and held up an immigration funding bill.

But Tillis and Cornyn, who lost reelection this year after Trump endorsed his primary opponent, said they want to ensure that the White House does not reverse course, especially as Trump continues to argue that a fund is needed.

The Department of Justice has provided the senators with language that says Blanche's May 18 order establishing the "Anti-Weaponization Fund" is "rescinded and shall have no force or effect," according to a document reviewed by The Associated Press.

Cornyn and Tillis have said they also want clarification on a separate part of the settlement that would grant Trump and members of his family immunity from tax audits. Cornyn said this week that it was his understanding the audits could extend to more than 100 Trump Organization subsidiaries in the future.

"Todd Blanche said it was limited to the parties to the litigation — and it was retrospective, not prospective," Cornyn said. "And all we're doing is asking them to put that in writing."

UEFA declares no confidence in Infantino and vows accountability for failed World Cup equity plan

By GRAHAM DUNBAR Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Successfully stopping Gianni Infantino's FIFA plan to sell World Cup profits to private investors was the first half of a high-stakes game in global soccer politics.

The second half kicked off Saturday with what seemed a clear aim of ending Infantino's decade-long presidency.

"No option should be off the table," said European soccer body UEFA, whose president Aleksander Čeferin has led the fight against Infantino in a seismic week for FIFA.

"The current FIFA leadership has not only lost UEFA's confidence but also that of many other members of the football family."

Later Saturday, the governing body for North and Central American and Caribbean soccer (CONCACAF) called for accountability, saying: "A (World Cup) proposal of this magnitude does not reach that stage by accident. It is a symptom of leadership that has stopped putting football first. This recent unilateral and egregious act of poor governance and leadership follows a pattern of missteps and similar behavior. A full review of this leadership must now take place."

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Infantino had proposed creating a \$20 billion company to run the World Cup with private investors but drew backlash that grew every day since Tuesday's announcement.

Infantino was forced to scrap the plan early Saturday after his senior adviser who sat on a White House panel resigned and Asia's soccer body joined Europe and North America in opposing it.

UEFA's blistering statement

UEFA, the governing body of European soccer, issued its blistering statement hours after FIFA announced it was withdrawing its private equity plan.

"We cannot keep going on like this with secret schemes on fast-track timescales, cooked up by faceless individuals and of dubious benefit to the game," UEFA said. "We must identify those responsible and hold them to account."

"It is right that, in the coming days and weeks, UEFA will work with its associations and in close cooperation with other confederations to reflect on how this happened and devise a plan to make sure that it cannot occur again."

Norwegian soccer federation president Lise Klaveness, an elected member of the UEFA executive committee, said steps must be taken to protect the integrity of the sport.

"The entire framework of international football cooperation was unnecessarily put at risk in pursuit of individual interests rather than the best interests of the game," Klaveness said Saturday. "This has been visible to many for a long time, including those of us elected to positions intended to safeguard checks and balances and provide ongoing oversight. We have to recognize that these mechanisms have not worked well enough."

The president of the Asian soccer confederation, Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, said "the future of global football must always be shaped through proper consultation, collective dialogue and respect for the established governance structures of our game."

Infantino's audacious bid fell apart after UEFA's 55-member nations agreed Thursday to boycott the World Cup and all other FIFA competitions. CONCACAF and the Asian Football Confederation also said they opposed the plan.

CONCACAF's statement added that FIFA leaders have "a duty of service over power. Where that duty is not upheld, accountability cannot be optional."

FIFA's internal revolt

There was also an internal revolt.

Infantino's senior adviser, Carlos Cordeiro, a former Goldman Sachs banker who represented the soccer body on the White House Task Force for the World Cup, resigned on Friday and urged other senior FIFA staff to speak out.

Hours later, FIFA chief operating officer Kevin Lamour issued a statement to The Associated Press, saying FIFA staff were deceived by Infantino's lack of openness in planning the sale over recent months and that the project must not continue.

"It is the project of one person," wrote Lamour, a longtime colleague of Infantino at both FIFA and UEFA. "Not only must this project not go ahead ... but the time has now come for football political leaders to ask themselves the right questions and make the right decisions."

