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Brown County Fair Tickets Available

The Groton Daily Independent has some Brown County Fair Tickets available for \$50 each. 2 each of Cooper Alan & Jackson Dean, Aug. 12, 8 p.m.; and 2 each of Theory of a Deadman & Sevendust, Aug. 14, 8 p.m. I do take Venmo. Text Paul at 605-397-7460 if interested.

Community Calendar

Friday, Aug. 7

Senior Menu: Taco bake with ground beef, Mexican rice with beans, Catalina blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Storybook Land Theatre Presentation, 10 a.m., GHS Gym

State Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament at Redfield

Saturday, Aug. 8

State Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament at Redfield

Sunday, Aug. 9

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., at Zion, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship with communion 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 Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament at Redfield

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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1440

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

AI-Designed Viruses

Scientists have used artificial intelligence to design new viruses that don't occur in nature and can infect bacteria, according to a study published yesterday. The breakthrough could accelerate efforts to fight antibiotic-resistant infections by creating customized viruses.

The researchers trained AI models on the genetic blueprints of roughly 2 million bacteriophage—viruses that infect bacteria, not humans—before building thousands of new viral designs. Lab testing showed 16 AI-made viruses killed E. coli, including strains resistant to naturally occurring phages. The work could help advance phage therapy, an experimental alternative to antibiotics, as drug-resistant infections are expected to kill roughly 40 million people worldwide by 2050. Researchers caution that increasingly powerful AI tools raise biosafety and biosecurity questions.

Bacteriophages are the most abundant biological entities on Earth, including in the human body. More than 10 nonillion bacteriophages exist at any given time.

Faster Flu Shot

The Food and Drug Administration has approved the first mRNA flu vaccine for adults age 50 to 64, expanding a Nobel Prize-winning technology first used to combat COVID-19. Unlike traditional vaccines, which take several months to develop, mRNA vaccines can be produced in about six weeks and modified to match emerging flu strains.

Developed by Moderna, mFlusiva uses the mRNA plug-and-play model in which genetic sequences for any virus or pathogen can be swapped into the vaccine. Traditional vaccines require growing virus components, which limits the possibility of quick adaptation. The new vaccine coming this fall is 27% more effective than a standard flu shot, though clinical trial participants reported mild side effects like injection-site pain, fatigue, and headaches.

Influenza ranks as the 11th leading cause of death in the US, and it results in over 300,000 deaths worldwide annually. Flu season typically runs from October to May in the US.

👉 Humankind: Syria hosts its first soccer tournament for people with disabilities.

Nuclear Water Crisis

Romania plans to sink four rock-filled barges into the Danube River today in a last-ditch effort to keep its only operating nuclear reactor running. Record-low water levels have already forced the shutdown of its other reactor. Together, both typically provide about one-fifth of the nation's electricity.

Droughts and heat waves have reduced Danube water levels from their average range of 13 to 26 feet to as low as 4 inches, disrupting shipping and energy generation across the region. Romanian officials hope the sunken barges will redirect water toward its nuclear facility, which relies on the river to cool its reactors. Even if successful, the measure will likely extend operations by only nine to 10 days. Officials are urging residents to conserve electricity and exploring possible power imports, though options are limited as neighboring Hungary also risks shutting down its only nuclear plant.

The receding water has exposed dozens of sunken Nazi warships and woolly mammoth fossils.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

TikTok star Sydney Towle dies of rare bile duct cancer at age 26; she began documenting her cancer journey online after being diagnosed at age 23.

Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese among players making their US women's national basketball team debuts in major international competition as team pursues fifth consecutive FIBA Women's World Cup title next month.

Footage of "Grand Theft Auto VI: An Extended Look" to premiere on Netflix on Aug. 27 in a first-of-its-kind partnership between the game maker and streaming service.

The business strategy behind the "GTA VI" release.

Science & Technology

Researchers assemble first nearly complete map of DNA inherited from both a person's mother and father, creating the clearest picture yet of an individual's genetic blueprint.

Natural sugars found in fruit and honey may have supplied the energy needed to support human brain growth before cooking made starch-rich foods easier to digest; finding may offer insight into why humans still crave sweet foods.

Scientists genetically engineer lettuce and tobacco plants to grow the animal protein myoglobin, a step toward making plant-based proteins that taste and contain nutrients more similar to meat.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow -0.9%, Nasdaq -0.1%) | Meta ordered to pay total of \$942M to address harm to kids from social media.

Kellogg to remove artificial colors from all cereals by year's end after identifying fruit- and vegetable-based juice alternatives ahead of 2027 deadline.

Apollo Global Management to buy UK budget airline EasyJet in roughly \$7.7B deal after rival US private equity firm Castlelake withdraws its bid.

Burger King fuels Restaurant Brands International's growth, offsetting declines at Popeyes.

Politics & World Affairs

Dr. Anthony Fauci held in contempt of Congress by Senate committee for refusing to answer questions about COVID-19 pandemic.

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R, KY) is discharged from rehab, will continue recovering at home after June fall.

Salmonella outbreak linked to jalapeños is tracked back to a grower in Mexico; the peppers have been served at Chipotle Mexican Grill and Qdoba.

Trump administration moves to relax federal oversight of early education program Head Start.

President Donald Trump signs executive orders restricting birthright citizenship for kids of foreign lobbyists, "birth tourists," and more.

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

August 10, 2026 – 6:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of July 13, 2026 school board meeting as drafted.
2. Approve July 2026 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approve July District bills for payment.
4. Approve Open Enrollment #27-10.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Continued Discussion on Middle/High School Building Project and Bond Election
3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS

1. Approve Fall Sports Volunteer Coaches
 - a. Boys Soccer – Kelsey Roberts
 - b. Volleyball – Josi Stevens
 - c. Football – Quintin Biermann
2. Approve hiring Jackson Bahr, Bus Driver.
3. Approve hiring Brandon Clocksene, Bus Driver.

ADJOURN

Mellette County Fatal Crash

What: Single-vehicle fatal crash
Where: S.D. Highway 63 at mile marker 55, 21 miles south of Belvidere, South Dakota
When: 5:15 p.m., Wednesday, August 5, 2026

Vehicle 1: 2001 Toyota Tundra
Occupant 1: 29-year-old female from Redmond, Oregon, life-threatening injuries
Seat Belt Used: No
Occupant 2: 20-year-old female from Bend, Oregon, fatal injuries
Seat Belt Used: No
Occupant 3: 37-year-old male from Olympia, Washington, fatal injuries
Seat Belt Used: No

Mellette County, S.D.- Two people died Wednesday in a single-vehicle crash near Belvidere, South Dakota.

Names of the those involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2001 Toyota Tundra was traveling northbound on S.D. Highway 63 when they lost control on the washboards. The Toyota entered the ditch and rolled, ejecting all three occupants. Two people sustained fatal injuries. The third was taken to a Rosebud hospital with life-threatening injuries before being transferred to a Sioux Falls hospital.

The Highway Patrol is investigating who was driving the vehicle at the time of the crash.

Names Released in Pennington County Fatal Crash

What: Single-vehicle fatal crash
Where: Bombing Range Road and Sheep Mountain Road, 4.5 miles south of Scenic, South Dakota
When: 7:55 a.m., Monday, August 3, 2026

Driver 1: Kristina Yellowhawk, 18-year-old female from Wall, South Dakota, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2008 Chevrolet Impala
Seat Belt Used: No
Passenger 1: Patrick Little Moon Jr., 19-year-old male from Pierre, South Dakota, serious non-life-threatening injuries
Seat Belt Used: No

Pennington County, S.D.- A Wall, South Dakota woman died Monday in a single-vehicle crash near Scenic, South Dakota.

Preliminary crash information indicates Kristina Yellowhawk, the driver of a 2008 Chevrolet Impala, was traveling northbound on Bombing Range Road when the vehicle left the road. She attempted to correct and lost control of the vehicle, sending it into a roll. She sustained fatal injuries. Her passenger was taken to a Rapid City hospital with serious non-life-threatening injuries.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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

Data as of 08/6/2026

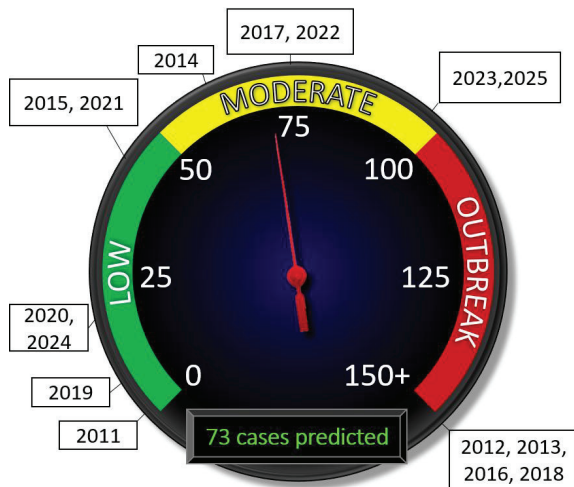
Division of Disease Prevention and Control

South Dakota Mosquito

SD West Nile Virus

- 5 human cases reported
 - 3 non-neuroinvasive cases
 - 2 neuroinvasive cases
 - 0 deaths
- 0 human viremic blood donor detections
- 5 counties with a positive mosquito pool
 - Brown, Codington, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha

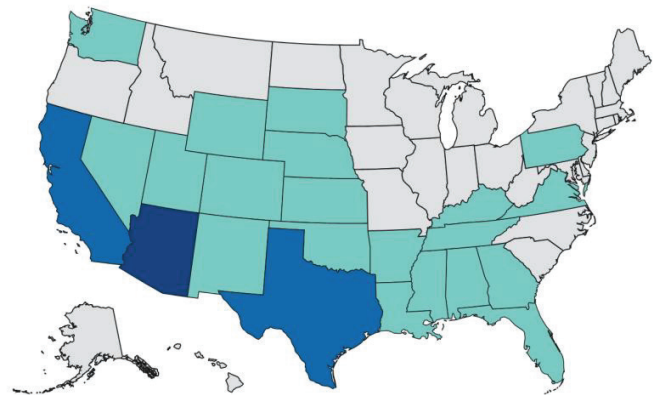
Current WNV SD Case Prediction:



US West Nile Virus

- 143 human cases reported
 - 99 of which are neuroinvasive

WNV Human Disease Cases Reported by State of Residence:



1 to 5 6 to 8 9 to 25 >25

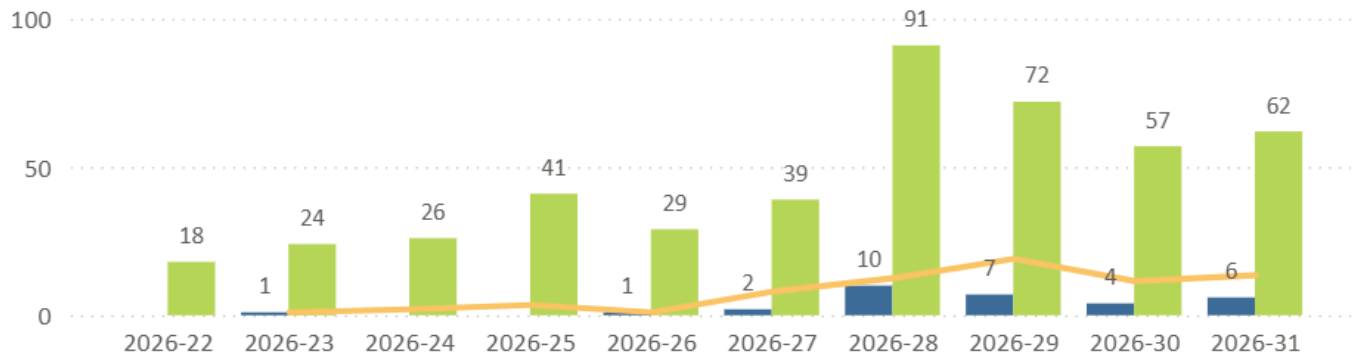
Data compiled from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. West Nile Virus: Current Year Data and Maps. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/west-nile-virus/data-maps/current-year-data.html>

SD Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2026

- Total sites collecting mosquitos: 59
- *Culex* Species Collected: 32,211
- Total mosquito pools tested: 490
- Percent positivity: 6.33%

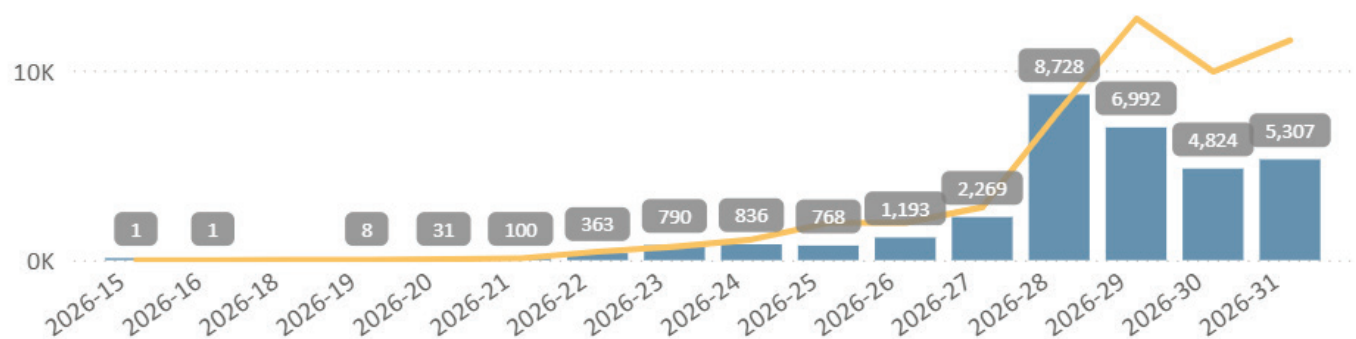
Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative ● 5 Year Median Pool Count



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week

● Culex Species Collected ● 5Y Median Culex Count



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IN THE STIX



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AUGUST 10-16, 2026

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Summer Splash drew a great crowd on a night with perfect weather as the event was the finale for the Summer Fest held Thursday. (Photo from Groton Fire & Rescue Facebook Page)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Farm bill proposal fails in US Senate ag committee amid food assistance funding fight

BY CAMI KOONS

Farm bill progress stalled Thursday as the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee failed to move its version of the legislation forward due to a conflict over when states will shoulder a share of federal nutrition assistance costs.

While the bill included bipartisan language from more than 100 bills, Democrats were unwilling to budge on their demand for a two-year extension to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act policy that requires states to pay for part of their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program if they have SNAP payment error rates in excess of 6%.

Chairman John Boozman amended the bill to extend the deadline one year, as a compromise, along with additional funding for an emergency food assistance program.

In his opening remarks, the Republican from Arkansas said the amendments made to the draft are the "best and final offer" to address Democrats' concerns with SNAP.

"Should this legislation be defeated today, current law will remain in effect, and states who poorly administer SNAP programs will begin to pay for the portion of the benefit cost next year," Boozman said.

Republicans were without a majority in the room due to the absence of Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who has been hospitalized and in rehabilitation since June. Sen. Tommy Tuberville, an Alabama Republican, was also not present during the final vote on the bill, allowing Democrats to win the vote against the bill by one vote.

Farm groups expressed disappointment in another delay to the farm bill, which has not been reauthorized since 2018, especially since the Senate version included a provision for year-round, nationwide E15 sought by ethanol and corn producers.

Other groups celebrated that policies like the Save Our Bacon Act, which would block individual state rules on the growing conditions of agricultural products, were not advanced.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, said in the seven farm bills that he has worked on, "this is the first one I can recall that we're not doing on a bipartisan basis."

Grassley spoke in response to an amendment proposed by Sen. Peter Welch, a Vermont Democrat, to mandate an audit on farming operations that have multiple farm managers or people eligible to receive subsidy payments. He said it was a bill he had worked on with Welch, but since "this has turned out to be a partisan markup, I can't vote for an amendment that I agree with you on."

"We can't have a partisan deal on the floor of the United States Senate, or we don't get anything done for the family farmers," Grassley said.

SNAP error rate extension

SNAP error rates are calculated with a series of state and federal reviews to measure the accuracy of states in determining who is eligible for SNAP and how much they receive.

Rates for 2025 showed nine states were below the 6% threshold set by the 2025 tax and spending law.

Depending on how high their error rate is, states will be saddled with 5%, 10% or 15% of SNAP benefits costs in their state starting Oct. 2027, unless the state has an error rate at or above 13.34%, making it eligible for an extension.

Democrats said expanding the two-year extension to all states, rather than just those with the highest

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error rates, would give other states the same flexibility.

Senate Agriculture Committee ranking member Amy Klobuchar said as the law currently stands, mid-range error rate states like her home of Minnesota would have to pay millions to continue SNAP benefits in the state, while states with higher error rates "get off scot-free" for two years.

"It's not just about the time, it's about the equal footing," Klobuchar said in her opening remarks. "And while again, I appreciate that one year has been included in this bill ... it is a Band-aid because one year from now, again, you're going to have the same thing play out."

The error rate issue dominated conversation, even on amendments that proposed other changes.

Sen. Michael Bennet, a Colorado Democrat, said exemptions for states with the highest error rates was "completely irrational" as it means when certain states lower their error rates, they are now on the hook to pay, whereas they otherwise would have been exempt for two years.

"If you are interested in, and I'm sure everybody here is, in creating a set of incentives that actually will lead to better results, that will allow us to attack fraud and abuse and waste in these systems, that is not the system that we have today," Bennet said.

Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kansas, questioned why his colleagues across the aisle felt states would be incapable of lowering their error rates in the offered time span.

"Why is it a misconception that we don't think that these states can get their error rates down in the next year and a half?" Marshall said. "Is that just impossible to expect that the states can become more competent?"

Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota said Boozman's amendment for a one-year delay would give states "a chance to get in compliance."

"We've got to get a bill, if we want to pass a farm bill, that's something that can pass the House and be signed into law by the president," Thune said. "So the negotiations around this were with that in mind."

Thune later blasted Democrats in a statement issued to the media, saying their "refusal to support the farm bill and year-round E15 is deeply disappointing and only creates more uncertainty for South Dakota's farmers and ranchers."

Sharon Parrott, president of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, said in a statement the Senate's farm bill proposal would have been a "step in the right direction" but ultimately "doesn't do enough for people losing the help they need to afford groceries."

Parrott said states are adding access barriers to SNAP, and thus enrolling fewer people, in an effort to lower their error rates that will leave them on the hook for millions in the upcoming years.

"When Congress returns this fall, policymakers must work on a bipartisan basis to advance legislation that addresses the unfolding crisis without making deeper cuts to food assistance in later years," Parrott said.

Other farm bill considerations

While SNAP policy has dominated farm bill debate in both the House and the Senate, the bill also stipulates the policies that farmers rely on for things like indemnity payments, or conservation work, marketing assistance, disaster payments and support for rural development

Boozman said he wanted to "put more farm into the farm bill" with the Agricultural Act of 2026, or as he called it the Farm Bill 2.0.