Infantino had proposed spinning off FIFA's commercial businesses — including World Cups and Club World Cups for men and women — into a \$20 billion subsidiary with 20% owned by private investors.

The "anchor investor," described by FIFA, is a New York-based investment firm launched by Joshua Kushner, the younger brother of U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

This is not Infantino's first big plan to flop

A tumultuous week in international soccer is at least the third time Infantino has rocked it with an ambitious plan many in the sport saw as reckless.

But the fallout from FIFA's Kushner-backed plan is the first time UEFA has acted quickly to create momentum for removing the man who was its former long-time employee.

In 2018, Infantino pushed a secretive offer of \$25 billion from Japan's SoftBank to create new competitions, that posed a long-term risk to continental events for clubs and national teams.

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In 2021, Infantino proposed playing World Cups every two years instead of four — an idea that also angered the International Olympic Committee where he is an elected member.

Both plans created big rifts in the sport and were eventually dropped by FIFA.

Despite the turmoil, Infantino was re-elected unopposed in 2019 and 2023.

The third time shapes to be different.

Here is the calendar for the FIFA presidency

Nov. 18 is the deadline for candidates to enter the next presidential contest, exactly four months ahead of the vote in Rabat, Morocco, where FIFA has its African headquarters.

FIFA statutes allow Infantino one more four-year term in office. The failed spinoff venture seemed like a way to create a commissioner-like role for Infantino beyond 2031, likely paying much more than his current annual salary and a bonus deal of more than \$6 million.

It would take 106 votes to ensure a majority in a contested election. Continents surely do not vote uniformly en bloc, but most of Europe's 55, plus Asia's 46 and CONCACAF's 35 FIFA members would be a solid base.

The Qatar FA issued a statement in support of Infantino on Saturday.

Its president, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Thani, said: "We welcome FIFA President Gianni Infantino's decision to withdraw the FIFA Forward Enterprise proposal in the interest of the global football community.

"While the proposal had merit, we applaud the wisdom behind prioritising unity among Member Associations. The Qatar Football Association fully supports President Infantino's efforts to continue growing and strengthening the game globally."

Europe's wildfire crisis eases in west as danger shifts east to Greece

By THOMAS ADAMSON and NICOLAS GARRIGA Associated Press

LE PORGE, France (AP) — Europe's wildfire emergency eased across much of western Europe on Saturday, but its most dangerous front shifted to Greece, where gale-force winds drove flames through a seaside resort, forced hundreds to flee by sea and hampered firefighting aircraft.

For Greece, the danger carried grim resonance: a 2018 wildfire at the seaside community of Mati, near Athens, killed 104 people, making it Europe's deadliest wildfire this century.

In southwestern France, firefighters held a vast wildfire within its perimeter, with about 198,000 people now allowed home after what may have been the country's largest peacetime evacuation.

Major fires in Spain were also no longer advancing, and Portugal's main blaze was under control.

A second French fire stopped expanding overnight after racing across 10 square kilometers (4 square miles) in six hours Friday — "faster than a horse at full gallop," according to the prefecture. But it remained active Saturday and 2,500 people were still unable to return home.

The gains in western Europe marked a sharp turn from the height of the crisis, when fires in France and Spain alone drove a third of a million people from homes and vacation sites, emptied towns during the summer holiday season and stretched firefighters, aircraft and emergency services across simultaneous emergencies.

Europe is Earth's fastest-warming continent, heating at more than twice the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus climate service. Rising temperatures and prolonged drought leave vegetation drier and more combustible, allowing fires to spread faster and burn more intensely.

Gale-force winds drive Greek fires

Nearly 500 firefighters battled Saturday to protect Porto Germeno, a popular resort on the Gulf of Corinth, as flames tore through thick pine forest and smoke blocked out the sun.

The fire broke out Friday near the neighboring coastal village of Agios Vasileios. About 300 people were evacuated by sea, and authorities issued further evacuation orders Saturday.

"A pristine forest, a paradise, was surrendered to the hands of the fire," said Minas Tzortzanis, a 60-year-

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old farmer and local resident. "There are no words to explain what has happened. Destruction. Total destruction."