While the initial draft of the bill omitted year-round, nationwide access to E15, a fuel blend with 15% of ethanol, an updated version included the provision, much to the support of committee members across the aisle.

Farm states and agriculture commodity groups have pushed for many years for year round, nationwide E15 legislation, since the added ethanol demand would boost corn demand.

National Corn Growers Association President Jed Bower said Thursday the association was "extremely disappointed" the Senate committee was unable to pass the bill that "was particularly important to corn growers."

"We implore senators to approve a bipartisan farm bill that extends consumer access to E15 and serves the interests of America's farmers," Bower said in a statement. "We are running out of time in this Con-

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gress and urge action as quickly as possible.”

Klobuchar said that while it would be preferable to pass E15 as part of a farm bill, she would push for a standalone vote to get the policy passed in the Senate.

Senators debated other amendments to the bill, including additional support for specialty crop farmers, reform to disaster grants and conservation program expansions.

Senators did not debate language that would block laws like California’s Proposition 12, which stipulates certain proteins sold in the state must come from animals raised under specific animal confinement regulations. Proponents of the Save Our Bacon Act say it protects interstate commerce and shields farmers from costly upgrades to comply with the state rules.

Many animal rights and environmental groups opposed the language and celebrated that senators kept it out of the bill discussion.

“A Farm Bill that fails to protect farmers from corporate consolidation, invest in real climate solutions and ensure healthy, affordable food for all is not a solution – it’s just more of the same,” Food & Water Watch Food Policy Director Rebecca Wolf said in a statement. “Senate Democrats were smart to reject this deeply flawed Republican bill. They must continue to do so in September.”

The committee passed an amendment with a bipartisan vote of 17-6 to implement Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling on beef.

National Farmers Union President Rob Larew said in a statement the adoption of the amendment was one of the “encouraging signs of bipartisanship” in the markup.

“Family farmers can’t afford more delay, so it’s disappointing that the Senate Agriculture Committee did not come to an agreement on the farm bill,” Larew said.

Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, also praised the labeling amendment, saying on social media that “Americans deserve to know where their meat is coming from.”

Boozman said struggling farmers are being held “hostage” by the refusal to reach a compromise on the bill.

“This is really not about SNAP recipients, this is about allowing states to continue making error rates that are unimaginable,” Boozman said in closing. “They’re off the chart, and there’s no reason that we can’t help them, get them straight, in a year.”

Boozman recessed the meeting, leaving it open for the committee to reconvene.

Klobuchar, in a statement following the markup, said she was “committed to continuing to work on the bill.”

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said the “stakes are too high” for farmers to allow another year without an updated farm bill.

“We urge senators to return to the table, work across party lines, and advance a farm bill out of committee in order to continue the negotiations toward a bipartisan farm bill that provides the long-term support and certainty our farmers, ranchers and rural communities need,” Duvall said.

South Dakota Searchlight contributed to this report.

This story was originally produced by Iowa Capital Dispatch, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

COMMENTARY

Utility reports preview South Dakota's future, if anybody's paying attention

by Brad Johnson

Five utility planning reports landed at the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission on July 1.

At first glance, they looked like ideal reading for anyone struggling with insomnia.

Load forecasts. Transmission studies. Generation plans. Enough utility jargon to make the owner's manual for a new grain dryer seem almost exciting.

Stay awake long enough to read all five, though, and a much larger story comes into view.

The filings outline more than \$1 billion in publicly disclosed generation projects in South Dakota, plus utility-scale battery storage, new substations and major transmission expansion. And that's before counting the regional transmission investment likely to follow.

New natural-gas plants are proposed near Aberdeen, Rapid City and Toronto. A large battery project is being planned in Codington County. High-voltage transmission lines are being designed to move electricity across the Upper Midwest for decades.

Viewed one at a time, they're projects. Read together, they're a strategy. Utilities don't plan more than a billion dollars in projects because they hope someone shows up. They do it because they believe someone will.

And that matters because South Dakota's ordinary electric use isn't growing fast enough to explain everything on the drawing board. More homes, businesses and manufacturing will add demand, but not on this scale.

The utilities are preparing for industrial customers capable of using more electricity than entire cities.

For a glimpse of that future, look just across the state line.

Ellendale, North Dakota, sits about 40 miles north of Aberdeen. A data center there already uses up to 180 megawatts. Another proposed campus could require as much as 350 megawatts.

Together, that's roughly 530 megawatts — a level of demand in a town of barely 1,000 people roughly equivalent to the average electricity use of about 430,000 homes. South Dakota does not have that many households.

For comparison, NorthWestern Energy's proposed Aberdeen III natural-gas plant would generate about 131 megawatts.

There's no public evidence that Aberdeen III is being built to serve Ellendale. Different utilities are involved, and the regional grid is complicated enough without pretending otherwise.

But electricity doesn't stop at the state line.

Ellendale isn't some distant curiosity. It's a nearby example of the size of the customers utilities are preparing to serve. A customer that large doesn't show up with an extension cord.

And this isn't only an Aberdeen story.

Western South Dakota is seeing the same shift. East of Rapid City, the 128-megawatt Wild Springs Solar Project is the largest operating solar facility in the state. Black Hills Energy is also building the 99-megawatt Lange IInatural-gas generating station in Rapid City.

That's 227 megawatts of recent or new generation in the Rapid City region alone.

The Toronto plant matters for the same reason. So does the battery project in Codington County. So do the transmission lines that will cross farms, ranches and wildlife habitat to connect the pieces.

These aren't isolated dots on a map. They're parts of the same regional picture.

That's why the five utility reports deserve more than a quick regulatory glance before disappearing onto a government website.

They're economic development blueprints written by engineers.

The Public Utilities Commission is where many of those plans eventually become permits, rates, contracts and ownership decisions. That makes the commission one of the most important places where South

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Dakota's economic future is being shaped, even though most people rarely think about it.

South Dakota should be thinking about what role it wants in this changing economy. Does the state want to produce power, move power or recruit industries that consume enormous amounts of it?

There could be construction jobs, permanent employment, tax revenue and economic growth. There will also be tradeoffs.

Who pays for the infrastructure? How do local communities benefit? How will private property, productive farmland, wetlands and wildlife habitat be protected?

Those questions should be asked before a permit application arrives — not after a route has already been drawn across someone's land.

For years, South Dakota has debated wind farms, pipelines and transmission lines one project at a time. By then, the argument is usually over a route, a setback or a particular piece of ground.

Those questions matter, but they aren't the first question. The first is what kind of South Dakota all this power is being built to serve.

The utilities are already planning for that future.

It might be wise for the rest of us to stay awake and do the same.

Brad Johnson is a certified general real estate appraiser and longtime journalist. He is past president of South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, a member of the National Wildlife Federation's board of directors, and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources. He lives in Rapid City and Watertown.

US Senate panel votes to hold Fauci in contempt for declining to answer COVID questions

BY JACOB FISCHLER

WASHINGTON — Republicans on a U.S. Senate panel voted Thursday to hold Dr. Anthony Fauci in contempt of Congress after he declined to answer any questions at a hearing last week about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee voted along party lines to approve a resolution referring to the Justice Department charges that Fauci, a top public health official during the pandemic, violated a congressional subpoena when he repeatedly invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination and refused to answer any questions at a July 29 committee hearing.

Fauci asserted his Fifth Amendment right 111 times, even in response to Republicans' questions about his tie color or the day of the week meant to test his strategy.

Chairman Rand Paul of Kentucky and other committee Republicans said Thursday that was a misuse of the privilege, in part because President Joe Biden issued a broad pardon to Fauci covering any conduct from 2014 to 2025.

"We are voting on whether a witness who has received the benefit of a sweeping federal pardon can be ordered by this committee to answer questions and then defy that order without consequence," Paul said.

Walking into a 'trap'?

Democrats raised a host of objections to the contempt resolution.

They said, as Fauci argued during the hearing, that Paul sought to trap Fauci. Biden's pardon of Fauci would not cover new misstatements to Congress, Sen. Maggie Hassan, a New Hampshire Democrat, said.

"The goal was to wait for Dr. Fauci to make any kind of misstatement and then have a weaponized Department of Justice file criminal charges for that new statement that would not have been covered by the pardon, leaving Dr. Fauci little choice but to invoke his constitutional right to not walk directly into a trap," Hassan said.

Fauci said during an opening statement at last week's hearing that he believed "any reasonable person" would conclude that Paul's objective was to trip him up.

"The only conclusion I can reach is that the sole reason he is calling me before this committee is to get

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me to say something — anything — that could vindicate his repeated public pledges that I end up, in his words, 'behind bars,'" he said.

Weakening future investigations

Ranking Democrat Gary Peters of Michigan also said the partisan vote undermined the panel's legitimacy. He took particular exception to Paul's intention to send the resolution directly to federal prosecutors without gaining approval from the full Senate, which would require a bipartisan vote to meet the chamber's 60-vote threshold.

"No individual senator and no committee speaks for the entire Senate," he said. "Institutional powers belong to the full body. Allowing one chairman to unilaterally assert those powers would invite future chairs in both parties to bypass the Senate whenever they cannot secure the support of their colleagues."

Future witnesses could use the vote to justify not appearing before congressional committees, Peters said.

Highly public role

The July 29 hearing was a departure for Fauci, who, as one of the nation's most visible public health officials during the pandemic, spoke publicly about it on a daily basis for several months.

He has testified before congressional committees two dozen times since January 2020 and had never declined to answer lawmaker questions before last week.

Fauci was a member of the coronavirus task force during President Donald Trump's first administration and a chief medical adviser on COVID-19 during Biden's term. He headed the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases under presidents of both parties for nearly four decades.

As the pandemic response turned increasingly political in the months following nationwide containment efforts in early 2020, Republicans became more critical of measures that caused significant economic problems.

Sen. Ron Johnson, a Wisconsin Republican who chaired the panel in 2020, said Thursday that learning what officials like Fauci knew at the time was key to understanding what led to the response he considered an overreaction.

"It's been six years since the pandemic began," he said. "We have not had a reckoning of what happened."

Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Governors and lawmakers say they're getting serious about states' rights

BY KEVIN HARDY

OKLAHOMA CITY — State leaders of both parties say the federal government — including the president — wields too much power, and they want to see more authority returned to the states.

Bipartisan groups of governors and state lawmakers held major gatherings in recent days where issues of state authority became a major focus. They agreed the federal government had grown too powerful and pushed for states to maintain control over elections, energy, education and other issues.

During President Donald Trump's second term, state leaders have heightened focus on federalism, the uniquely American system created by the framers of the Constitution to share power between Washington, D.C., and the states.

But governors and lawmakers said it requires bipartisan cooperation across the states to reset the balance of power.

Utah Republican Gov. Spencer Cox said it's easy for state leaders to champion states' rights when the opposing political party controls the levers of federal power. But a truer test of federalism likely lies in how states approach it when their own party controls Washington.

"And that's why I'm proud to have Republicans who still believe it even when the president is doing things that they want," Cox told Stateline.

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Cox, who was in Oklahoma City this weekend for the National Governors Association summer meeting, has long championed a rebalancing of state and federal powers. He and other leaders argue that a renewed focus on federalism could help lower the national political temperature. By shifting more political decisions to the states, some officials envision a nation less subject to blue-red swings that change the entire course of federal law enforcement, environmental policy and business regulation.

In Utah, state officials are looking to lead a national movement to bring more authority back to the states. Cox said too many political issues have become nationalized, driving vitriol and polarization as a sharply-divided Congress acts on few policy issues.

"That means that the president becomes even more important than they were ever meant to be," Cox said, "and then these big elections every four years feel kind of life or death."

Cox said recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions have empowered states. But he said liberal and conservative states alike must push to take more authority from the federal government.

"We have to demand it," he said. "We have to talk to our members of Congress about it, let them know that we don't want the feds playing such a major role."

The bipartisan association of governors is in the process of updating its internal policies on federalism. Last revised years ago, NGA's current policies speak about challenges such as unfunded mandates, in which the federal government requires states to meet new rules without providing money to achieve them.

The updated policy will address pressing issues such as artificial intelligence regulation — an ongoing state-federal conflict over jurisdiction — and the primacy of each state to control its own National Guard — an issue that sparked major concerns about state sovereignty last year.

The revised policy will remind governors of the inherent authority of states in pushing back against the federal government, said John Dinan, a professor and chair of the department of politics & international affairs at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. Dinan, a federalism scholar, is consulting with NGA on its federalism work.

Dinan said both political parties have leaned on federalism principles opportunistically over the years — depending on which party enjoyed national power. But now, he sees strong agreement between Republicans and Democrats to strengthen the role of states.

"It's attracting interest from people across the ideological spectrum," he said.

States say they should lead

In Oklahoma City, governors sought to showcase a bipartisanship that has nearly vanished in national politics.

Governors said their states could compete with each other, experiment with programs and adopt wildly distinct policies — without being divisive or disrespectful.

In particular, Oklahoma Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt and Maryland Democratic Gov. Wes Moore emphasized their close friendship. Moore wore cowboy boots as he assumed leadership of the national association from Stitt at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

In opening the meeting, Stitt recalled President Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address, given near the end of the Civil War. The 16th president famously pushed for national unity by calling for "malice toward none" and "charity for all."

"Think about that," Stitt said. "After years of war, Lincoln didn't focus on settling scores or getting revenge. He focused on putting our country back together. His commitment to unity saved our country."

Like Lincoln, Stitt said the nation's governors don't shy away from fractures and disagreements. They debate and share ideas, while also embracing the role of diverse policies across the states.

"When states lead, America succeeds," Stitt said. "There's not a one-size-fits-all for a country as diverse as America."

As one example, several governors pointed to the recent dramatic climb in Mississippi's student reading and language scores.

"Mississippi really turned the entire country around when it comes to the science of reading," said North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein, a Democrat. "And that was because one state went out there and figured some-

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thing else out and we're now all aggressively copying it."

Stein, along with Vermont Republican Gov. Phil Scott, have been working on revising the association's federalism policies. Both of those states were among a coalition that recently sued the federal government over attempts to withhold federal disaster aid. Trump officials sought to condition more than \$1 billion in funding on states moving away from electronic ballot counting ahead of November's midterms.

"Which has nothing to do with disaster recovery and also offends federalism because elections administration is to be left to the states," Stein said in Oklahoma City. "The federal government shouldn't be dictating how states conduct their elections."

'We don't want a king'

Just days before the governors met, thousands of state lawmakers assembled in Chicago for the National Conference of State Legislatures annual summit.

At that meeting, lawmakers of both parties also emphasized the important role of states in reining in a federal government they say has grown too powerful.

Michelle Woods, vice president of the state-federal affairs division at NCSL, characterized the current moment as one of the most consequential ever for state and federal relationships. She cited executive orders coming from the White House and upheaval in federal spending and policy.

"Federalism is no longer simply a constitutional principle that we're going to debate," she said during a panel discussion on the topic. "It's the reality that state legislators are navigating every day."

Maryland state Del. David Moon, the Democratic majority leader, kicked off his remarks on the panel noting how his state had to pivot to "basic debt collection" from the federal government at a time when it has sought to punish blue states and withhold previously approved federal funds.

Moon pushed for legislation in Annapolis this year, which Moore signed into law in April, that allows the state to place liens on federal property or withhold revenue payments to Washington if officials determine the feds are withholding funds in defiance of court decisions.

Despite current high-profile clashes with the feds, Moon said he was optimistic that the nation could return to more traditional state-federal relationships after Trump leaves office.

"I think we are witnessing an outlier moment with respect to federalism and some of these interesting expansions of federal power," he said. "...But the truth of the matter is, whether we get there is really determined by all of us."

Utah state Rep. Ken Ivory, a Republican, said state leaders nationwide must start by educating themselves of the constitutional limits of federal power. He said orientation for newly elected lawmakers often teaches how to navigate their capitols or enroll in state insurance — rather than emphasizing the legal fundamentals.

"If we're going to restore federalism, we have to know very clearly what state jurisdiction is versus the limits of federal power," he said. "We have to know our powers to do that — to push back."

Ivory leads Utah's Federalism Commission, which lawmakers hope will connect state officials and agency staff from across the country to bring more authority back to the states. He said state Republicans and Democrats must stand together on states' rights — even when they strongly disagree on individual state policies.

"We felt very strongly that if federalism is purely a partisan exercise, it's not federalism, and it's just seeking advantage, gaining advantage, and it actually undermines the concept," he said. "And so, we kind of have a saying that we don't want a red king or a blue king. We don't want a king."

Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at khardy@stateline.org.

This story was originally produced by Stateline, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

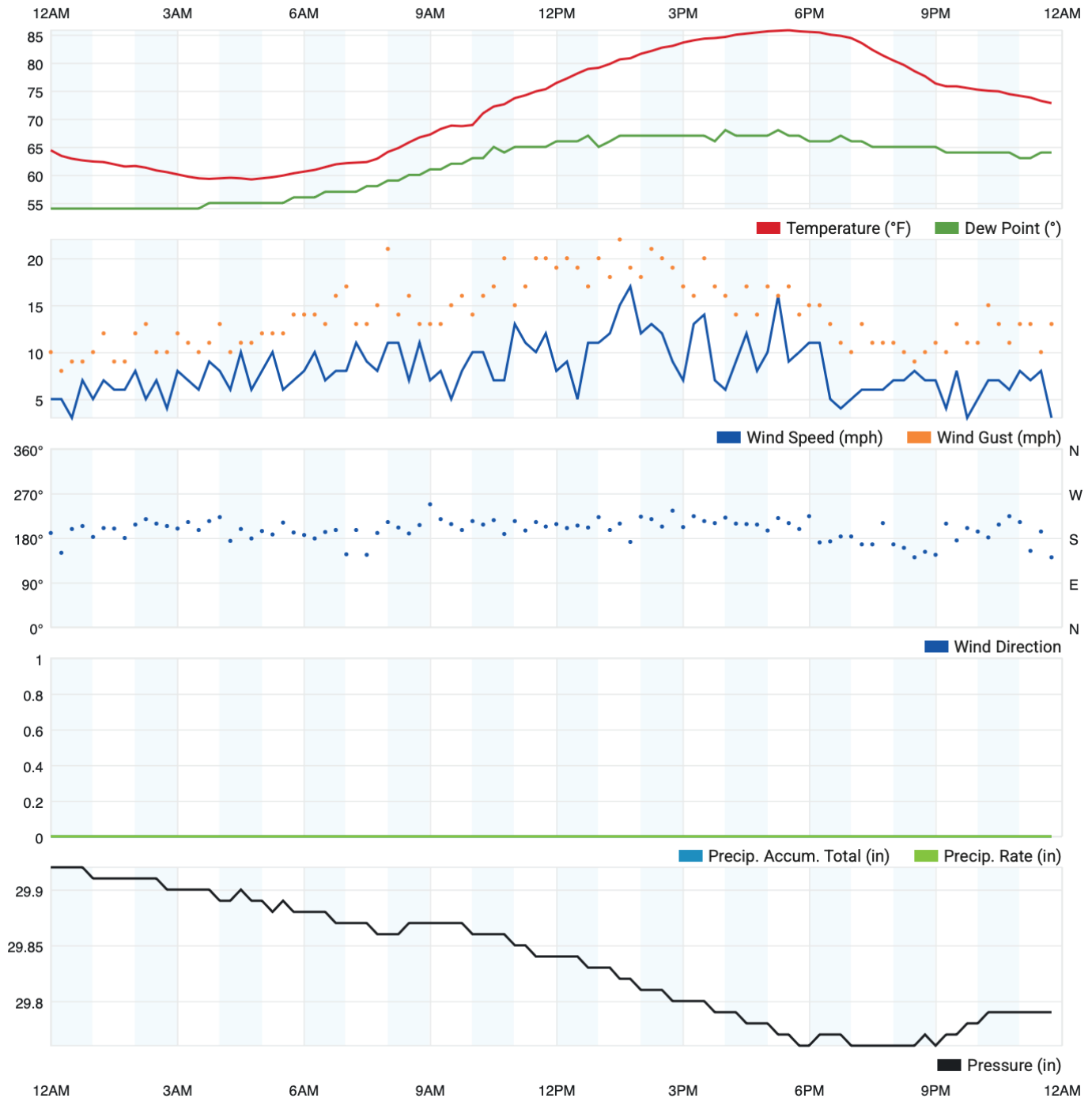
Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 6, 2026



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Today



High: 81 °F

Becoming
Sunny

Tonight



Low: 54 °F

Partly Cloudy

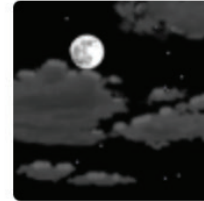
Saturday



High: 86 °F

Mostly Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 59 °F

Partly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 84 °F

Mostly Sunny



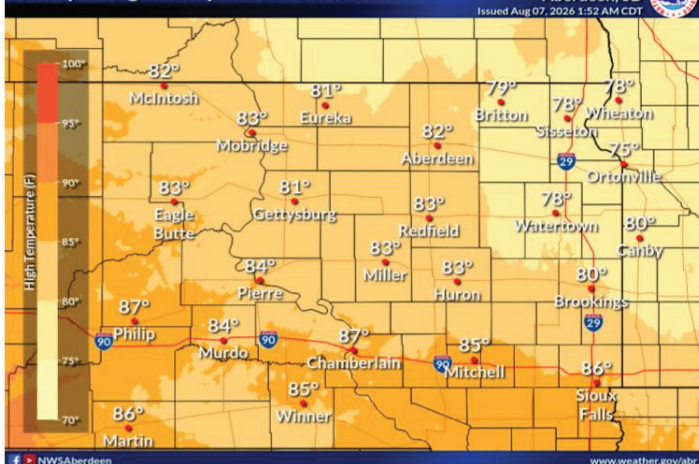
Cooler Temperatures Today

August 7, 2026
2:20 AM CDT

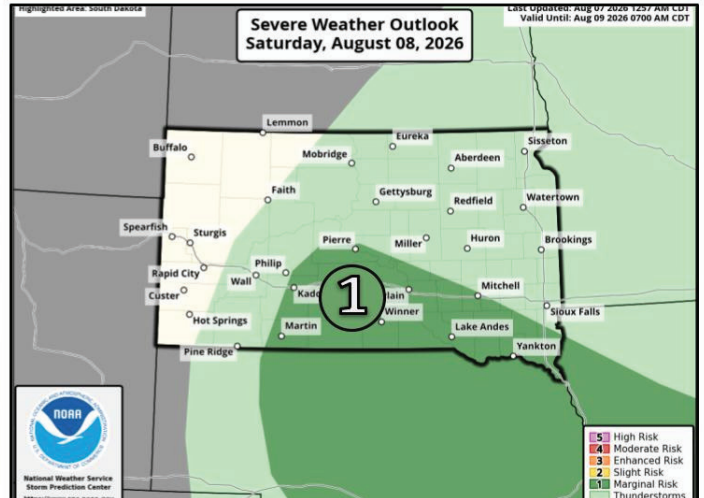
Very small chance (20% or less) for a stray thunderstorm tonight/early Saturday morning

- **Cooler today** in the wake of a cold front. **Warming back up again Saturday.**
- Breezy northwest winds 10-25 mph throughout the region today.
- Low chance (20% or less) for a thunderstorm or two over central and south central SD late tonight and Saturday.

Friday's High Temperature Forecast



Severe Weather Outlook Saturday, August 08, 2026



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

High temperatures today should end up 5 to 10 degrees cooler than what was observed on Thursday; readings generally topping out in the low to mid 80s. Late tonight into Saturday, there is a Marginal Risk of severe storms across portions of central and south central South Dakota, with the main hazards being 1 inch hail and 60 mph wind gusts. Some storms will also be possible Sunday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 5:29 PM

Low Temp: 59 °F at 4:49 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 1:24 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1949

Record Low: 42 in 1921

Average High: 84

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in Aug.: 0.51

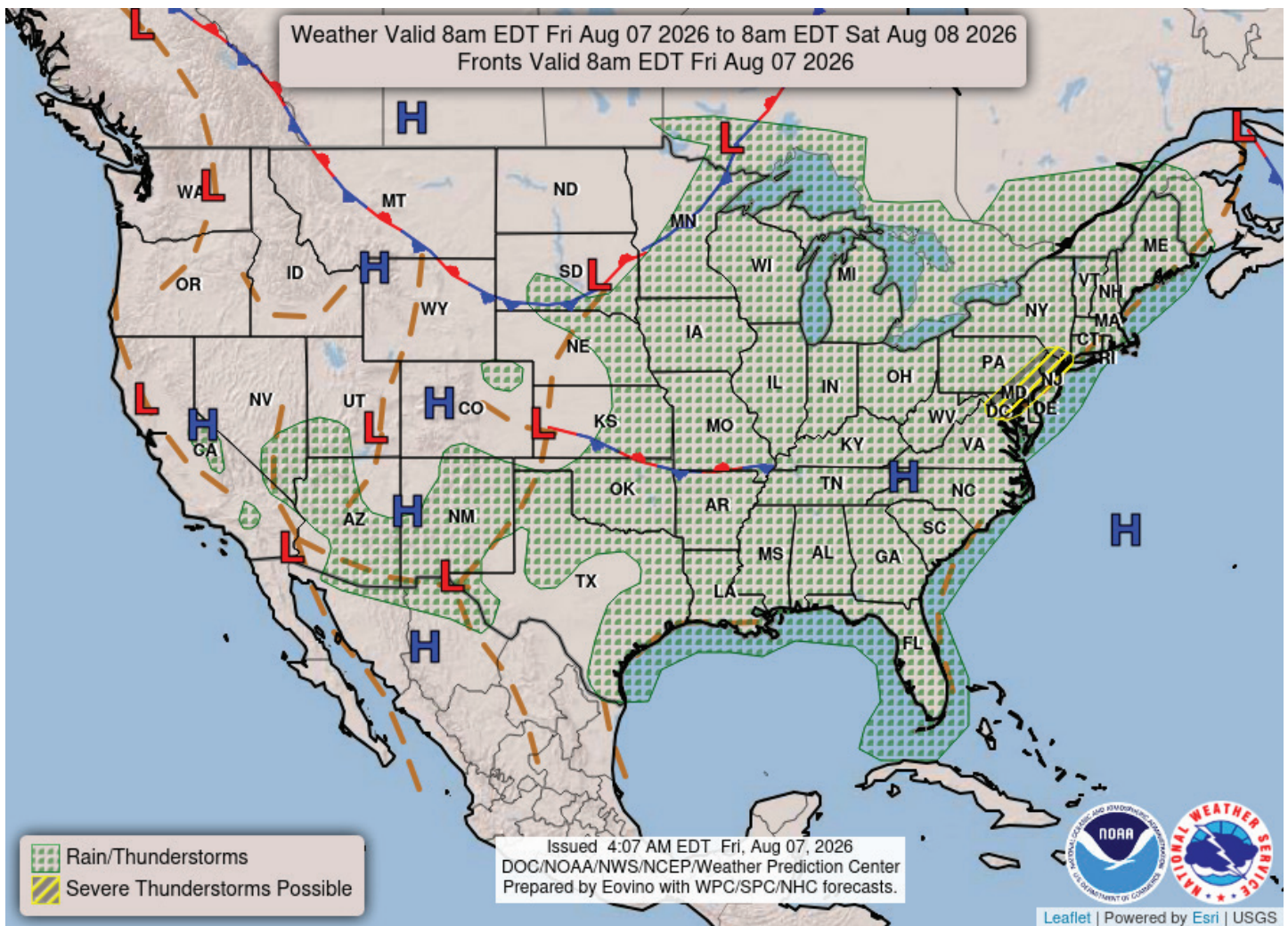
Precip to date in Aug.: 9.79

Average Precip to date: 14.61

Precip Year to Date: 19.26

Sunset Tonight: 8:52 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:24 am



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Today in Weather History

August 7, 1968: From 9 miles north of Isabel, hail up to golf ball size was observed with a severe thunderstorm. This storm continued moving in a southeast direction, causing extensive damage to crops, trees, utility lines, and structures. A radio tower was blown over near Huron, and a wind gust of 115 mph was reported at Huron. A woman was swept from a roof in Huron and was critically injured.

August 7, 2009: A supercell thunderstorm developed across the northern Black Hills and moved eastward across the Sturgis area, southern Meade County, northeastern Pennington County, Haakon County, and northeastern Jackson County. The storm produced baseball sized near Sturgis, then high winds and hail larger than baseball sized developed as the storm moved across the plains. The storm hit Sturgis during the annual motorcycle rally and caused extensive damage to motorcycles, vehicles, and property. Minor injuries from the hail were also reported.

August 7, 2010: An EF4 tornado touched down south of Tyler in Richland County North Dakota and tracked to the northeast for roughly 2.5 miles before crossing the Bois de Sioux River into Wilkin County, Minnesota. In Wilkin County, the tornado continued for another 2.5 miles and lifted about 650 pm CDT. The total track length was about 5 miles, and peak winds were estimated at 175 mph.

1904 — A flash flood near Pueblo, CO, washed a train from the tracks killing 89 passengers. A bridge, weakened by the floodwaters sweeping through the valley below, gave way under the weight of the train dashing all but the sleeping cars into the torrent drowning the occupants. Rail service was frequently interrupted in the Rocky Mountain Region and southwestern U.S. that summer due to numerous heavy downpours which washed out the railroad beds delaying trains as much as five days. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1918 — Philadelphia, PA, established an all-time record with a high of 106 degrees. New York City experienced its warmest day and night with a low of 82 degrees and a high of 102 degrees. Afternoon highs of 108 degrees at Flemington NJ and Somerville NJ established state records for the month of August. (The Weather Channel) (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1924: A tornado caused estimated F4 damage moved southeast from south of Osseo, WI to Black River Falls, WI. One person was killed as a home was leveled and a boy was killed running to the storm cellar near the start of the path. Two people died as farm homes were swept away near the northeast edge of Black River Falls. Damage totaled \$200,000 as 50 farms were hit and buildings were unroofed in the town of Northfield. The tornado followed the present route of Interstate 94.

1980: Hurricane Allen bottomed out at 899 millibars (26.55 inches of mercury) while moving through the Yucatan Channel in the southeastern part of the Gulf of America. Allen was the second lowest pressure ever recorded in the Western Hemisphere up to that time. Allen's winds at the time were sustained at 190 mph.

1984 — El Paso, TX, normally receives 1.21 inches of rain in August. They got it in forty-five minutes, with four more inches to boot, during a storm which left Downtown El Paso under five feet of water. (The Weather Channel)

1986 — A rare outbreak of seven tornadoes occurred in New England. One tornado carved its way through Cranston RI and Providence RI causing twenty injuries. Rhode Island had not reported a tornado in twelve years, and three touched down in 24 hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1987 — Morning thunderstorms drenched Goldsboro, NC, with 3.37 inches of rain. Late morning thunderstorms in Arizona produced dime size hail, wind gusts to 50 mph, and two inches of rain, at Sierra Vista. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A dozen cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Waco, TX, with a reading of 107 degrees. The record high of 88 degrees at Marquette, MI, was their twenty-third of the year. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Nebraska, Minnesota and Wisconsin, with wind gusts to 81 mph reported at McCool, NE. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Forty cities in the central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Valentine, NE, with a reading of 40 degrees, and Belcourt ND with a low of 37 degrees. Martin SD was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 30 degrees. Unseasonably hot weather prevailed over Florida and Washington State, with record highs of 100 degrees at Daytona Beach, FL, 101 degrees at Walla Walla, WA, and 103 degrees at Hanford, WA. (The National Weather Summary)



Getting Back on Track

A life apart from Jesus will never thrive. True fulfillment is found in Him.

Hebrews 12:1-3: 1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Our Creator gives each of His followers the specific gifts, abilities, and resources necessary to live according to His purpose (Ephesians 4:11-12). Sadly, many people drift through life without taking hold of God's terrific plan for them, not realizing that in Him and Him alone true fulfillment is found.

There are also many followers of Jesus who walk with Him for a time but then get off track. This happens for a variety of reasons. Some become fainthearted and lose the desire to persevere through challenging circumstances. For others, worldly ideas and goals become distractions. Sports, hobbies, or simply busyness can also cause a believer's heart to stray from Christ.

Regardless of the cause, any life separated from the only true anchor—Jesus—is in danger. God offers believers a full life in Him. But the Bible teaches that Christians will not thrive if they live apart from God's Word, His principles, and an ever-deepening relationship with Him (John 10:10; John 14:6).

Are you walking closely with Jesus? Or have the cares of life entangled you? Pray for wisdom as you consider these questions. And if anything besides God holds first place in your heart, ask that He help you surrender it to Him. Then commit to pray, read the Word, and obey.

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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Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.06.26

7 20 42 48 51 3

TOP PRIZE:
\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 31 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.04.26

14 21 51 55 65 21

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$70,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 16 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.05.26

1 19 20 40 51 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,400,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 31 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.05.26

8 18 28 31 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$21,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 46 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.05.26

6 33 54 63 66 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 14 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.05.26

14 20 59 60 61 25

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$856,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 14 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

ICE will release body camera video only when seen in the agency's 'best interests,' policy says

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

Immigration and Customs Enforcement is moving to equip officers with body cameras in the next two months but the agency's policy gives it broad control over what footage will be made public by specifying any releases must be in its "best interests."

After years of delays, ICE said its field officers nationwide will have body-worn cameras by the end of September. The rollout comes after recent fatal shootings by officers enforcing President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown have intensified pressure for accountability that the cameras could provide.

But the agency's body-worn camera policy could mean taxpayers who are pitching in tens of millions of dollars to pay for the cameras may be kept in the dark about some high-profile confrontations, at least in their immediate aftermath.

The policy says ICE will promptly release video of shootings and other encounters in which its agents cause death or serious injury only after determining "it is in the best interests of the agency" to do so. That gives its director discretion to release recordings that reflect well on the agency's image while working to keep others secret, experts on body camera policies said.

Such selective releases are routine in some law enforcement agencies but usually not so clearly contemplated in policy, according to professor Christopher Schneider of Brandon University in Canada, a co-author of the new book "Police Body-Worn Cameras: Media and the New Discourse of Police Reform."

"In some ways, ICE is saying the quiet part out loud," he said. "Body-worn cameras are being used as contemporary image-work tools to present the police to the public in the most favorable way possible."

Body camera policy allows withholding some video

The policy requires officers to activate cameras during routine enforcement activities, including while making arrests, executing search warrants and responding to emergencies.

After shootings or other serious confrontations, a committee that includes top ICE officials and lawyers will review footage and recommend whether to release it promptly, according to the body camera policy issued in February 2025.

If the answer is yes, the recording could be released within 72 hours. But if the ICE director finds that "specific and compelling circumstances" justify withholding the video, they have the authority to block or indefinitely delay the release, the policy says.

The policy does not elaborate on such circumstances, and ICE did not respond to a question from The Associated Press about how it would make such decisions.

Practices vary widely in the U.S. In Chicago, a police watchdog agency routinely releases body camera video of shootings and other serious use-of-force incidents within 60 days. In Philadelphia, the police department very rarely uses its discretion to release video of specific incidents and has no policy for when to do so.

Even when footage is released, ICE's policy will require the redaction of all officers' identifying features such as their faces, names and badge numbers to preserve their privacy.

Schneider, who has studied body cameras since their use began spreading a decade ago, said he does not expect ICE to release footage of fatal shootings like those last month in Houston and Maine.

He noted ICE's sister agency, Customs and Border Protection, has not released footage of the January shooting of Alex Pretti in Minneapolis even though it was captured on agents' cameras. CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott told lawmakers in February that the video and other materials were under investigation and would be made public "when it's appropriate."

ICE says all officers will have cameras by end of September

ICE spent \$30.9 million in July to purchase body camera equipment from Axon, the Arizona-based com-

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pany that also manufactures Tasers, federal spending records show.

The spending began one day after the fatal shooting of a 25-year-old motorist in Maine by an ICE officer with a history of violent behavior. Days earlier, another ICE officer shot and killed a homebuilder in Houston who was driving to work.

Neither shooting was recorded with body cameras. That news angered members of Congress, who had given ICE \$20 million to purchase body cameras in a bill passed to end a partial government shutdown on April 30.

ICE said body cameras have been sent to more than half its field officers and the rest will receive them by the end of September. That timeline pushes back estimates from earlier public statements. Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins, who backed funding for cameras, said last month that the agency informed her they would be deployed by the end of August. ICE had said earlier that they would be issued by mid-September.

ICE officers working in the Houston area, where the agency sent more than 800 cameras, are among those who have started training, according to U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, a Texas Democrat and member of the House Appropriations Committee.

At least one member of every arrest team will be required to have a camera, the agency said.

"I think the American people need to see what that officer sees and hears," White House border czar Tom Homan said July 19 on CBS News' "Face the Nation." "And if you look at the data, body cameras actually exonerate agents more than they, you know, provide evidence of wrongdoing."

Schneider said he expects ICE to release recordings that promote the agency's mass deportation program by portraying officers as brave and immigrants as dangerous criminals.

"Much of what law enforcement does is convince the public that we need them and feel safe and they do all this good stuff for us," he said. "The more bad stuff the public sees, the more angry the public gets. And this causes problems for the police brand."

ICE has taken years to adopt body cameras

ICE began testing body cameras in 2021 during President Joe Biden's administration and distributed 1,400 devices three years later, saying use would expand as funding became available.

After returning to office in 2025, President Donald Trump rescinded a Biden order that required federal law enforcement agencies to use body cameras.

ICE did not buy body cameras even after it received a historic \$75 billion infusion in Trump's signature policy bill in 2025 and began hiring thousands of new officers. The two July purchases from Axon were made through an existing government contract that began in 2023, records show.