Theodore Giannaros, a wildfire meteorologist at the National Observatory of Athens, estimated that 40 to 50 square kilometers (15 to 19 square miles) had been affected. Authorities had not issued an official burned-area figure.

The operation also included specialized forest-fire teams, crews temporarily deployed from France and Romania, 19 water-dropping planes and 11 helicopters.

New fires erupted elsewhere in Greece. A blaze east of Nafpaktos prompted evacuation alerts for at least four villages.

"The very strong to gale-force winds continue to create exceptionally difficult conditions," Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister Evangelos Tournas said.

Extreme turbulence was preventing some aircraft from collecting water or approaching the fires closely enough to make drops, he said.

Evacuation orders remain in western France

The Gironde fire has burned 420 square kilometers (162 square miles) of pine forest west of Bordeaux, an area four times the size of Paris.

It remained contained within its perimeter Saturday but had not been declared "fixed" — the point at which crews determine that a fire is no longer advancing. Active sectors and buried hot spots persisted.

Authorities reopened more communities Friday, but several remained largely deserted Saturday. Much of the forested Cap Ferret peninsula stayed evacuated because a nearby hot spot could flare again, cut its limited road access and trap returning residents.

"Today, the fire is still not fixed. It is contained," Lt. Col. Eric Pitault told reporters.

Crews used tactical burns overnight. Along 240 kilometers (149 miles) of fire edge, heat could remain hidden underground and erupt again.

Renewed blaze remains active in southern France

In the Mediterranean Var region, defensive lines around the Gros Bessillon fire held overnight and no additional ground burned, Var Prefect Simon Babre told French media Saturday.

The blaze had been declared fixed earlier in the week before mistral gusts revived embers Friday and sent it racing through dry hills in temperatures approaching 42 C (108 F).

It remained active Saturday, with 1,300 firefighters deployed and about 2,500 people still unable to return home. The fire's sudden return "defies understanding," Babre said.

Twenty French departments were under an orange heat warning Saturday, mostly in the east and south-east. Eight departments faced a high forest-fire risk.

Returning residents confront what the fire erased

For residents returning to the Gironde fire zone, the easing emergency brought a first reckoning with what had been lost.

In Le Porge, one of the communities hardest hit, Matthieu Plessis returned Saturday to the ruins of a home that had been in his family for seven generations.

Just over a week earlier, smoke had turned the afternoon almost to night as flames raced along both sides of the road. Now the 40-year-old mechanic drove through blackened forest and struggled to identify what had once stood there.

"There are little details here and there that I recognize, but otherwise everything is unrecognizable," Plessis said. "You don't even know what was here anymore, or who lived where."

He had to force open the property's gate because its key had burned. A chimney and twisted metal frames were among the few clues to where the rooms had been. The tools and machinery from his bicycle-repair business were gone.

"It's not easy. I'm trying to stay strong and help other people now," Plessis said. "I don't want to spend the next 10 years feeling sorry for myself."

'Today' show host Savannah Guthrie begs for 'someone to come forward' in her mother's disappearance

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

"Today" show host Savannah Guthrie on Saturday said on social media that her family was "desperate" and "begging for help" in the disappearance of her mother, a day after authorities released two ransom notes including one saying that she had died.

Authorities released an early note in the investigation into the disappearance of 84-year-old Nancy Guthrie, hoping that someone will recognize the writing style. A second note said Guthrie died shortly after she was kidnapped and "is buried in nature now." Both notes initially were sent to a Tucson television station days after Guthrie went missing from her home outside Tucson on Feb. 1.

Desperate plea

"We are begging for help. We are desperate. We need someone to come forward. Someone knows something. Someone suspects something. Someone recognizes the writing in the ransom demand notes," Guthrie wrote on her Instagram account, alongside a photo of her mother.

"Someone has noticed something different, strange, troubling or just unusual - perhaps with someone they deeply love," she wrote. "Perhaps they are afraid to come forward. Perhaps they are conflicted. Perhaps they are angry or upset for being in this situation. There is a way out - to tell what you know."