"This is not hard to deploy, but they've slow-rolled it," said Jason Houser, who was ICE chief of staff under Biden and helped implement the agency's pilot program.

Houser said the Trump administration should have equipped officers with body cameras when it expanded mass arrests and traffic stops. Doing so only after several shootings and pressure from Congress "is clearly a political response" that will not make officers or the public safer, he said.

"This doesn't fix the problem of putting officers in a place where they're not trained or equipped to carry out the style of operations that the administration is asking them to do," he said.

One man works to slow the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak in history, and he's doing it unpaid

By PROSPER HERI NGORORA and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Wiza Bondele goes to work every day at a hospital in Congo with one goal in mind: to slow the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak on record.

At an Ebola treatment hospital in the eastern Ituri province, the epicenter of Congo's ongoing outbreak, Bondele disinfects contaminated areas, checks visitors' temperatures and enforces handwashing protocols — work that puts him at risk of getting infected.

But like hundreds of other front-line health workers, including burial teams and drivers, Bondele says

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he has been working without pay since the outbreak was declared in mid-May in one of Congo's most remote and conflict-hit regions.

Poor welfare for front-line workers has been a key source of concern in the outbreak. The payment issues and attacks on health teams and facilities have forced some health workers to walk off the job, disrupting critical care in the outbreak that authorities say continues to spread at an alarming rate and faster than efforts to track it.

Ebola spreads through direct contact with the bodily fluids of infected people or contaminated materials, a risk Bondele is well aware of.

"Sometimes patients are bleeding or vomiting blood. We clean and disinfect those places," the 29-year-old infection control worker told The Associated Press while on duty. "With risks like that, we deserve salaries."

Confirmed cases in the outbreak have exceeded 4,000, including over 1,800 deaths, according to the latest government data. It is the second-largest Ebola outbreak on record, behind the 2014-2016 West Africa outbreak that recorded more than 28,000 cases, including over 11,000 deaths. Another from 2018-2020 killed at least 2,200.

This outbreak has been linked to the Bundibugyo virus, for which there are currently no approved vaccines or treatments.

Workers continue despite financial strain

A veteran of Congo's 2018 Ebola response, Bondele returned when the virus resurfaced, believing his experience could help protect his community in Ituri, which accounts for nearly 90% of the Ebola cases.

Instead, he found himself among many workers who have continued reporting for duty without receiving the monthly salary of \$510 that Bondele said they were promised.

Officials have told them that the outstanding payments will be made, he said. Workers have registered their numbers to get paid through mobile money transactions, signed attendance sheets and waited for payment notifications, but only some were eventually paid.

Bondele said even colleagues who were paid have told him they have not received the full amount.

Congolese authorities did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Thursday. Officials in the past have blamed logistical issues for the payment delays.

Without his salary, paying rent, buying food, phone credit, covering transport costs and paying water bills have all become daily struggles. He also supports his wife, child and other relatives, responsibilities he says have become increasingly difficult to meet.

One morning, the hardship became painfully visible.

Setting off for work on his motorcycle, Bondele said he ran out of fuel along the way. With no money to refill the tank, he left the bike with neighbors and walked the remaining 13 kilometers (8 miles) to the hospital. By the time he arrived, he said his shoes had fallen apart.

Despite the unpaid wages and hardship, Bondele and hundreds of workers continue to show up to the hospital seven days a week. He said his work is too important to abandon.

"I hope their conscience tells them that I deserve to be paid," Bondele said, referring to officials.

Strikes and protests have led to disruptions

Bondele was among hundreds of Ebola response workers in Bunia who staged strikes and protests over unpaid wages in recent weeks, at times abandoning health facilities and disrupting parts of the response as the outbreak continued to spread.

"We realized they (the authorities) weren't doing anything, and that's when we went on strike," he said.

They warned that unpaid wages were undermining morale and affecting patient care. In a statement, staff at one treatment center said they would remain on strike until "concrete solutions" were found to resolve months of unpaid wages and bonuses.

Dr. Adelard Lufungula, operations manager for the government's Ebola response, said last month that the payment problem was being resolved, with workers now paid through mobile money instead of cash and the backlog expected to be cleared soon.

For Bondele, the explanations have done little to ease the uncertainty.

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"I wonder whether it is injustice or whether there simply isn't enough money," he said.

Insecurity and residents' mistrust complicate the response

The strikes come as the Ebola response is already battling armed conflict, widespread misinformation and deep public mistrust, all of which have made it harder for health workers to contain the outbreak.

"It is very difficult to get people to understand," Bondele said. "Sometimes while raising awareness I can be threatened or beaten, and I have to run away."

Some communities continue resisting basic prevention measures such as regular handwashing, he said.

Restrictions on traditional burials, where families are prevented from touching the highly contagious bodies of loved ones, have fueled resentment in some communities. Rumors claim that the virus is a hoax, that health workers are profiting from the outbreak or that hospitals are withholding lifesaving treatments.

The misinformation has repeatedly turned violent. Angry crowds have torched Ebola treatment centers, stormed hospitals to retrieve relatives' bodies and attacked teams carrying out safe burials. Health officials say the mistrust has also made contact tracing and early treatment more difficult, particularly in remote communities affected by rebel violence.

As visitors line up for temperature checks and disinfectant is sprayed to keep the virus at bay, Bondele continues the work he says he joined out of passion.

"Working this job takes a lot of courage," he said. "But today, I am discouraged."

Student kills at least 6 in a shooting at a high school in Thailand, authorities say

By TIAN MACLEOD JI Associated Press

NONTHABURI, Thailand (AP) — A student shot several people at a high school outside Bangkok on Friday, killing at least six people and wounding several others, police said.

The shooting happened at the Debsirin Nonthaburi School in Nonthaburi province northwest of the national capital, Royal Thai Police spokesperson Trairong Piwpan told The Associated Press.

A witness told reporters that students hid inside a classroom while they heard gunshots from another building before police officers knocked on the door and cleared a way for them to leave the building.

About an hour after the shooting, people stood outside the school comforting one another and police and first responders walked around inside the school.

Authorities gave conflicting information on the casualties that could not immediately be reconciled.

Trairong told news broadcaster Channel 3 the shooter was being hospitalized in serious condition and 15 others were injured, with two in critical condition. He said three teachers and three students were killed.

Health Minister Pattana Promphat said 22 people were injured with nine in critical condition. Some were injured from causes such as falls, and it wasn't clear how many were shot.

Deputy Interior Minister Polapee Suwunchwee told reporters at the scene that five teachers died and that the shooter killed his two grandparents at home before going to the school. He also said the shooter died at a hospital.

Trairong said the motive was still being investigated. He said the gun was believed to have been taken from a member of the student's family.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul offered his condolences and said he had ordered relevant officials to take care of the victims.

In February, a 17-year-old stole a gun from police and opened fire at a public high school in southern Thailand, briefly taking people hostage in a two-hour attack that killed one person and injured two others.

In 2023, a 14-year-old boy was accused of a shooting at a major Bangkok shopping mall.

Jets running back Isaiah Davis sidelined a couple of weeks with a minor knee injury

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr. AP Pro Football Writer

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. (AP) — New York Jets running back Isaiah Davis will be sidelined “a couple of weeks” with a knee injury, head coach Aaron Glenn announced Thursday.

While he didn’t specify the nature of the injury, it didn’t appear Glenn thinks it’s serious or will affect Davis’ availability for the regular-season opener at Tennessee on Sept. 13.

“He had a minor knee (injury),” Glenn said after practice. “He’ll be out maybe a couple of weeks, but he’ll be back. I’m confident that he’ll be just fine going into the regular season.”

Davis, entering his third NFL season, was in uniform at practice — without a helmet — but watched the entire session from the side while standing with other teammates on the offense.

The 24-year-old Davis was a fifth-round pick by the Jets in the 2024 draft out of South Dakota State. He is expected to have a complementary role behind starter Breece Hall and backup Braelon Allen. Davis had career highs with 236 yards rushing and 21 receptions last season in 16 games before missing the season finale with a concussion.

In two seasons, Davis has rushed for 410 yards on 73 carries — an impressive 5.6-yard average per carry — and a touchdown with 30 catches for 261 yards and a score.

Jets get good news on Sadiq

Glenn confirmed that rookie tight end Kenyon Sadiq will return before the start of the regular season after suffering a setback in his recovery from offseason hernia surgery.

The coach said Tuesday that Sadiq, the No. 16 overall selection in April, will be sidelined “a little bit” but was confident he would be available for Week 1.

“Actually got pretty good news other day, you know, and I’m just crossing my fingers and still I’m going to say it’s a couple of weeks still,” Glenn said. “But it’s not anything that’s going to keep him out of the regular season.”

Sadiq, who suffered the injury during the college season at Oregon last year, was on what Glenn called “a maintenance program” at the start of training camp. Sadiq practiced the first three days of training camp, but hasn’t participated since.

Ponds working his way back

Cornerback D’Angelo Ponds has yet to practice during training camp, but Glenn said the second-round pick out of Indiana is progressing in his return from a strained calf.

Ponds is expected to compete for a starting slot cornerback spot with Jarvis Brownlee Jr., a fifth-round pick of Tennessee in 2024 who was traded to New York during the season last year. Brownlee was mostly solid for the Jets before suffering a season-ending hip injury against Baltimore in Week 12.

“Ponds is getting close,” Glenn said. “He’s moving around. The thing is, I don’t want to put a date on it just yet, but again, he is another guy that I know he’ll be ready in the next couple of weeks, I would say that. But he’s moving around.”

Regarding other injuries, Glenn said edge rusher Kingsley Enagbare is day-to-day with an ankle issue and cornerbacks Nahshon Wright (hip strain) and Brandon Stephens (undisclosed) will “be just fine.”

The Danube River’s water is dropping so low that World War II ships are emerging

By MARKO DROBNJAKOVIC Associated Press

PRAHOVO, Serbia (AP) — Water levels on the Danube River, the second longest in Europe, have dropped so low because of drought that the hulks of dozens of World War II German warships are emerging into view.

They are a curious distraction from the summer heat crisis. The Danube’s record low water levels also have forced power plants to the brink of shutting down, and governments across Central and Eastern

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Europe are taking steps to conserve electricity.

In the middle of the river separating Serbia and Romania near the Serbian port of Prahovo, a rusty hull is now visible along with a broken mast where the Nazi flag used to fly.

The ships, some still laden with weapons, belonged to Nazi Germany's Black Sea fleet that the Germans deliberately sank as they retreated from Romania and as Soviet forces advanced deeper into Europe near the end of the war.

Historians say up to 200 German warships were scuttled in September 1944 near Prahovo in the Danube gorge as they came under Soviet fire. The idea behind the deliberate sinking was to slow down the Soviet advance in the Balkans. But Nazi Germany surrendered months later, in May 1945.

The sight of the old warships is a reminder that the Serbian government, with European Union financial support, has long been trying to do something about them. Some were removed from the river by Communist Yugoslav authorities, but most have remained because of the explosives they carried.

Now, however, authorities are trying to keep traffic flowing on the Danube, which flows through 10 nations, as the dropping water levels create dangerous conditions. Experts have linked the unusually hot weather to global warming and other factors.

Krsta Brandic, a Prahovo resident, said the low water levels have almost stopped ship traffic: "As you can see, the (big) ships can't pass anymore."

China's exports slow slightly in July despite robust demand for high-tech products

BANGKOK (AP) — China's exports slowed slightly in July from the month before despite robust demand for high-tech electronics and vehicles.

Customs data released Friday showed China's trade surplus narrowed to \$112.5 billion from \$125.6 billion in June.

Exports rose nearly 24% in July from a year earlier, compared with a 27% increase in June. Imports climbed 27.5% year-on-year, but that was lower than June's jump of 36%.

Disruptions to port operations due to typhoons helped to slow trade, analysts said.

"The boom in Chinese trade slowed a touch in July but the big picture is that export and import values remain elevated, helped by soaring global demand for electronics and green tech products," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a report.

The Iran war interfered with shipments of aluminum from the Middle East, leading to an increase in Chinese exports of the metal, he noted.

Trade data show China has fully transitioned from providing mostly low cost manufacturing to supplying vital machinery and components for advanced manufacturing.

Exports of high-tech items surged nearly 41% in January-July from the same period the year before, while shipments of vehicles jumped 55% and overall exports of electronics and machinery rose 26%.

China's exports to the U.S. climbed just 2.6% year-on-year in the first seven months of this year, while imports from the U.S. grew 1.4%.

Exports to the European Union were up nearly 17%, while exports to Southeast Asia, which as a bloc is now China's biggest trading partner, surged 25%.

'I'm very good at grass.' Why Trump goes into the weeds on one of his favorite topics

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will tell you: The grass is always greener on his side of the fence.

And tell you. And tell you.

Trump has spoken repeatedly of his prowess with green lawns since returning to the White House — at

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some events even spending more time talking about it than the war in Iran, the economy or November's midterm elections.

It was on the president's mind just five weeks after his second inauguration, when he pointed out the Oval Office window during an interview with *The Spectator*. "You see the grass outside, right?" Trump asked before detailing his plans to pave over much of it. "Some people would like to leave it. But the problem is, you can't."

Trump has kept on the topic constantly ever since, saying as recently as Monday at a White House event with military spouses: "Grass is like humans. It has a life."

All told, he's mentioned grass in at least 45 public events or interviews over the past 18 months — or at least once every 12 days. That doesn't include the numerous social media posts that Trump has also made on the topic.

His gravitation toward grass speaks to Trump's decades as a New York real estate developer and personal love of building things and overseeing construction projects, but also to the amount of time he spends on the golf course and his extensive, second-term efforts to revamp the White House and greater Washington in his own image. He's already far outpaced the 26 times he mentioned grass during the entirety of his first four-year term.

The White House declined to comment. But Trump has made clear where his interest in — and knowledge of — grass comes from.

"I know a lot about grass because I own a lot of golf courses," he said while announcing the recipients of the Kennedy Center Honors last August. "And, if you don't have good grass, you're not in business very long."

A week later, while visiting park police officers in Washington, the president declared, "I know more about grass than any human being, I think, anywhere in the world."

Trump frequently touts his Washington overhaul and Rose Garden patio

Matt Koch, the lawns research fellow for gardening giant Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, met recently with the president to discuss planting new grass on the White House's South Lawn. He proudly considers himself a "grass nerd" and came away convinced Trump is an honorary one.

"An amazing dialogue, talking grass for half an hour," Koch said of the Oval Office discussion. "Going back and forth about grass."

Trump has managed to bring up grass at events as varied as the signing of an executive order on TikTok and the 2025 White House celebration of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. He mentioned it while pardoning turkeys last Thanksgiving, while addressing the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, and while signing a directive on quantum technology.

Last September, while hosting Republican lawmakers for dinner, he pledged of green spaces around Washington, "We're gonna re-grass them with the best guys in the country." That same month, during an event announcing the intended renaming of the Department of Defense, Trump assured attendees, "I'm very good at grass."

Trump most frequently mentions grass while promoting his Washington beautification efforts. In May, he spent 10 minutes of a Cabinet meeting detailing his efforts to fix fountains and give D.C.'s parks and monuments a facelift — sometimes sounding more like a small-town mayor than the leader of the free world.

Ironically, the president brings up the topic while defending his decisions to remove grass for new construction — like when he covered the lawn near the White House's Rose Garden with a stone patio.

"Problem with the grass, you couldn't do anything with it," he said during a 2025 Oval Office tour for hosts of the "All-In" podcast.

The president also frequently recounts that hordes of women, including journalists, Cabinet members and administration officials, used to complain to him about their high heels getting stuck in the mud in the old, grassy Rose Garden.

"The women would be lifting up their shoes, saying, 'You've destroyed my shoes,'" he said during a luncheon last fall. When hosting the Los Angeles Dodgers in July, he relayed that women in heels "would

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go down like quicksand."

Trump's helipad is wiping out even more grass

Erecting a UFC octagon to mark his 80th birthday in June reduced large swaths of the South Lawn to dusty dirt. In the weeks since, crews have been building a sprawling helicopter landing pad, meaning even more grass has been removed from the lawn.

Trump said the helipad was needed because the new, more powerful fleet of helicopters now being used as Marine One tore up the previous sod.

"When you land on the grass, it's not that the grass gets discolored — it gets ripped out," he said in June. Trump even described tufts of turf going "all over" and said, "Half of the grass was sitting in front of the Oval Office front door."

Scotts Miracle-Gro donated \$1 million in monetary and product support to the National Park Service to restore the South Lawn after the UFC fight, and Trump used the meeting with Koch in June to select a custom turfgrass blend of four kinds of tall fescues and four Kentucky bluegrasses. The company's CEO, James Hagedorn, is a Trump supporter.

Trump, Koch said, asked good, detailed questions as he was shown carpet sample-like swaths of each grass variety.

"You can tell he spends a lot of time on golf courses," Koch said. "He obviously owns courses, and he knows grass from being around it."

Koch returned to the White House last week as crews began resodding some areas of the White House lawn outside the helipad construction area. There are plans next spring to plant seeds from the grass blend Trump selected. By then, growth will be optimal, and the helipad work should be complete, making the lawn restoration easier.

Many golfers are obsessed with grass

Also key to the president's grass fixation is his love of golf.

Bert McCarty, a Clemson University professor of turfgrass science and management, said golfers like how top courses are so different — from incorporating the ocean in places near beaches to relying on inclines in the mountains.

Trump, McCarty said, is "like most golfers. He likes the challenge of the course and the differences of the course to add variety."

Last August, Trump pledged that, after his administration's various improvements, parks in Washington will "look like Augusta" — a reference to the home of the iconic Masters tournament, where aesthetics are so important that bags from the pro shop and food wrappers are green so that any possible litter blends in with the grass during TV broadcasts.

McCarty said most people "look at the beautiful flowers and the striped-up fairways, and they just think it's heaven." But "Augusta basically spares no expense to achieve the look they're after," he added, and municipalities "can't compete with that."

Cost aside, though, Trump may be thinking even bigger than Augusta, pointing to his own golf course in Northern Virginia.

"It'll look like, more importantly, Trump National Golf Club," he said. "That's even better."

A deal with Iran over the Strait of Hormuz may require a compromise from Trump

By BEN FINLEY and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — To reach a deal with Iran that reopens the economically vital Strait of Hormuz, President Donald Trump may need to do something out of character — compromise.

Any concession would be tough for the Republican president, who has insisted there is no truth to his sagging poll numbers, the sluggish economy and the U.S. military's dwindling stockpiles of key weapons following the Iran war he launched with Israel more than five months ago.

"He divides the world into winners and losers, and this would make him a loser," said Eliot Cohen, who

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served as counselor of the State Department in the George W. Bush administration. "And the image of being a loser, I think, would be intolerable for him."

The sticking point has been over control of the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil normally flows. While both sides say a deal is close, the Trump administration has ruled out any arrangement that would cement Iran's grip over the Persian Gulf waterway, including Tehran charging fees.