Guthrie went on to say they "wanted to find out what happened to her, so that we can give her the dignity of a proper goodbye - a celebration of her remarkable life that she so deserves."

Missing since February

Saturday is the six-month mark since Guthrie disappeared. No suspects have been arrested. The investigation has been dogged by unanswered questions, such as how many people are believed to have taken part in her abduction and whether she was taken by someone who knew her.

The FBI in Washington did not respond to questions about the ransom notes, including whether both messages sent to the Tucson station have been deemed legitimate.

In releasing the notes, the Pima County Sheriff's Department said "we believe these distinctive linguistic characteristics may be recognizable to someone who knows or has interacted with the notes' writer."

Ransom notes released

The first note, sent Feb. 2, said Guthrie was safe but scared and would be released unharmed once her captors received \$4 million in cryptocurrency, with the ransom amount increasing if the first demand was not met. It said Guthrie would be released within 12 hours if the payment was received. It also included a threat to kill her if the ransom wasn't paid.

"Your mother is aware of this and her life is in your hands," the first note read. "It is in the best interest of everyone to have this completed as soon as possible."

The second note was sent Feb. 6 and said Guthrie died shortly after she was taken. "She is buried in nature now," it said. "Nothing you could have done could have changed the outcome." The note ended with an apology: "We are truly sorry."

The sheriff's department said the notes reveal a distinctive pattern of word choices and provide insight into the writer's mindset. The agency said someone who knows the notes' writer may recognize the patterns.

Authorities similarly used a suspect's own writings as a tool to apprehend Theodore "Ted" Kaczynski, branded the "Unabomber" by the FBI. Kaczynski, who killed three people and injured 23 others with mail bombs over a 17-year span, pressured The Washington Post, in conjunction with The New York Times, to publish his 35,000-word manifesto in 1995.

Signs of preparations

The sheriff's office also said Friday that two videos recovered from Guthrie's doorbell camera might be from two separate days and indicate an unidentified male prepared ahead of when Guthrie was taken. Authorities are seeking information on anyone who was behaving differently, changed their physical appearance, suddenly left the Tucson area, or had a noticeable or unexplained interest or disinterest in the case.

"Investigators continue to pursue every available technological and investigative lead," the sheriff's office

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said. "However, community members remain a vital resource as we seek to provide answers for Nancy's family."

The FBI had released surveillance videos of a masked person who authorities said appeared to tamper with a camera on Nancy Guthrie's front porch and block it with a plant. They described the person as a male about 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 meters) tall.

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore says he's 'very concerned' Trump will interfere in the midterm elections

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Gov. Wes Moore of Maryland said he is "very concerned" that President Donald Trump will wield the power of the federal government to thwart the midterm elections this fall as the Republican tries to maintain his grip on power during the final two years of his administration.

In an interview as he becomes chair of the National Governors Association, the potential 2028 Democratic presidential contender ticked through Trump's efforts to restrict voting by mail, obtain voter information from states and possibly deploy federal troops or agents to polling places. Moore said there was a role for the NGA, a bipartisan group, to ensure states are able to oversee elections as designed by the U.S. Constitution.

"I don't think that the president is trying to hide the ball on this," Moore said. "It's not even am I concerned about what the president could do? I'm concerned about what he's already doing in broad daylight."

Moore's national profile is expanding and so is speculation about the White House

The 47-year-old governor's national profile is rising as he assumes the top leadership post for the nation's governors on Saturday, a role once held by Bill Clinton when he was governor of Arkansas. Moore is the subject of frequent speculation that he will announce a presidential run, a prospect he rules out, saying he will not "get distracted" before the November elections.

His travel to early presidential testing grounds such as South Carolina and Nevada, though, suggests he may run. Moore is proving himself a savvy digital communicator and crafts an image as a newcomer to politics while voters demand change.

The centerpiece of his agenda as NGA chair — a national program to build communities and draw young people into the workforce through service-oriented work — could be a pillar of a future campaign.

"Service will save us as a society because I know service saved me," he said, recalling his time in the Army.

The "Service United" campaign opens with \$10 million in philanthropic support to build on similar work Moore has done in Maryland, including a \$5 million expansion of an apprenticeship program in the state announced this week.

"It's an opportunity to help people with a career path," said Bechara Choucair, the executive vice president and chief health officer at Kaiser Permanente, which is building a youth mental health corps with Service United.

Dame Louise Richardson, the president of the Andrew Carnegie Foundation, which is supporting the program, said she hopes to "see the day when you meet somebody, they don't just ask, 'Where did you go to college?' but they ask, 'Where did you do your service year?'"

The contours of the initiative have drawn support from some Republicans, including Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, the outgoing NGA chair.

"One of the things I like is the apprenticeship model and getting kids out of the classroom and into more workforce learning," Stitt said. "So I think that's brilliant."

Divisions between parties run deep despite nods at bipartisanship

But that optimism masks the challenge facing Moore as he takes the helm of one of the few remaining political groups that bring top Republicans and Democrats together. For all the nods at bipartisanship, the divides between — and within — the parties run deep.

Even as he spoke warmly of Moore's program, Stitt warned against anything resembling a "big govern-

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ment program."

Moore, meanwhile, spoke of public frustration with the government's response to dramatic changes in the workforce, driven by advances in artificial intelligence that could erode entry-level work that has long helped young people start their careers. He said the White House has complicated the dynamic.

"We want to say that if a person goes on to a four-year college or chooses not to go to a four-year college, they still need to have pathways to long-term wages and wealth," Moore said. "What we have seen from the federal government thus far has just been simply executive orders that have told the states to stay out of it."

Moore and Trump have sparred frequently and there's potential for more

Moore has a challenging relationship with Trump, who sought to bar him and Gov. Jared Polis, D-Colo., from a White House meeting organized by the NGA earlier this year. The president relented after Stitt intervened, though there is little to suggest that the relationship has recovered, raising the potential of another confrontation at the next NGA meeting, traditionally held February in Washington.

When asked about Trump, Moore noted his enjoyment at working with governors from both parties before saying "the president of the United States seems to consistently take an ideological view when it comes to securing the future of this country."

The White House did not comment on Moore's characterization.

But Moore also is contending with divides among his fellow Democrats.

At home in Maryland, where he is seeking reelection this fall, he has at times struggled to win over Democrats in the legislature, which reconvenes next week to consider a constitutional amendment on redistricting after an earlier effort he backed fell short.

Moore says party bosses should not rule

The Democratic National Committee is in turmoil. A string of democratic socialists has won primaries from New York City to Denver, prompting debate over whether the party is moving too far to the left and threatening its potential victories in the fall. Upcoming elections in Michigan and Wisconsin will further tug at the divide.

Moore did not take a firm stance with either of his party's ideological wings. He batted away questions about democratic socialists potentially imperiling Democratic wins, insisting it was up to voters to decide who their nominees would be.

"Party bosses shouldn't be determining who members of the party are," he said, without specifying whether he was referring to Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York as one of them. "The people should be the ones to have a final say on that."

At the same time, Moore made clear that he did not support some of the left flank's positions.

"I know where I am on issues," he said. "I don't believe in abolishing the police. I don't believe in abolishing prisons. I don't believe in open borders."

Democrats sound alarm about Trump role in midterms

But perhaps the biggest test for Moore will be navigating the management of this year's elections without denting the bipartisan tone that typically defines the NGA. He will be in the middle of Republicans who are calling for tougher rules, particularly around voter identification and deadlines for mail ballots, and fellow Democrats who warn of voter suppression.

Democratic Gov. Josh Stein of North Carolina, who leads one of the most politically competitive states that includes a marquee Senate race this fall, echoed Moore's concerns about federal interference.

"I don't think you can be a clear-thinking person and not be concerned because all the signals are very worrisome," he said in an interview. "But that said, I have confidence that if the voters come out in droves and vote the way that they want to vote, that the government will represent their wishes."

White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said that "if Democrats really cared about securing our elections, they would pass the SAVE America Act," referring to a strict proof-of-citizenship voting bill that is stalled in the Senate.