But Iran has insisted on some measure of control, saying the strait will not go back to being an open international waterway as it was before the war. Despite thousands of U.S. strikes, Iran can still fire drones and missiles at vessels, giving it a chokehold over commercial shipping.

Cohen said yielding ground to Iran would be difficult for the president, even if the conflict keeps gasoline prices elevated and poses problems for Republicans in November's midterm elections.

But David Schenker, a former State Department official in the first Trump administration, said the increasing economic pressure may actually prompt Trump to compromise on the strait, even if it's likely to have profound implications on global trade.

"There will be a lot of spin both ways, but my guess is that the president has tipped his hand as to the urgency for him of resolving the crisis," said Schenker, now a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "This is a concession he may very well be willing to make."

Trump says weapons stockpiles are 'a little bit tighter'

Trump, however, has so far conceded little about the war.

He posted on social media Thursday that the U.S. military still has "massive amounts" of weapons and that large amounts are being manufactured. He threatened jail time for the alleged "leakers" of information on the nation's weapons stockpiles.

Trump was referencing a Washington Post story that reported his frustration with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth over the shrinking inventories of advanced weapons, as the Cabinet had gathered at Camp David last week.

A senior administration official said there had been a "robust and healthy" discussion about Iran in the Cabinet meeting and would not provide additional details except to say there had not been a "knock-down, drag-out fight" over the matter. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration deliberations.

Experts say the U.S. military is running short on weapons like advanced missile interceptors that have defended American troops from Iranian attacks. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, has released reports on declining inventories based on budget documents and other public information.

When asked later about weapons stockpiles, Trump told reporters that "we need more all the time." He claimed that certain kinds of munitions are in "virtually unlimited supply" and others are "a little bit tighter." He didn't offer more specifics.

He insisted that "we're in great shape. But, with that being said, we always want more. We have to have more," noting that the military could tap into U.S. supplies of munitions around the world if needed.

Hegseth was on Capitol Hill this week, meeting privately with Republican senators as he makes the case for billions of dollars in additional Pentagon spending as part of a major GOP budget package.

Sen. Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat and former Navy pilot, said the weapons shortfall stems from a war that lacked a well-defined goal and strategy beyond striking more than 14,000 targets.

"My contention on this is, if you knew what the goal is, maybe the target list would have been 500 targets. Maybe it would have been 200 targets," Kelly said, adding the Pentagon wants "billions and billions of dollars to fix their self-inflicted problem."

Trump has made a dubious claim about polling

Trump also has claimed in a social media post Tuesday that his polling numbers are the best "they have ever been." He cited accomplishments including employment numbers and the "Denuclearization of Iran."

But about two-thirds of U.S. adults say the war with Iran has not been worthwhile, according to a poll from late July by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That includes the vast

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majority of Democrats and independents, as well as about 37% of Republicans.

On employment, the United States had nearly 159 million jobs in June, not including farmworkers, which was a record. In Trump's second term, however, job growth has slowed considerably.

Trump also continues to claim that the Strait of Hormuz is open to commercial shipping. He said Thursday that the strait is "sort of open right now" and pointed to the Navy's blockade of Iranian ports.

"But they can always shoot something, they always have something or drop a mine," Trump said of Iran. "And if you have one mine sitting out there, you sort of mess things up because people don't want to take their billion-dollar boats and accidentally get hit by a mine."

At least two ships were hit in the Strait of Hormuz in the past week, while several others reported near misses or warnings from entities claiming to represent Iran's Revolutionary Guard, according to maritime data company Lloyd's List Intelligence.

Vessel traffic through the strait increased to 84 transits last week, up from 45 the week before. But traffic is still far below the more than 700 transits seen in a typical week before the crisis, Lloyd's List said.

A deal over the Strait of Hormuz could hinge on fees

U.S. and Iranian officials say they are close to reaching an agreement to reopen the strait. That is even as the U.S. military insists the strait is open through a route it helps oversee near Oman's coast, saying this week that it "remains free and open for all commercial vessels seeking to transit the international waterway."

The Associated Press reported Wednesday that the potential deal is being portrayed as a temporary solution to the dispute over the strait, and that it would allow ships to enter the Persian Gulf through an Iranian-controlled route and exit through an Omani-controlled route.

The Trump administration has said repeatedly that it is strongly opposed to any arrangement that would see Iran charge fees.

Any temporary routes through the waterway will not have tolls, charges or other impediments, according to a U.S. official not authorized to comment publicly who spoke Thursday on condition of anonymity. The official said Trump's preferred choice is diplomacy and he "holds all the cards" in dealing with Iran.

US likely added nearly 100,000 jobs in July, but market is still tough for young and unemployed

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — On the face of it, the U.S. job market has looked pretty stable this year. Hiring has been solid — if not exactly spectacular — after a lackluster 2025.

But underneath the headline numbers, the job market is sending mixed and confusing signals.

Companies in some industries can't find enough workers and have to pay premium wages to fill vacancies. Others are making such efficient use of technology that they don't need to hire much at all.

Normally, the American labor market looks either good or bad. Lately, it's been a bit of both.

Layoffs are rare — but times are tough for jobseekers

Americans who have jobs are enjoying unusual job security. Layoffs are low by historical standards. Companies, scarred by the surprise labor shortages that followed COVID-19 lockdowns a few years ago, don't want to risk giving up the staff they have.

One week in July the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits dropped to the lowest level in more than 50 years. The jobless rate tumbled to 4.2% in June, the lowest in a year, and is expected to have stayed there last month, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet.

But Americans who have lost their jobs — or are seeking to bust into the job market for the first time — are struggling to catch a break. One sign of their trouble: In May 27.5% of the unemployed had been out of work for six months, the most in four and a half years; the share dipped slightly but remained high in June.

Economists have used the term "no hire, no fire" to describe the unusual job market conditions.

The Labor Department releases July employment numbers on Friday. They are expected to show that companies, government agencies and nonprofits added nearly 98,000 jobs last month, according to the

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FactSet survey.

That would be an improvement on the disappointing 57,000 jobs employers created in June.

Rebounding from a miserable 2025

And it would mark a continued rebound from 2025 when the economy generated fewer than 10,000 new jobs a month – the weakest hiring outside a recession since 2002. Last year, high interest rates and uncertainty over President Donald Trump’s economic policies discouraged companies from adding staff.

So far in 2026, employers have added an average 92,000 jobs a month.

In the past, that would have been an unimpressive level of hiring.

But the United States doesn’t need as many jobs as it used to keep the unemployment rate from rising. Trump’s immigration crackdown and the ongoing retirement of baby boomers mean fewer people are competing for work. So the “break-even” rate of monthly hiring, 155,000 in 2023-2024, has dropped, perhaps to nearly zero, according to a Federal Reserve study.

“There are just fewer people available to hire,” said Sal Guatieri, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets. For some, labor shortages translate into higher wages. The payroll processor ADP reported Wednesday that people who changed jobs last month pocketed a 7% raise, the biggest year-over-year gain in almost a year and a premium over a 4.4% increase for workers who stayed where they were.

At the same time, companies have become more productive in recent years, using technology to do the work that humans used to do. “We are seeing companies produce more with their current staff,” Guatieri said. “So there’s less need to take on new workers.”

Shortages of available workers and rising productivity, he said, “will keep the lid on the rate of hiring and monthly job growth.”

Moreover, the outlook for hiring is clouded by the ongoing fighting in the Persian Gulf, which has pushed up energy prices and squeezed family budgets, and by the rise of artificial intelligence, which could either make workers more efficient and better-paid -- or take their jobs.

Quirks in the jobs data

The June jobs report contained an oddity that might have reversed in July. The Labor Department numbers showed that 720,000 people dropped out of the labor force in June – and a surprising 700,000 (97%) of them were ages 25 to 34.

A smaller labor force means fewer people are competing for work and tends to push the unemployment rate lower. If the June drop was a statistical quirk – and the labor force rebounded last month and increased the number of people vying for jobs – the unemployment rate could surprise and tick back up.

In a report out this week, researchers Ingrid Chen, Marianna Kudlyak and Riva Mikhlin of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco found that landing a job has gotten tougher in the past couple of years – surprisingly so.

Normally, this deep into an economic expansion – it’s been more than six years since the last recession – employers would need workers so badly that they’d be taking chances on young people and on those with less education. Not this time. “Instead of being pulled in, the pipeline into employment is shrinking such that the recovery is no longer reaching workers at the margins,” Chen, Kudlyak and Mikhlin write.

Moreover, the unemployed people who normally get back to work the fastest – those in their prime working years (25 to 54) and with college educations – are struggling to find new jobs. The San Francisco Fed researchers aren’t sure what’s making the job search so tough. They suspect it might have to do with the immigration crackdown, hiring slowdowns specifically at tech companies and government contractors, uncertainty over the direction of government policy or “early signals of broader labor market deterioration.”

Tennessee voters oust Trump-backed congressman, set fall matchup for redrawn Memphis-area House seat

By DAVID A. LIEB and KRISTIN M. HALL Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Former Tennessee Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Hatcher defeated U.S. Rep. Andy Ogles in a Republican primary Thursday for a significantly reshaped congressional district — marking a rare rejection of a candidate endorsed by President Donald Trump.

Voters also picked a pair of Memphis-area lawmakers to square off in another vastly reconfigured U.S. House district. Trump-backed state Sen. Brent Taylor will face Democratic state Rep. Justin Pearson, who gained national prominence when he was expelled from the Tennessee House for protesting in support of gun control measures and then reelected by voters.

The primaries provided the first test of a new U.S. House map that was redrawn in May by Republican state lawmakers after the U.S. Supreme Court weakened federal Voting Rights Act protections for minorities. Trump cheered along the redistricting as part of a broader national plan to try to hold on to a slim House majority in the midterm elections.

Republicans already hold eight of the state's nine congressional seats and will be going for a clean sweep of the districts in November.

The previously compact 9th Congressional District, based in Memphis, had a majority Black population and is represented by a Democrat. But it was cracked apart by Republicans this year, causing a ripple of changes that also reconfigured Ogles' 5th District.

A Trump-endorsed candidate is defeated

Ogles, a member of the conservative Freedom Caucus, had faced controversies related to his campaign finances and his resume, among other things. But Trump gave him an early endorsement last fall — and praised him on Election Day as “a Conservative Warrior” — as Ogles sought a third term.

Ogles capitalized on a previous redistricting in the 2022 elections, winning a formerly Democratic-held seat that was reshaped to Republicans' advantage by splitting the Nashville area among three districts.

The new 5th District stretches from Ogles' base in central Tennessee to the northwest corner of the state before snaking south along the Mississippi River to Memphis — with 82% of its voters new, according to an Associated Press estimate.

Although he lacked Trump's endorsement, Hatcher was backed by Republican Gov. Bill Lee, under whom he served for seven years. Hatcher campaigned as pro-Trump while emphasizing his farming background.

“The message resonated, and the message was: Work like a farmer, get things done and serve others,” Hatcher told the AP after winning the primary.

Ogles' campaign declined to comment.

Ogles' controversies have included the FBI seizing his cellphone in 2024 as part of an investigation into his campaign finance reporting. The Justice Department recently agreed to return the device, signaling that it was abandoning the probe, which began under the Biden administration.

In 2023, Ogles acknowledged that he had graduated with a liberal studies degree from Middle Tennessee State University, saying he was “mistaken” for previously describing it as an international relations degree.

Columbia Mayor Chaz Molder won the Democratic primary in the 5th District.

Pearson and Taylor to face off in revamped Memphis district

The new 9th District stretches about 200 miles (320 kilometers) east from Memphis across rural areas before reaching north toward Nashville. It previously favored Democrats but now tilts Republican, with 71% of voters new to the district, according to an AP estimate.

After the redistricting, longtime Democratic Rep. Steve Cohen announced that he would no longer seek reelection.

Pearson noted to supporters Thursday night that it was 61 years ago to the day that the Voting Rights Act was signed. He said the Supreme Court and Tennessee lawmakers have effectively undone portions of it, leading to the redrawing of the formerly majority-Black district.

“The political dilution and degradation of our rights is happening,” Pearson said. But he added: “We're

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one step closer to Washington, D.C.”

Taylor said in a statement to supporters that “Pearson is the face of the extreme left in this race — the same activist who has repeatedly put chaos over order.”

While Pearson opposed Trump’s deployment of National Guard troops to address crime in Memphis last year, Taylor joined other Republicans in supporting it, calling it “an investment.”

Taylor also sponsored a 2024 law that required law enforcement agencies to communicate with federal immigration authorities if they discover people are in the country illegally.

Memphis voters voice dismay over redistricting

For decades Memphis, the most populous city in Shelby County, formed the base of its own congressional district. Now the county is split among three districts that extend outward like spokes into rural areas.

Lonzo Taylor, a retired postal worker and military veteran, said Black voters like himself have had their voices diluted.

“We only had one district in the whole state of Tennessee, and you don’t even want that to be fair? It’s just terrible,” said Taylor, 72. “I love this state, but I am very disappointed in our governor,” who called lawmakers into a special session for the redistricting.

Terrice Thomas, 45, an educator who votes for Democrats, had to learn a lot more about the candidates when she got switched from District 9 to District 8. She is concerned Memphis constituents could get overlooked.

“Is everybody going to have an equal say on what’s happening in their communities or even the people that you’re voting for?” Thomas said. “Are they going to really take into account the different areas and what makes us unique?”

Garrett wins Republican primary for open seat in the 6th District

Republican U.S. Rep. John Rose opted not to seek reelection in the 6th to run for governor instead. That created a contentious primary for the GOP-leaning district, which stretches east from Nashville.

State Rep. Johnny Garrett won a Republican contest that included Rose’s recent chief of staff, former U.S. Rep. Van Hilleary. Mike Croley won a five-way Democratic primary.

Republican voters pick Blackburn for governor

U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn defeated Rose in the GOP primary to succeed Gov. Lee, who is barred by term limits from seeking reelection. Memphis City Council member Jerri Green won for the Democrats.

Republicans have held the governor’s office since 2011 and won every U.S. Senate election since 1994.

Sen. Bill Hagerty won the Republican primary without opposition and will face Marquita Bradshaw, who won the Democratic nomination, in November.

More than a decade after 43 students vanished in Mexico, ex-governor arrested, accused of cover-up

By MARIA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexican authorities have arrested the former governor of the southern state Guerrero for his alleged involvement in the disappearance of 43 students in 2014, a case that has become a symbol for impunity and state involvement in cartel violence.

Federal prosecutors said Thursday that they arrested Ángel Aguirre, Guerrero’s former governor, on accusations of “concealing evidence to determine the whereabouts of the students” of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers’ College.

The former governor, belonging to a party that gave rise to Mexico’s ruling Morena party, is the highest-profile arrest in the case to date since the detention of former federal Attorney General Jesús Murillo Karam, who is facing criminal charges of forced disappearance, obstruction of justice and torture. Aguirre governed Guerrero from 2011 until he resigned in October 2014, one month after the students disappeared.

The disappearance of the students from the rural teacher’s college of Ayotzinapa after they commandeered several buses on their way to a protest shocked Mexico and the international community, and continues

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to fuel outrage as the truth of the case continues to trickle out nearly 12 years later.

According to Mexican authorities, a cartel in Guerrero state's city of Iguala attacked the students in collusion with security forces as well as local, state and federal authorities, including the military. Officials were presumably involved by taking part in the crime or concealing it.

Ernestina Godoy, the Attorney General of Mexico, stated that two testimonies gathered this year indicate that Aguirre not only requested that officials hand over the security camera footage from one of the locations of the attack that night but also ordered the destruction of any evidence related to the events.

"The Attorney General's Office has evidence proving that this order to conceal the evidence was issued directly by the then-governor, with the participation of high-level state officials," she said.

"Far from being an isolated act or a technical oversight, the concealment of the recordings was the result of a malicious operation, deliberately orchestrated from the highest levels of the State Executive Branch."

Godoy did not explain why the testimonies of a collaborator and a protected witness, collected in January and May 2016 respectively, were obtained more than a decade after the events. She only indicated that when she arrived at the Attorney General's Office at the end of last year, she began a "reanalysis" of the case with a "new investigative approach."

Hours later, the Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center, which represents the families, stated in a social media post that neither the students' parents nor their attorneys had been notified of the arrest and that they were unaware of the charges. "If it is solid and in accordance with the law, the process that is beginning could help settle a debt of justice for the families," the center said.

The current federal administration had committed to inform parents first of any developments, a key demand from families for years.

Clemente Rodríguez, the father of one of the students, recalled that from the beginning families asked for Aguirre to be investigated. "He has to tell everything he knows," he told The Associated Press.

After three administrations, dozens of arrests and an investigation plagued by irregularities, key questions remain unanswered. Authorities believe the students were killed, but only bone fragments from three of them have been found, and the motive for the attack remains unclear, although it is believed to have been linked to heroin trafficking in buses to the U.S. operated by the local cartel in collusion with authorities.

On Sept. 26, 2014, students were attacked in a coordinated manner at various locations. In one instance, cameras recorded the moment when security forces stopped one of the buses outside the Palace of Justice, the seat of the courts, but initial official statements claimed that this footage did not exist. Now, the federal prosecutor's office confirms what investigators from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) denounced years ago: that these recordings were hidden or destroyed to conceal evidence.

The administration of former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who served from 2018 to 2024, described the Ayotzinapa case as a "state crime."

During President Claudia Sheinbaum's administration, which began in October 2024, the president said that new lines of investigation were reopened, some of which, according to the prosecutor, have led to the arrest of the former governor.

Carney says US trade talks are 'nasty' after Trump criticizes Canada's leadership

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Thursday that trade negotiations with the United States had turned "nasty" after President Donald Trump derided America's neighbor and its leadership while threatening to expand tariffs.

Carney said Canada remained engaged in the negotiations despite Trump's comments, describing the talks as a fight to protect Canadian workers and businesses.

"This is a tough negotiation," Carney said in French. "You can say 'nasty.' But this is a question of Canadian jobs. It's a question of the future of Canadian businesses."

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Trump criticized Canada during a speech Wednesday in Las Vegas. "Canada's nasty. They are. They're nasty," Trump said. "I love the people, but they're nasty. Nasty leadership."

Carney said "we are in the middle of a tariff war with the Americans" but laughed when asked about Trump's description. He said Canadian negotiators were in Washington this week and that he expected further conversations with Trump after speaking with him last week.

The United States already has tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum and automobiles. Trump has threatened to impose 50% tariffs on more Canadian goods beginning Aug. 19.

Tariffs are taxes on imports, which companies can then pass along to consumers in the form of higher prices. The president maintains that the costs created by tariffs will cause manufacturing to relocate to the U.S., though there is little evidence of that in the economic data.

Trump's tariff threats and repeated suggestions that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state have angered many Canadians, prompting many Canadians to cancel trips to the United States.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer has argued that Canada and China are the only two countries to retaliate against Trump's tariffs, citing restrictions on U.S. alcohol sales in some Canadian provinces among his concerns. Canadian officials say their countermeasures were a response to existing U.S. tariffs.