Stitt expressed confidence that states would hold elections without federal intervention while noting his support for the voting bill. But he also rejected federal intervention and said: "States should control their

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own elections.”

Moore said he used to associate states’ rights arguments with segregationists like Bull Connor, the infamous public safety commissioner in Birmingham, Alabama, who turned fire hoses and dogs on peaceful protesters during the Civil Rights era.

Now, Moore said, the Trump era has reshaped his views and reinforced “the importance of having actually strong governors.”

August’s total solar eclipse will sweep over Spain, Iceland and Greenland

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

For the first time in more than a century, a total solar eclipse is coming to mainland Spain with an even longer encore next summer.

Toss in a crescendoing meteor shower and a six-planet parade on the same day, and the heavens will be overflowing with awe.

Daytime darkness will descend Aug. 12 across the Iberian Peninsula close to sunset — plus slivers of Greenland and Iceland — as the sun, moon and Earth align perfectly in the sky.

Starting near the North Pole before tracking south, totality will last up to two minutes and 18 seconds, an appetizer for an even longer solar show next year — a 6 ½-minute extravaganza that will sweep from Spain to North Africa and the Middle East.

It will take 1 ½ hours for the umbra, or moon’s sun-blocking shadow, to race along the 5,130-mile (8,260-kilometer) course, most of it over an empty Atlantic. Maximum totality will occur off Iceland’s west coast. By the time it reaches a small patch of Portugal and then Spain with its massive crowds, totality will have dwindled to a minute or so. The spectacle will end in the Mediterranean.

Eclipse chasers gear up for the solar spectacle

Hundreds of millions more on the sidelines are in for a treat as well.

A partial eclipse will delight as far away as Alaska and Siberia, enveloping Canada, the northern U.S., and much of Europe and West Africa.

The closer to totality’s course, the more the sun will vanish behind the moon — 94% coverage in Dublin and 83% in Oslo, Norway. Montreal will see an 18% bite out of the sun, tapering to 9% in New York and 2% in Norfolk, Virginia.

Special eclipse glasses are crucial. even if a morsel of sun is showing.

Adding to the cosmic wonder, the day begins with six of our neighboring planets forming an arc in the sky before dawn and end with the Perseid meteor shower peaking after nightfall under the new moon. Streaking meteors could photobomb totality, with some of the brighter planets and stars visible in the background.

Eclipse mapmaker Michael Zeiler is chasing an even more elusive interloper: the northern lights.

For his 13th total solar eclipse, Zeiler will be on a cruise ship in a Greenland fjord, sailing as a guest lecturer. He’ll point a video camera toward the north to capture any aurora forming during totality. A massive outburst from the sun would be the icing on his eclipse cake.

“What gets me excited is viewing rare phenomena,” Zeiler said in an email.

He’s not the only one revved up.

See who’s hosting solar eclipse watch parties and science experiments

The European Space Agency will host a live webcast from Spain’s Astrophysical Observatory of Javalambre and a public celebration in Leon. NASA will provide its own coverage, as will the Italian-based Virtual Telescope Project and others.

“For me, it’s not just a scientific moment. It’s not just an incredible alignment of heavenly bodies. It’s also a very human moment,” said ESA’s director of science Carole Mundell. “It’s a real human connection between us with our feet planted on the Earth and the cosmos.”

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Two of ESA's space telescopes will observe the eclipsed sun and its corona, or outer atmosphere. Proba-3, the space agency's artificial eclipse-making satellite duo, will be in the wrong part of its orbit during totality as seen from Earth, but will try to sneak in some before-and-after shots.

U.S. college research teams are also pitching in, launching more than 60 high-altitude balloons from Spain and Iceland to study Earth's atmosphere and other changes during the eclipse when the temperature momentarily drops. They launched 10 times as many balloons during the 2024 total solar eclipse that captivated North America.

"A couple of minutes isn't a lot of time, but it's still plenty to affect the atmosphere and to make that cold, dark shadow of the moon on Earth," said Montana State University's Angela Des Jardins, who leads the NASA-funded balloon project.

Southwest Research Institute's Amir Caspi also expects a scientific bonanza from his study aboard a NASA high-altitude plane. Four cameras will record the corona in nine wavelengths as the jet chases the eclipse at 460 mph (740 kph), extending totality to nearly three minutes in the air. Caspi anticipates thousands of images gathered from each camera during those precious 180 seconds.

"It's true the eclipse is short, but it's still incredibly valuable," he said.

And there's more to come

An exceptionally long total solar eclipse is in store for 2027, yielding nearly three times more observation time.

The southern tip of Spain will take center stage on Aug. 2, 2027, with up to six minutes and 23 seconds of totality extending into Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Somalia.

Then on Jan. 26, 2028, a ring-of-fire eclipse will round out Spain's celestial trifecta — "a lucky coincidence," according to ESA's Mundell.

It's all the more extraordinary considering Spain's last full solar eclipse — not counting the Canary Islands — occurred two days before the Titanic's sinking in 1912. Because that rare hybrid eclipse toggled between a ring-of-fire and just a few seconds of totality for Spain, some consider 1905 for the country's last pull-out-all-the-stops solar eclipse.

The Royal Observatory of Belgium's Andrei Zhukov can't get enough of them regardless of their length or origin. His Proba-3 science mission has created more than 60 simulated total solar eclipses over the past two years, with the longest lasting five hours and 38 minutes from two satellites flying in formation.

"We're looking forward to more eclipses," Zhukov said, "natural or artificial."

Today in History: August 2, verdict in "Black Sox" trial

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Aug. 2, the 214th day of 2026. There are 151 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On August 2, 1921, a jury in Chicago acquitted seven former members of the Chicago White Sox baseball team and two others of conspiring to defraud the public in the notorious "Black Sox" scandal (though they would later be banned from Major League Baseball for life by Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis).

Also on this date:

In 1790, the first United States Census began under the supervision of Thomas Jefferson; a total of 3,929,214 people were counted in the census, nearly 700,000 of whom were enslaved.

In 1873, inventor Andrew S. Hallidie successfully tested a cable car he had designed for the city of San Francisco.

In 1876, frontiersman "Wild Bill" Hickok was shot and killed while playing poker at a saloon in Deadwood, Dakota Territory, by Jack McCall, who was later hanged.

In 1923, the 29th president of the United States, Warren G. Harding, died in San Francisco; Vice President Calvin Coolidge became president.

In 1934, German President Paul von Hindenburg died, paving the way for Adolf Hitler's complete takeover.

In 1945, President Harry S. Truman, Soviet leader Josef Stalin and Britain's new prime minister, Clement

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Attlee, concluded the Potsdam conference.

In 1974, former White House counsel John W. Dean III was sentenced to one to four years in prison for obstruction of justice in the Watergate cover-up. (Dean ended up serving four months.)

In 1985, 137 people were killed when Delta Air Lines Flight 191, a Lockheed L-1011 Tristar, crashed while attempting to land at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, seizing control of the oil-rich emirate. (The Iraqis were driven out of Kuwait months later in 1991 by a U.S.-led military coalition in Operation Desert Storm.)

In 2014, a suspected dust explosion at an auto parts factory in eastern China that supplies General Motors killed 146 people in the country's worst industrial accident in years. The blast happened at Zhongrong Metal Products Co. Ltd. in Kunshan.

In 2022, U.S. President Joe Biden announced al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri was killed in a drone strike in Afghanistan two days earlier. Al-Zawahri and Osama bin Laden, who was killed by U.S. forces in 2011, had plotted the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States.

Today's Birthdays: Author Isabel Allende is 84. Actor Butch Patrick (TV: "The Munsters") is 73. Rock music producer/drummer Butch Vig is 71. Actor Mary-Louise Parker is 62. Filmmaker Kevin Smith is 56. Actor Sam Worthington is 50. Actor Edward Furlong is 49. U.S. President JD Vance is 42. Actor Lily Gladstone is 40. Singer Charli XCX is 34. Olympic swimming gold medalist Simone Manuel is 30. Actor Ayden Mekus is 21.