The latest comments followed months of escalating tensions. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, Carney criticized major powers for using economic coercion against smaller countries, prompting Trump to respond: "Canada lives because of the United States. Remember that, Mark, the next time you make your statements."

Canada is one of the United States' largest trading partners, and the move threatens to push prices higher at a time when Americans are already frustrated with the high cost of living ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections.

Carney said existing U.S. tariffs on aluminum have contributed to a 58% increase in aluminum prices in the United States.

"That's not a good situation for American companies," Carney said.

Amanda Knox defends her comedy show at Edinburgh festival as honoring her murdered former roommate

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Amanda Knox, the American student convicted and later acquitted of the murder and sexual assault of her British roommate Meredith Kercher 19 years ago in Italy, is defending herself against accusations from Kercher's sister that her comedy show at the Edinburgh Fringe festival in Scotland trivializes violence against women.

Knox, now 39, said Thursday in a post on Instagram that her show "honors Meredith Kercher's memory and calls out the violence that was done to her and to me."

The show is called "Cartwheel," a reference to a story that claimed Knox did cartwheels in the police station after Kercher's death. The show debuts Friday evening and is due to run for 11 straight nights at the annual mish-mash of stand-up, theater and musical offerings in the Scottish capital.

The show is being marketed as a woman "approaching forty, juggling motherhood and finally getting around to being furious about the whole wrongful-imprisonment thing. Especially when half the world is telling her to get over it, while the other half still thinks she's guilty."

Knox was a 20-year-old student in Perugia when Kercher was found stabbed to death on Nov. 2, 2007, in her bedroom in the apartment they shared with two Italian women.

The case made global headlines as suspicion quickly fell on Knox and her boyfriend of just days, Raffaele Sollecito. She served nearly four years in prison during the investigation, initial murder trial and when she was freed by an appeals court in Perugia. The couple were acquitted by Italy's highest court in 2015.

Another man, Rudy Hermann Guede, from the Ivory Coast, was eventually convicted of murder after his DNA was found at the crime scene. He was freed in 2021, after serving most of his 16-year sentence.

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Knox returned to the United States in 2011, after being freed by the appeals court in Perugia, and has since established herself as a global campaigner for the wrongly convicted. She has a podcast with her husband and last year published a memoir titled, "Free: My Search for Meaning."

Knox's post follows an interview that Meredith Kercher's sister, Stephanie Kercher, gave to the BBC during which she said the show "normalizes and trivializes violence against women."

While insisting that Knox is "naturally free to continue with her life as she wishes," she said "the problem with this particular project is that it is comedy."

"It's not about whether people think she's guilty or innocent, if someone else was doing the show specifically against Meredith, I would still feel the same, it is obviously an added wound that it's coming from her at the same time, but I do feel very strongly that it should be something that's not given a platform," she said.

An online petition calling for the show to be canceled has been launched and so far has more than 4,400 signatories. It states that the show "mocks the horrific events surrounding Meredith's murder and aims to somehow turn this tragedy into entertainment."

Knox said "a petition to cancel a show no one has seen, on the grounds of false accusations intended to shame and vilify a wronged woman into silence, is not an argument against Cartwheel."

The Edinburgh Fringe, she added, "is the perfect place for a show like this."

Man charged with arson in Spokane, Washington, told police he planned wildfire for weeks

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

A man charged with starting one of the wildfires in Spokane, Washington, that have destroyed hundreds of buildings planned the crime for weeks and researched when the weather would be best for igniting it, police said.

In an interview after his arrest, Aaron Farinacci said "fire is powerful, beautiful, and that things that go through fire experience a kind of rebirth," Spokane County Detective Michael Drapeau wrote in a court filing Wednesday.

Farinacci, 37, is charged with starting the Old Trails fire, one of three blazes in the Spokane area that have burned more than 850 buildings, destroying whole neighborhoods and streets. Tens of thousands of people were forced to evacuate and many still can't return home. No deaths or serious injuries have been reported.

Farinacci is also charged in connection with four smaller fires ignited in the summer of 2025 and last month.

He was scheduled to be arraigned on five first-degree arson charges Thursday, but his lawyer asked for a competency evaluation before he enters a plea. Spokane Superior Court Judge Jeremy Schmidt said he would review that request. He set bond for \$2 million, ruling that Farinacci was a risk to community safety, a flight risk and that there was potential for a violent offense.

Defense attorney Colin Charbonneau did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Farinacci denied starting the Old Trails fire when police initially contacted him, but during an interview with Drapeau, he confessed to that fire as well as others last year and last month, the detective wrote. That led to the four additional arson charges.

He told the detective that he always carries marijuana or cigarettes so he would have a legitimate reason to have a lighter and matches.

"He knows arson is an easy crime to get away from if you have time, and he had time," Drapeau said.

Farinacci researched the weather to predict a day that would be hot and windy and have low humidity for starting the Old Trails fire, Drapeau said. He also looked up the work of a well-known serial arsonist and purchased items to make a "time delay device" for igniting a wildfire, using notebook paper, matches, a cigarette and a rubber band, the detective said.

Farinacci picked Saturday, Aug. 1, to start the fire because he knew there would be strong winds —

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reaching 50 mph (80 kph), the detective said.

Farinacci said he knew it was going to get bad but claimed he didn't intend for it to grow as much as it did, Drapeau said.

Spokane County Sheriff John Nowels said Thursday that it's going to be weeks before people can safely return to their homes in areas burned in the Spokane fires. The other two major blazes, the Autumn Lane and Fairview fires, were also started by people, though not necessarily deliberately, investigators have said.

Paul Child, 64, has been credited with leading police to Farinacci. He was driving with his grandson along some railroad tracks when he saw a man standing there and looking toward nearby trees. About 10 minutes later, the man was still there.

"He was bent over in the brush, acting nervous," Child told The Associated Press on Tuesday. "You get the feeling this guy's up to something."

Drapeau said Farinacci also admitted responsibility for 25 fires near his apartment building in summer 2025. Most were near the Spokane River or the Centennial Trail.

Farinacci admitted to starting the Aubrey White fire that ignited on July 6, 2025, near the Centennial Trail and threatened homes and structures, the court filing said. It led to evacuations and road closures. An investigation determined it was caused by arson, but police didn't have any suspects at the time.

Farinacci also faces arson charges for the Meenach fire that started on July 8, 2025, the Fort George fire on Aug. 11, 2025, and the Indian Bluff fire on July 24, 2026.

Farinacci served about a decade in prison after killing his father in Mesa, Arizona, in 2010. He also shot himself. He was charged with murder but pleaded guilty in 2012 to manslaughter and aggravated assault. Farinacci's lawyer repeatedly raised concerns about his mental health during the case.

Drapeau said Farinacci indicated that he moved to the Copper River Apartments in the Spokane area in October 2022.

The detective said Farinacci's son was born in 2025, and he started having difficulty dealing with "life issues" and began smoking marijuana.

Trump administration moves forward with Head Start overhaul, proposing to eliminate regulations

By MORIAH BALINGIT AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's administration said Thursday it plans to overhaul Head Start, tossing out many of the regulations that are the hallmark of the early education program for the nation's neediest children.

Officials from the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees the federally funded pre-school program, said the proposed changes would encourage more local decision-making. But the proposal has sparked alarm across the Head Start community, where advocates say it threatens the backbone of the antipoverty initiative. Head Start centers serve around 700,000 of the nation's most vulnerable children, including those who are homeless, in foster care or disabled.

The Associated Press previously reported on the proposed rule, which became public Thursday when it was posted online. Americans have 60 days to weigh in before it goes into effect, though it could face legal challenges that might delay implementation.

Alex J. Adams, an assistant secretary at Health and Human Services, said the department is hoping to give Head Start centers flexibility to change the way they operate by eliminating most of the program's regulations, such as standards for low staff-to-student ratios.

"Federal mandates can certainly hinder local decision-making, drive up costs and limit the program's reach," Adams said on a call with reporters.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy spoke reverently about Head Start, which was started by his uncle Sargent Shriver under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

"It's a program that works for the most vulnerable of the poorest kids in our society, and it's really important we protect it," Kennedy said.

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But the changes would undermine many of the things that make Head Start distinct from other early education programs, according to current and former Head Start leaders.

"This version of Head Start is a shell of the program," said Khari Garvin, who oversaw Head Start under Democratic President Joe Biden. "This is a deeply diluted version of the program, which, in my view, will cause child and community outcomes to wane."

What makes Head Start different

Head Start is governed by more than 100 pages of regulations. They require centers to have low staff-to-student ratios, a research-backed curriculum and bevy of wraparound services for kids in poverty, including medical and dental screenings.

The Trump administration wants to toss out nearly all of that rule book, erasing some 1,400 regulations. Instead, Head Start's operators — which include nonprofits and school districts — would look to state and local childcare licensing requirements for guidance, including on matters of child safety and class sizes. The proposal also scraps detailed requirements on preventing lead exposure in Head Start facilities.

Other aspects of the program would be scrapped entirely. Family engagement requirements, which mandated that staff meet with parents to help them set and achieve goals, would be erased. So would deadlines for providing health and developmental screenings. Gone, too, is a mandate that children brush their teeth at school.

But parents say these comprehensive services are what made the difference in their lives — and the lives of their children. Lori Pittman, an advocate from Washington state, said her family was in crisis when she enrolled her son in Head Start, with a husband struggling with substance abuse. Head Start staff encouraged her to go back to school and eventually employed her. She credits the preschool with helping her family escape poverty.

"I was given the opportunity, while my child was in Head Start, to learn about leadership, to go back to school," Pittman said. "I know Head Start works."

The proposal was cheered by conservatives, who believe Head Start should be shuttered because it should be states — not the federal government — overseeing preschools.

"If the goal here is to make it more efficient for taxpayers, then the type of regulatory changes they're thinking of here are good steps," said Jonathan Butcher of the Heritage Foundation.

While the proposed rules largely loosen requirements, Adams emphasized centers have the option to continue to operate as they had in the past. He estimates deregulation could save the program more than \$2 billion, money that could be reinvested back in to the program to create more than 200,000 new slots. That savings would be driven in part by cutting staff, including teachers, and allowing class sizes to rise, the Trump administration says.

But Head Start advocates are skeptical the changes could help grow the program. Head Start enrollment has been declining for a decade, in part because of rising costs that have outpaced federal funding, forcing programs to scale back the number of children they serve. Staff shortages have also contributed, and they aren't likely to improve if programs start asking teachers to supervise more students.

Advocates also worry financial pressures will force programs to forgo aspects of the program that would become optional under the Trump administration rules.

"They're saying they're going to serve all these other kids," said Jenny Mauer, head of the Wisconsin Head Start Association. "What are you going to lose to do that, to serve more children without more money?"

Alongside the deregulation, the proposal would add some new requirements. Staffers would have to deliver all instruction in English, except in tribal communities that run immersion programs in native languages. There would be a 5% cap on administrative expenses, down from 15%. The proposal also includes a requirement for 30 minutes of physical activity — outside if the weather permits — for every three and a half hours of the program. New nutrition standards, championed by Kennedy, would require programs to provide more nutrition education for families, including warning them of "the negative health consequences of sugar-sweetened beverages and grain-based desserts."

State rules are more lenient

Overall, experts emphasize, state childcare licensing requirements are far more lax than Head Start's cur-

rent regulations. State rules are largely focused on ensuring children are healthy and safe. They generally do not require centers to provide things like medical screenings, they don't specify ways to engage with parents, and they don't speak to what — if anything — should be taught in childcare settings.

Shantel Meek, who heads the Children's Equity Project at Arizona State University, co-authored an analysis that compared state licensing requirements with Head Start standards and found massive gaps.

"Whereas licensing is, like, the bare minimum to keep kids safe, Head Start includes keeping kids safe but also ensuring that kids are developing, growing, learning well," Meek said. "It's a totally different purpose."

Critically, states allow adults to care for far more children than is allowed under Head Start standards. If the proposal goes through, about 80% of Head Start students would have worse staff-to-student ratios, Meek's analysis found. In Mississippi, for example, one Head Start teacher is only allowed to teach up to four 2-year-olds. State childcare regulations would permit up to a dozen 2-year-olds to be supervised by one adult.

Head Start, which operates in all 50 states, has long had support from Democrats and Republicans. But it has faced repeated threats under the Trump administration. Not long after Trump, a Republican, took office again in early 2025, some Head Start programs had to briefly shutter because they had problems accessing their federal money. Later, a budget draft eliminated Head Start's funding, but it was restored after widespread backlash.

Court orders Instagram and Facebook's Meta to pay \$567M to address kids' mental health online

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and WUFEI YU Associated Press

A New Mexico court has ordered Instagram and Facebook parent company Meta to pay \$567 million to address harms to young people from its platforms in the second phase of a landmark trial.

Judge Bryan Biedscheid said in a ruling late Thursday that the bulk of the money — \$420 million — will be used for treatment services for young people. The rest will go toward awareness and prevention, screening services and other costs over the next five years.

The new penalty is in addition to the \$375 million in civil penalties that jurors ordered against Meta in March after determining the company knowingly harmed children's mental health and concealed what it knew about child sexual exploitation on its platforms. In the second phase, prosecutors asked the judge to impose fundamental changes at Meta aimed at reining in addictive features, improving age verification and preventing child sexual exploitation through default privacy settings and closer oversight.

The total amount Meta is responsible for — \$942 million — is a small fraction of its annual profit, which was about \$60 billion in 2025. Investors seemed to shrug off the New Mexico ruling in after-hours trading Thursday, sending Meta's stock down less than half a percent to \$589.44.

Still, the ruling is another setback for Meta, which faces an avalanche of lawsuits from thousands of families of children harmed by social media.

New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez said it sends an unmistakable message that companies will be held accountable when their product designs knowingly put children at risk.

"Today's decision is a victory for every parent who has worried about what social media is doing to their child and every child who deserves to grow up safer online," he said in a statement.

Meta vowed to appeal.

"We work hard to keep people safe on our platforms and have been transparent about the challenges of identifying and removing bad actors and harmful content," the company said in a statement. "We remain confident in our record of protecting teens online and will continue to defend ourselves against claims that misrepresent the facts."

The look of Meta's platforms could change

The judge ordered Facebook and Instagram to build banner and informational screens to clearly explain its protection features, best practices and tools to address inappropriate comment, for example, and display them regularly. Those changes and an educational campaign in New Mexico would be subject to

review by the state.

The court said federal children's privacy laws prevent Meta from applying age-verification tools to children under 13. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA, means it cannot order Meta to request children to submit personal data or be passively tracked online, even for age verification purposes.

The court also noted that ordering verification of children's ages only for Meta and not other social media companies would be "inequitable and unduly injurious" to the company.

Instead, the court ordered Meta to continue to improve its age assurance tools in New Mexico, which include using artificial intelligence to determine people's age based on signals such as who their friends are and what types of content they post and consume. Meta must also attempt to develop a dedicated "under-13-years-of-age prediction model" in the next two years.

Additionally, Meta should also request proof of age for Instagram and Facebook users in New Mexico it estimates to be under 13. If it determines a user to be under 13, or under 18 but without being able to estimate a specific age, Meta must treat the user as under 13 or under 18 until the user verifies their age.

The company must also partner with schools or a child safety organization to create a reporting portal where school staff can flag users who may be under 13. And it must delete personal information it has collected on users under 13. The court also ordered Meta to report on its progress twice a year on how it's complying with the abatement measures.

Meta is gearing up for a trial this month in California amid flood of lawsuits

Meta is also gearing up for a trial later this month in federal court in Oakland, California. Here, Meta will face the first four of 29 states that sued it in a federal multi-district lawsuit filed in 2023 for contributing to the youth mental health crisis by knowingly designing features on Instagram and Facebook that addict children to its platforms.

Eight states, including Tennessee, where a trial is currently ongoing, filed lawsuits in their own state courts.

And late last month, Meta, along with TikTok, Snap and Google's YouTube, were sued by the families of four teenagers who died by suicide over what they describe as "years of escalating harms" from using their platforms that eventually resulted in their deaths.

What comes out of New Mexico is the first of many dominoes that will fall for Meta, said Laura Edelson, an assistant professor at Northeastern University focusing on social media and cybersecurity.

"America is not going to pass a law that bans social media," Edelson said. "But if companies like Meta know they're causing harm to users by product design, the states are finally finding a way to rein this in."

Possible Strait of Hormuz deal, a large attack in Yemen and other Mideast news

By The Associated Press undefined

Iran says it's in the final stage of drafting an agreement on the Strait of Hormuz waterway with Oman, while two Israeli soldiers have been killed in Lebanon.

Here's a look at the latest developments in the Iran war and the wider Middle East on Thursday. Full coverage can be found [here](#).

Iran says a deal with Oman is close

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, has said an agreement on the Strait of Hormuz with Oman, which lies on the other side of the waterway, is in the "final stage" of drafting. Speaking Wednesday, he said a joint statement will be issued "if certain parties do not obstruct this process," apparently referring to the U.S.

The agreement is likely to be contingent on the U.S. lifting its blockade on Iran's ports.

A U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly said Thursday that any temporary routes through the Strait of Hormuz will not have impediments such as approvals, permissions, tolls or charges.

Asked Thursday if a deal has been reached with Iran to reopen the vital waterway, U.S. President Donald

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Trump said he didn't want to say.

"It has been sort of open right now," he told reporters in the Oval Office.

The strait is crucial to global shipping and energy supplies. Before the war, which began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran in February, about one-fifth of the world's traded oil and natural gas passed through the waterway at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

— Michelle Price in Washington

Ships struck over the past week in the Strait of Hormuz

At least two ships were hit in the Strait of Hormuz in the past week, while several others reported near misses or warnings from entities claiming to represent Iran's Revolutionary Guard, according to maritime data company Lloyd's List Intelligence.

The company added that Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels continued to claim attacks on ships in the Red Sea. The claims could not be independently verified.

Vessel traffic through the Strait of Hormuz increased to 84 transits during the week of July 27 to Aug. 2, up from 45 the previous week. But traffic is still far below the more than 700 transits seen in a typical week before the crisis, Lloyd's List said.

Yemen's Houthis kill 30 government forces in major attack

More than 10 civilians, including a 4-year-old child, were injured in Saudi Arabia on Thursday after a series of attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels, according to the Saudi military.

The attacks, which took place in the southern region of Najran, near the Yemeni border, came hours after the Iran-backed rebels claimed responsibility for another series of strikes in central and eastern Yemen that killed at least 30 government troops and wounded at least 50 others.

The back-to-back attacks mark a major escalation since a truce in 2022 largely halted fighting. The civil war pits the Iran-backed Houthis against a Saudi-led coalition allied with Yemen's internationally recognized government.

A Houthi leader said Saudi-backed troops were targeted in the attacks and that "hundreds" were either killed or injured. The assaults hit camps for forces of the internationally recognized government in the provinces of Marib and Hadramout, the Yemeni officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Turki al-Malki, a spokesman for the Saudi military, said the later attack wounded seven Saudi nationals, one Yemeni, two Egyptians and one Pakistani expatriate. The Houthis did not release any statement.

Yemen has been embroiled in a civil war since 2014, when the Houthis seized the capital, Sanaa, and much of northern Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition intervened the following year.

— Samy Magdy in Cairo and Baraa Anwer in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Israeli soldiers killed in Lebanon as negotiators meet in Rome

Two Israeli soldiers were killed and another four were seriously wounded in an explosion in southern Lebanon, the Israeli military said Thursday. The deaths are Israel's first since a shaky truce was implemented in June between Israel and the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

The Israeli army launched strikes Wednesday in southern Lebanon in response to what it described as Hezbollah's violation of the ceasefire and issued a call for residents of another village to flee — the first such warning Israel has issued in weeks.

The escalation came as Lebanese and Israeli negotiators met in Rome to discuss implementation of the June deal under which Israeli forces are supposed to withdraw from areas they occupy in southern Lebanon, in exchange for Hezbollah's disarmament.

Uganda approves sending troops for international force in Gaza

Ugandan authorities won parliamentary approval Thursday to deploy troops as part of the International Stabilization Force for Gaza.

The 20,000-strong force, proposed by U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace in February to ensure "future prosperity and enduring peace," has not yet materialized.

Several other countries pledged troops to the mission, including Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Albania

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and Indonesia, which has since put its commitment of troops on indefinite hold.

The Gaza ceasefire has stalled, as Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said this week that Israel will not withdraw from its current lines in Gaza until Hamas has completely disarmed.

Israeli settler charged in West Bank killing of Palestinian activist

Israeli prosecutors have charged a settler with the killing of a Palestinian community leader last year in the occupied West Bank.

Prosecutors accuse Yinon Levi of reckless manslaughter in the death of prominent Palestinian activist Awdah Hathaleen in July 2025. The charge holds a lesser punishment than murder under Israeli law. The indictment also charges Levi with armed trespassing and malicious property damage.

It is extremely rare for Israel to charge settlers with violence against Palestinians. Israeli rights group B'Tselem said the charges against Levi mark the first time since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that an Israeli has been indicted for the death of a Palestinian in the West Bank.

In that time, the group said, Israeli settlers and soldiers have killed at least 1,100 Palestinians in the territory.

Iraq moves to crack down on armed militia groups

Iraq said Thursday that any armed activity outside of state authority after Sept. 30 will be prosecuted under the country's Anti-Terrorism Law, the latest move in a push to bring all weapons under government control.

Several powerful, Iran-backed armed factions have rejected calls to surrender weapons or dissolve their organizations, saying they remain committed to the "option of resistance."

Saudi Arabia and the U.S. launched strikes on Iraq last week after Riyadh accused Iraqi militias of using drones to attack its oil facilities.

The retaliatory strikes in Iraq hit bases of the Popular Mobilization Forces, a collection of armed groups close to Iran that are officially part of Iraq's security forces but often operate outside of state control.

Trump again tries to restrict birthright citizenship after Supreme Court ruling

By WILL WEISSERT and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he is once more trying to limit the number of people who are born in the country who can become American citizens, in a sign that even after his first attempt at limiting birthright citizenship was rejected by the Supreme Court, he's ready to try again.

The president said he was signing two executive actions on immigration, including one limiting the number of people eligible for U.S. citizenship after being born in the United States, while another focused on stopping people from coming to the U.S. to give birth.

The written executive order released later Thursday was narrower in scope than the previous one shot down by the Supreme Court and appeared to focus on restricting automatic citizenship to specific categories of people, including children born to adults with connections to foreign embassies or organizations as well as anyone considered an "alien enemy" of the United States.

It also aimed to restrict birthright citizenship to anyone whose parents "engaged in fraudulent activity to obtain citizenship."

A second order seeks to curb what Trump called "birth tourism" by increasing restrictions on visitors to the U.S. who want to obtain visas to give birth while in the country.

It was not immediately clear how successful the president's most recent attempt to restrict birthright citizenship would be. Trump said he thought his latest actions would be constitutional and his drive to reopen the question reflected the administration's zeal to restrict who gets to become an American.

"I thought we were going to win it at the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, we had a bad decision, very unfair decision. Our country suffers because of it and we're ending it a different way," Trump said.

The Migration Policy Institute noted in a 2026 article that it's already considered fraud and grounds to

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restrict a visa if someone seeks a visa specifically to come to the U.S. and obtain citizenship for a child. Previous administrations have also sought to prosecute so-called "birth tourism" schemes that helped women hide their pregnancies while traveling to the United States to give birth.

Birthright citizenship has become a key rallying point in the president's second term anti-immigration agenda, with the president and supporters arguing it makes the country a magnet for immigration and that American citizenship should be reserved for those who truly value it, as opposed to just being given to anyone born here.

But immigration advocates and many legal experts say that the Constitution is clear in outlining who is considered a citizen. They've also argued that birthright citizenship is a benefit to the U.S. by giving everyone an equal stake in the country's future and that restricting who can become a citizen would create a second-class of people in America.

The Trump administration has painted birth tourism as a widespread problem. There's no official estimate of how many births can be considered "birth tourism" births, but an estimated 26,000 might fall into that category out of the roughly 3.5 million births in the U.S. every year, MPI wrote in its 2026 article.

In June, the Supreme Court rejected Trump's previous efforts to declare that children born to people in the U.S. illegally or temporarily aren't American citizens, and upheld a broad conception of birthright citizenship.

The American Civil Liberties Union predicted that Trump's second attempt would also be rejected.

"The Supreme Court already decided this issue: Birthright citizenship is guaranteed by the Constitution. No additional executive order can change the meaning of the Constitution. Any executive order that tries to rewrite birthright citizenship will meet the same fate as the last one," said Cody Wofsy, deputy director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, in a statement Thursday.

On Trump's first day in office of his second term, he signed an executive order aimed at ending birthright citizenship, which allows anyone born in the United States to automatically become an American citizen.

Trump's administration was immediately sued by opponents who said the executive order went against the 14th Amendment, adopted after the Civil War, which makes anyone born in the country a citizen, with very limited exceptions.

The executive order was blocked by several lower courts and never took effect.

In June, the Supreme Court struck down Trump's order by a 6-3 vote. But the vote was too close for many immigration advocates and legal observers who felt the legal question of birthright citizenship was a long-settled issue.

When it came to the legal question of whether birthright citizenship was protected by the Constitution, the vote was even narrower. Only five justices said it was enshrined in the Constitution, while Justice Brett Kavanaugh rejected the executive order, but did so specifically on the grounds that federal law conveys birthright citizenship.

FACT FOCUS: A look at Trump's false and misleading claims about the Reflecting Pool

BY MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

In April, President Donald Trump announced that the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool was being renovated to address long-standing cosmetic and structural issues. He initially promised a gleaming blue pool that would be fixed in a week at a cost of \$1.5 million, much less than what previous administrations had paid for work on the national landmark.

But four months later the results of the project have not lived up to Trump's rhetoric, which has in some cases become increasingly hyperbolic.

Here's a look at his many claims and the facts around them.

Cost and time frame

TRUMP, on April 23 at an Oval Office event: "Our job will take one week and will cost about a million and a half dollars."

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THE FACTS: Work is ongoing 15 weeks later. The pool was drained for a second time in mid-July to address returning algae blooms and issues with a new coating that was peeling. Trump's estimates of the project's cost have increased as work has progressed, to "less than \$20 million." Records show that more than \$16 million worth of contracts have been awarded for the project so far.

Relationship with contractors

TRUMP, on April 23 in a video: "And I said, no, there's a better way of doing it. I said, what we're going to do is I'm going to call all three of these people that have worked for me in the past, doing swimming pools.

THE FACTS: Trump bragged on multiple occasions about calling up contractors he had worked with previously who could fix the pool and multiple no-bid contracts were awarded.

Ohio-based Green Water Solutions, also known as Greenwater Services, was given a \$1.7 million contract to install a water-purification system in the Reflecting Pool, while Virginia-based Atlantic Industrial Coatings was awarded \$14.7 million to repaint and waterproof the pool's concrete floor.

Trump later backtracked. He said in a May 12 post on Truth Social, "I didn't give out the contract, 'Interior' did, to a contractor I did not know, and have never used before." At an unrelated Oval Office event on Aug. 3, the president doubled down. "And by the way, I didn't know the contractor," he said.

Spending by previous administrations

TRUMP, on May 27 at a Cabinet meeting: "The Biden administration and the Obama administration spent hundreds of millions of dollars trying to get it to work, and they failed."

THE FACTS: This is false. The Obama administration spent at least \$34 million on a massive, two-year reconstruction project that ended in 2012. No major repairs to the pool were done during the Biden administration.

The work will be indestructible

TRUMP, on May 4 at a White House event: "This will last for at least 50 years and you'll never have a leak," he said. "It's very strong. You couldn't — if you had a knife, I don't want to give anybody ideas — if you had a knife you can't even cut it."

THE FACTS: The president responded to reports about problems with the resurfacing by saying that the pool had been cut with a box cutter, knife, or sharp razor, resulting in either a giant gash ranging from 250- to 350-feet or "numerous slashes over a very long 350-foot length."

Authorities made at least seven arrests related to problems at the pool, including charging former Olympian David Hearn with one count of felony destruction. Hearn pleaded not guilty.

Trump also blamed vandals for the algae bloom that reoccurred after the pool was refilled, claiming on June 22 that someone may have put chemicals such as fertilizer in the water to "create the algae." Algae has been a problem with the pool for many years.

By the end of July, the cases were falling apart.

The Justice Department moved July 31 to dismiss a criminal case against Hearn, saying evidence prosecutors had recently received refuted the idea that vandals were to blame.

Its 20-page filing from U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro said that additional documents provided by the Interior Department since Hearn's indictment 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 American 250 celebration in the weeks surrounding Independence Day 2026."

Judge Todd Edelman in Washington dismissed the case Thursday.

Charges have also been dropped against three other people — Justin Carreno, Cameron Thiers and Sophie Dennison-Gibby — charged in the same D.C. court with misdemeanors for allegedly removing pieces of paint from the pool, according to online court records.

Trump has rebuked Pirro's move and maintained that vandals are responsible, saying that she "choked" and "folded like an umbrella."

Senate committee votes to hold Fauci in contempt for refusing to answer COVID questions

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate committee voted along party lines Thursday to hold Dr. Anthony Fauci in contempt of Congress over his refusal to answer questions at a hearing on his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, setting up a referral to the Justice Department for potential investigation over whether the country's longtime top infectious disease official properly exercised his constitutional rights.

A department spokesperson confirmed Thursday evening that the department had received the contempt referral, is "reviewing it and will work with the Senate accordingly."

The vote approving the contempt resolution came a week after Fauci invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination more than 100 times when he appeared before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, an episode that raised fresh legal questions about the ability of Congress to compel testimony from a previously pardoned witness.

Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, the committee chairman who pressed for the contempt finding, said that constitutional protection did not apply because Fauci last year received a pardon from Democratic President Joe Biden and thus did not have to worry about the threat of prosecution.

"Dr. Fauci faced no risk of federal prosecution," Paul said at the outset of Thursday's vote. "All he had to do was tell the truth."

He told colleagues that the issue before them was not Fauci's opinions, policies or "anything he said from a podium six years ago."

Instead, he added, "We were voting on whether a witness who has received the benefit of a sweeping federal pardon can be ordered by this committee to answer questions and then defy that order without consequence."

Fauci, in a statement last week explaining his decision to invoke his Fifth Amendment rights, said he had good reason to fear the possibility of criminal charges given what he said was Paul's determination "to get me to say something, anything, that could vindicate his repeated public pledges that I end up, in his words, quote, behind bars, unquote."

Fauci's lawyer, David Schertler, said in a statement that the contempt resolution was "a continuation of Senator Paul's personal vendetta against Dr. Fauci, who spent 50 years in public health and has saved countless lives." Schertler accused Paul of abusing his power by trying to "weaponize the Justice Department."

"Today's partisan committee vote is a crude political stunt intended to punish Dr. Fauci for exercising his constitutional rights," Schertler said. "The Senate should reject Senator Paul's meritless and politically-motivated contempt resolution. For years, Senator Paul has proclaimed to anyone who would listen that Dr. Fauci should be prosecuted and put in prison. Dr. Fauci has committed no crime – and Senator Paul knows it."

The pardon from Biden covered acts from 2014 through the January 2025 day it was issued, but does not shield him from state-level prosecutions or protect him from federal investigations into any testimony he did give that lawmakers deemed false. The current Justice Department has repeatedly initiated false statement investigations into perceived adversaries of President Donald Trump as part of what critics have called a retribution campaign.

Democrats who unanimously opposed the contempt resolution agreed with Fauci that he had a well-founded fear of self-incrimination given the publicly stated desires of Republican lawmakers, including Paul, to see him prosecuted in connection with COVID. The Trump administration has also raised questions about whether the Biden pardons were valid given Biden's frequent use of an autopen to conduct official business.

"The goal was to wait for Dr. Fauci to make any kind of misstatement and then have a weaponized Department of Justice file criminal charges for that new statement that would not have been covered by the pardon, leaving Dr. Fauci little choice but to invoke his constitutional right to not walk directly into a trap," said Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., before the vote.

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Trump himself weighed in Thursday at the White House, noting in response to a reporter's question that two advisers from his first term, Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro, were jailed on contempt charges during the Biden administration after they defied congressional subpoenas and refused to even show up for their scheduled hearings.

"When you see that happen, you sort of say maybe he should," Trump said of Fauci being prosecuted. "What he did is far more serious than a lot of crimes, frankly."

Paul's decision to send the referral directly to the Justice Department would leave it to prosecutors in Washington to decide whether to investigate or potentially attempt to prosecute Fauci for contempt. A referral from Congress does not compel the Justice Department to act.

The committee's top Democrat, Sen. Gary Peters of Michigan, questioned whether the referral would be legally valid if Paul did not seek a vote before the full Senate, where the 60 votes needed to pass the resolution are seen as unlikely. He said punishing a witness for exercising a constitutional right against self-incrimination would complicate future efforts by Congress to conduct oversight and compel appearances and testimony.

"If this committee now seeks to punish a witness for asserting their (constitutionally) protected Fifth Amendment rights, future witnesses will argue that appearing before Congress exposes them to punishment regardless of whether they comply with a subpoena and invoke a constitutional protection," he said. "They will point directly to this vote — this vote — as a justification for refusing to appear at all."

FACT FOCUS: Trump boasts about the economy but there's more to the story

By PAUL WISEMAN and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS Associated Press

President Donald Trump has been extolling his economic accomplishments on social media and at events like a rally at a Las Vegas resort Wednesday. He touts recent record stock market highs and claims a boom in hiring, manufacturing and investment. Some of the claims are clearly true, some exaggerated, some unclear.

Ahead of Nov. 3 midterm that will determine whether Trump's Republican Party will retain full control of Congress, voters are frustrated with the economy and the high cost of living.

Only 32% of U.S. adults approved of Trump's handling of the economy in an AP-NORC poll conducted in late July. The same poll found that 69% of Americans characterized the economy as "poor." Many said the cost of everyday essentials like groceries and gas was a "major" source of stress in their lives.

Here's a look at the facts.

The number of jobs in the U.S. keeps hitting records but that's not the full story

TRUMP: "More Americans are working in the United States right now than at any point in the history of our country."

THE FACTS: True, but this needs context. The economy adds jobs most months, so U.S. payrolls are constantly hitting new highs. Jobs have increased in the United States 65 of the last 80 years. In June, the United States had nearly 159 million jobs (not including farm workers). And that was, in fact, a record. If Friday's July jobs report shows another uptick, as expected, U.S. payrolls will hit another high.

In Trump's second term, however, job growth has slowed considerably. Last year, companies, government agencies and nonprofits added just 9,700 jobs a month — the weakest hiring outside a recession since 2002. So far this year, they've been creating 92,000 jobs a month, considerably better but unimpressive by historical standards.

During President Joe Biden's four years in office, employers added an average of nearly 329,000 jobs a month. Those totals were inflated by a record-breaking hiring surge in 2021 and 2022 that followed the end of COVID-19 lockdowns. But even in Biden's last two years — 2023 and 2024 — job growth averaged 166,000 a month.

High interest rates, Trump's own immigration crackdown and the ongoing retirement of Baby Boomers are contributing to lower job growth.

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The U.S. stock market just keeps setting records

TRUMP: "The stock market has set 74 all time highs just since our short time that we've been back."

THE FACTS: It's unclear what exact stock market measure Trump is referring to. But the S&P 500 — an index for the biggest public companies in the U.S. — has hit a new record 64 times since the start of Trump's second term in January 2025, per a count from investment research firm CFRA. It's hit 74 new highs since the 2024 presidential election.

U.S. stocks soared to their latest record earlier this week, and have hovered near those all-time highs since. The rally is being driven by a surge in profits for companies in the S&P 500 — they're on track for the best quarterly profit growth since the second quarter of 2021.

A recent drop in the price of oil has also helped as investors remain hopeful about Trump's latest claims of a coming deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for the flow of fuel. Still, promises about Hormuz's future have unraveled before — and uncertainty over the U.S. war with Iran has led to market volatility. Beyond the war, some of the biggest swings have been due to the frenzy (and skepticism) around the value of artificial-intelligence technology.

Manufacturing shows improvement, related hiring not so much

TRUMP: "Manufacturing is BOOMING! Factory activity just hit its fastest pace in more than FOUR YEARS, far exceeding expectations ... American Manufacturing is BACK!"

THE FACTS: U.S. factories have indeed pulled out of a long slump in the past few months — but they aren't creating many jobs.

In comments on his Truth Social platform Tuesday, Trump appeared to refer to a report out the day before from the Institute for Supply Management, a trade association of purchasing managers. The institute's closely watched survey showed that U.S. manufacturing activity had expanded for seven months and in July hit the highest level since May 2022.

The upswing reversed a long losing streak for American manufacturing, which was in decline all but two months between November 2022 through December 2025, according to the ISM survey.

Trump's signature economic policy — massive tariffs — is meant to pressure manufacturers into moving production and factory jobs to the United States from overseas. But an uptick in production has not translated into a manufacturing hiring boom. In fact, the United States had 95,000 fewer factory jobs in June than it did before Trump returned to the White House in January 2025.

So far this year, U.S. manufacturers have added just 18,000 jobs, or 3,000 a month. Part of the problem is that today's factories are automated and don't need nearly as many workers as they did in the '60s and '70s heyday of American manufacturing. Trump's tariffs have also hurt some manufacturers by driving up the cost of imported steel, aluminum and other inputs they need to create their products.

Sal Guatieri, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets, said the "reshoring" of American manufacturing might eventually bring some factory jobs back to the United States, but it's "premature" to say that is happening in a significant way now. He attributes most of manufacturing's recent improvements to the AI investment boom.

Exports increase although the overall picture is mixed

TRUMP: Exports have skyrocketed "to the highest level in American history" — and the U.S. "is on track to export unprecedented \$2.5 trillion in goods this year alone, something everyone thought was impossible."

THE FACTS: Per the Bureau for Economic Analysis, seasonally-adjusted exports of U.S. goods hit an all-time monthly high of over \$221.8 billion in April of this year. But there's been a bit of a decline since.

In June — the latest month with data available — America's seasonally-adjusted exports of goods amounted to about \$206.9 billion, the BEA said. And exports of goods like U.S. crude oil, gold and computers all fell by billions of dollars. All the while, the value of goods the U.S. imports (nearly \$388 billion in June) continues to far surpass how much the country sends abroad.

That said, the value of U.S. goods exports is still higher at the midpoint of 2026 than it was at this time last year. In 2025, seasonally-adjusted goods exports hit nearly \$1.09 trillion through June — and ended the year at a record \$2.19 trillion, per BEA. By comparison, those goods exports for the first six months of

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2026 now amount to about \$1.25 trillion and would hit Trump's \$2.5 trillion estimate if the trend continues until the end of the year.

Few facts to support Trump's claims about investment

TRUMP: "With TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS of new Investment pouring into the United States, and more Factories, more Construction, and more High Paying Jobs on the way, the results are impossible to hide."

THE FACTS: In his Truth Social post Tuesday, Trump didn't put an exact dollar figure on the surging investments he claimed. But in May he told a group of small business owners that they totaled a staggering \$18 trillion. He didn't say exactly where his numbers came from, and the White House website cites a lower figure of \$10.7 trillion that appears to be padded with some investment commitments made during the Biden presidency.

Either way, the numbers seem implausible. Total private investment in the United States was running at an annual pace of \$5.7 trillion from April through July this year. And the BEA reported last month that foreign direct investment in the United States increased last year by \$266 billion. Direct investment includes money sunk into such things as factories and offices but not financial investments like stocks and bonds.

McConnell says he's leaving rehabilitation center to continue recovery at home

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky says he's been discharged from a rehabilitation center and will continue his recovery from home.

The former Senate leader was first admitted to the hospital on June 14. He disclosed weeks later that his hospitalization was the result of a fall and said he was undergoing physical therapy.

McConnell, 84, gave no specific date for his return to the Capitol, but senators are expected to soon leave Washington for the traditional August recess. Votes are unlikely for the next five weeks once they adjourn.

"On the advice of my doctors, I'll maintain an intensive regimen of physical therapy from home during the state work period, and I'll continue to engage with my staff and colleagues on important Senate business," McConnell said in a statement released by his office.

McConnell had polio in his early childhood and has long acknowledged some difficulty walking and climbing stairs as an adult. The Office of the Attending Physician has said McConnell was undergoing a strenuous course of physical therapy and rehabilitation since he left the hospital, which includes multiple sessions a day designed to rebuild strength and reduce the risk of future falls.

The senator is determined to finish out his seventh term, which concludes in January.

McConnell's absence is being felt in the Senate as Republicans were unable to advance a farm bill out of committee Thursday. The committee's chairman, Sen. John Boozman of Arkansas, said he spoke with McConnell this week about the bill.

"I know how much he would have wanted to be here to advocate for Kentucky's farmers and rural communities," Boozman said in kicking off the committee's meeting Thursday.

But there has also been criticism that McConnell has not been transparent enough about his health. The state's Democratic governor, Andy Beshear, recently called on the senator to either prove that he is fit to continue serving after his lengthy hospital stay or resign from office.

US stocks edge lower as oil prices rise and more earnings reports roll in

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks edged further away from their recent records on Thursday as Wall Street faced pressure from rising oil prices and mixed company earnings.

Wall Street opened the week soaring higher and notching records, but has calmed over the last two days. Markets are dealing with uncertainties over the ongoing U.S. war with Iran and its impact on infla-

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tion. Companies from a variety of sectors reported their latest financial results, adding to an already busy round of corporate earnings.

The S&P 500 fell 13.59 points, or 0.2%, to 7,709.96. It pulled further away from its record set on Tuesday, though the index is still solidly on track to notch weekly gains.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 464.02 points, or 0.9%, to 53,885.10. The Nasdaq composite fell 15.09 points, or 0.1%, to 26,348.35.

Both the Dow and Nasdaq are also heading into Friday on track for solid weekly gains.

"August is off to an extremely strong start, but there is still plenty of August left to go, and August is typically a volatile month for stocks," said Clark Bellin, president and chief investment officer at Bellwether Wealth, in a research note.

Warner Bros. Discovery rose 1.7% after reporting earnings that came in ahead of what investors were expecting. Molson Coors rose 1.3% after also reporting encouraging financial results.

On the losing end, Honeywell Aerospace fell 23.2% after turning in results that fell well short of forecasts. AppLovin slumped 19.7% after the digital ad company reported mixed financial results for its most recent quarter.

Strong overall profits from companies has helped allay concerns on Wall Street about the market being overpriced. Roughly 85% of companies in the S&P 500 have reported their results and overall earnings growth for the period is shaping up to be the strongest since 2021.

Outside of earnings, SpaceX rose 6.1%. More than 911 million SpaceX shares held by early investors and employees became eligible for sale on Thursday as a lockup period for the stock expired. That is more than double the shares that were initially offered to the public for sale during the initial public offering for Elon Musk's company. SpaceX jumped as high as \$225 a share following its market debut in June, but has since slumped below its initial \$135 offering price. The stock is currently trading around \$115.

Oil prices gained ground as uncertainty remains over the U.S. war with Iran that has stifled the global flow of oil. The price of Brent crude, the international standard, rose 3.8% to \$82.49.

Iran has said that it is close to a deal with Oman for reopening the Strait of Hormuz. President Donald Trump has also previously said a deal is close, but the conflict has had many starts and stops over the last five months.

A fifth of the world's traded oil and natural gas once passed through the Strait of Hormuz. Oil prices surged as high as \$113 during the conflict and higher prices have added more heat to inflation by raising the price of gasoline and raising costs for shipping.

The rate of inflation is stuck above 3% and higher costs have been squeezing businesses and households, while threatening to crimp broader economic growth. The U.S. economy expanded at a sluggish 1.5% pace during the second quarter. Households are still spending and the jobs market remains resilient, but worries linger for both areas of the economy.

Higher gas prices and added costs for shipping goods could prompt households to shift more spending toward necessities. That could hurt businesses focusing on nonessential items and services for many people, such as travel and entertainment.

Employment remains strong, but growth has been easing. A weekly report on Thursday showed that the number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits rose last week, though layoffs remain in the historically healthy range of the past few years. Employers pulled back on hiring in June, adding only 57,000 jobs. The latest monthly jobs report, for July, will be released on Friday.

Worries about inflation and the jobs market have prompted the Federal Reserve to hold its benchmark interest rate steady. Stubborn inflation, though, is nudging the central bank toward raising interest rates before the end of the year in order to help tame inflation. Raising rates could also slow economic growth while weighing down prices for stocks and other investments.

Treasury yields rose in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.67% from 4.63% late Wednesday.

European markets mostly rose.

Congo monitors 200 boat passengers near Kinshasa after a traveler dies with Ebola-like symptoms

By CONSTANT SAME BAGALWA and WILSON MCMAKIN Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Congolese health authorities held nearly 200 boat passengers in quarantine near Kinshasa on Thursday after one traveler who was previously aboard the boat died with symptoms matching the Ebola virus.

Congo has been battling an Ebola outbreak since May that has been deemed the fastest in history in terms of transmission, with confirmed cases reaching 4,000, including over 1,800 deaths, according to Dr. Jean Kaseya, Director-General of Africa CDC.

The passenger had become sick and disembarked nearly three weeks ago in Pimu, in the province of Mongala, more than 1,000 kilometers (more than 600 miles) from Kinshasa along the Congo River, Kaseya said Thursday, adding that the capital has no confirmed Ebola case. The passenger later died.

Authorities did not give the current location of the boat other than to say that it was near the capital. They did not say if the nearly 200 remaining passengers were being held aboard the ship or in some location on land, nor how long they would be held. But they said they were awaiting test results.

"We decided to do that even if some of them didn't have symptoms because we want to make sure that we don't miss anything," Kaseya added.

Ebola is highly contagious and spreads in the human population through contact with bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen, and with contaminated surfaces and materials such as bedding and clothing.

News of the passenger's death caused panic in Kinshasa, which is far from the eastern region hit by the outbreak, the second-largest outbreak on record, behind the 2014-2016 West Africa outbreak that recorded more than 28,000 cases, including over 11,000 deaths.

Authorities say 60-70% of new cases in the current outbreak are recorded outside of contacts being monitored, and that the outbreak is spreading at an "alarming" rate faster than efforts to track it.

Health workers strike disrupts response

Dozens of Congolese health workers at the epicenter in Ituri province, meanwhile, staged protests Thursday to demand payment for their wages, abandoning several health facilities and further disrupting critical care.

The health workers were protesting at the governor's office in Bunia, the capital of Ituri province, which accounts for nearly 90% of the Ebola cases in the country. They are the latest group to walk off their jobs since protests over pay issues began weeks ago.

The health workers, including nurses providing critical care to Ebola patients, said they haven't received wages and bonuses for their work fighting Ebola since the outbreak was declared in mid-May in one of Congo's most remote and vulnerable areas ravaged by rebel conflict.

"With this way of managing things, Ebola will not end in this province. We ask the authorities to get involved at all levels so that a solution is found quickly," said Edouige Makosi, one of the protesters.

Officials have in the past blamed logistical issues for the payment delays. Congolese authorities did not immediately respond to an inquiry for comments on Thursday.

Poor welfare for front-line workers has been a key source of concern in the outbreak. Apart from the payment issues, many health workers and facilities have been attacked by rebels and angry mobs.

During his visit to Congo on Wednesday, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged authorities to prioritize care and support for the responders.

Ebola is spreading at an 'alarming' rate in Congo

The medical charity Doctors Without Borders said this week that the outbreak is still "spreading at an alarming and unprecedented rate" and that the response, which has been expanding, "is still not reaching communities quickly enough to break transmission chains."

Government data shows 674 patients are currently in isolation, most of them in Ituri.

At least 75% of contacts are being traced after their exposure to patients, the data showed. A bigger

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concern, though, according to officials, is that contact tracing has not been effective as most new cases are coming from sources not being monitored and from remote localities where rebel conflict and mining-related movements are limiting access.

Fauci contempt vote reflects the enduring politics of COVID

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Dr. Anthony Fauci is sitting before Congress, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is on TV debating COVID lockdowns and Americans can't agree on what science to trust.

You might think it's 2020 again.

Six years after COVID-19 thrust the world into the fear and uncertainty of a global pandemic, Republicans in power aren't leaving it in the past. Instead, they've returned its familiar political arguments to center stage for new scrutiny, demanding accountability for the scientists and media figures whom they feel deceived and mistreated Americans years ago.

The efforts ramped up last week, when a Republican-led Senate committee chaired by Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul subpoenaed the now-retired, 85-year-old Fauci to testify about his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The former National Institutes of Health immunologist repeatedly invoked the Fifth Amendment, after accusing the lawmakers of trying to coerce him to perjure himself to justify criminal charges. In response to his choice, on Thursday, the committee passed a vote to hold Fauci in contempt, a stunning move that could motivate the Justice Department to initiate an investigation.

Separately, Kennedy, a politically independent former anti-vaccine activist who now serves as the Republican President Donald Trump's health secretary, spent part of his weekend in a combative live debate with CNN host Dana Bash about the pandemic's management and the media's role.

Political scientists and historians say the focus on COVID grievances half a decade after the virus' peak demonstrates how some wounds it opened have never been closed. Democrats, meanwhile, have slammed the federal government's blaming of Fauci as a performative distraction that's not based in facts.

While both Paul and Kennedy have spent years airing their frustrations about COVID, the Republican takeover of Congress and the White House last year created a new platform for them to steer how America remembers the pandemic, and who is held responsible for it, according to Matt Dallek, a political scientist at George Washington University.

It's also allowed them to use the administration's resources to surface new information.

"The response to COVID has become a touchstone for Trump's Republican Party," Dallek said. "They're using their power now to argue they were right all along."

Pandemic grievances have simmered for years

When the coronavirus began spreading widely in 2020, under Trump's first administration, groups of Americans revolted against requirements imposed by local authorities and businesses telling people to wear masks and stay at home to control the spread of the virus.

Vaccines supercharged those sentiments. Figures like Kennedy, then a leader of the anti-vaccine movement, accused the federal government of trampling on personal liberties by supporting vaccine mandates and social media takedowns of dissenting ideas.

While Trump has long expressed pride in his first-term Operation Warp Speed effort to disseminate COVID-19 vaccines quickly, saving millions of lives, his second administration has taken a different tone.

Under Kennedy's leadership, U.S. regulators have limited the availability of COVID-19 vaccines for Americans. Kennedy on CNN on Sunday questioned whether the COVID-19 vaccines protected children, even as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says on its website that they "help keep children from getting really sick from COVID-19."

Frances Lee, a Princeton University political scientist, said debates over COVID-19 have erupted on the fringes for years. Now that some of the leaders of those debates are in power, they're hashing it out on the national stage — something she said needed to happen eventually.

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"There are aggrieved parties, people who have a sense that they were done wrong during the pandemic and that there's never been an accounting for that," Lee said. "Most people don't want to think about this topic, but nevertheless there are constituencies – so Congress is speaking to those constituencies."

Lee said Kennedy's decision to surface numerous diary entries that Fauci had made on a government computer – and Paul's decision to publicize them last week – created an opening for "the first real show-down" in years around the pandemic's handling.

While some of the entries – including Fauci's uncertainty in the pandemic's earliest days about how best to curb the virus – already were reflected in a 2024 memoir and in interviews at the time, they have nonetheless drawn attention from people who blame Fauci for policies they believe infringed on their rights as hundreds of thousands of people were dying.

Also discussed at Fauci's hearing last week was whether NIH-funded research in China played a role in how the pandemic started. The day of the hearing, Trump's White House also directed social media followers to a federal website that used to feature information on COVID vaccines, testing and treatment that now promotes the theory that the pandemic originated with a lab leak.

Many scientists believe the virus most likely emerged in nature and jumped from animals to people, coming to light when it spread at a wildlife market in the Chinese city of Wuhan. There's no new scientific evidence supporting the theory that the virus might instead have leaked from a laboratory, a theory Paul champions. A GOP-led subcommittee that studied the question in 2024 found no evidence linking Fauci to wrongdoing.

Fauci has long said publicly that he was open to both theories but that there's more evidence supporting COVID-19's natural origins.

Republican lawmakers aren't stopping at the contempt vote. Sen. Ron Johnson said Thursday that Kennedy's department had given a subcommittee he chairs a copy of Fauci's cellphone from his time in government. Johnson indicated he intended to investigate it.

"Hopefully, this device will address many of the questions he refused to answer at last week's hearing," he wrote on social media.

Many dismiss the idea that Republicans' COVID fact-finding is genuine

As Republicans hold up scrutiny of Fauci as important accountability, Democrats have called it disingenuous. Paul said Thursday he'd invited Fauci to appear for a private, transcribed interview, but Democrats accused him of not allowing the full, bipartisan committee to be present for it.

Paul also referred the committee's contempt vote directly to the Justice Department, instead of to the full Senate. He said he did not "want to waste time" with that route, while Democrats insisted all senators should get a chance to vote.

Last week's hearing, at which Fauci pleaded the Fifth, came after the immunologist had repeatedly appeared before Congress over the years and talked about his thinking in the beginning of the pandemic and how it changed over time. Critics have raised concerns that the ordeal surrounding him will deter scientists from taking government jobs for fear of being similarly targeted.

Paul has long argued that Fauci should be criminally investigated, based on his belief that the scientist has been dishonest to Congress about National Institutes of Health-funded research and COVID's origins. Fauci's attorney last week called Paul's accusations about the scientist "false and disgraceful." More than 150 infectious-disease experts also came to Fauci's defense, writing that "no credible evidence has been produced to support these absurd charges."

Norm Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute said the hearing didn't represent legitimate truth seeking.

"They were looking for a platform in which they could attack him, and he would not respond, and he would say 'plead the Fifth' over and over again," Ornstein said.

He said while some Republicans are likely true believers that Fauci committed crimes, bringing him to the forefront serves a dual purpose in a midterm election year — distracting voters from less favorable headlines, including on the economy and foreign conflicts.

Michael Osterholm, an epidemiologist at the University of Minnesota, said there are real lessons to learn from the pandemic, including more deeply examining which efforts to contain the virus worked and didn't work. But he said Republicans in Congress aren't chasing those.

"A review of revisionist history will accomplish nothing," he said. "We won't be any better prepared for the next pandemic."

Ukraine strikes more oil facilities deep inside Russia, Zelenskyy says

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine hit more oil facilities deep inside Russia in overnight attacks, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday, as Kyiv kept up its campaign to undermine Moscow's wartime economy and embarrass the Kremlin.

The repeated strikes have caused fuel shortages and rattled Russians. Ukrainians, meanwhile, are enduring regular barrages that Kyiv's depleted air defenses are struggling to counter amid Moscow's 4-year-old full-scale invasion.

The Kyiv region observed an official day of mourning Thursday after a Russian missile and drone blitz killed 17 people the previous day, prompting an increasingly urgent scramble by Ukraine and its allies to find new air defense supplies.

In the first six months of this year, 1,396 civilians were killed and 7,978 injured in Ukraine, the United Nations office in Kyiv said Wednesday. That was a 37% increase from the same period last year and a 114% jump over 2024, it said, attributing the rise to more long-range aerial attacks by Russia.

Zelenskyy said he met with senior officials on how to accelerate the development of Ukraine's own ballistic weaponry, similar to its swift wartime innovation in drone technology.

"Developing one's own ballistic capabilities and creating a new anti-ballistic system is a task that only a tiny minority of countries worldwide have managed to accomplish," he said in a social media post. "Ukraine has this capability."

Zelenskyy said he expects the program to produce results this year and next after it overcomes "key challenges," including procuring critical components, technological cooperation with partner countries, and choosing where to build the armaments.

Ukraine says it hit Russian refineries and vessels at sea

Ukrainian forces hit a refinery in Russia's Bashkortostan region, more than 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) from the front line, as well as a refinery in the Yaroslavl region, almost 700 kilometers (400 miles) from the border, Zelenskyy said on social media.

Yaroslavl Gov. Mikhail Yevrayev confirmed an attack on a refinery, saying in a Telegram post that drone debris hit the facility's oil reservoirs, sparking a fire. Three private houses also caught fire, and several residential buildings were damaged, he added.

Ukrainian forces hit two Russian military patrol boats in the Black Sea, Zelenskyy said, along with vessels belonging to Moscow's so-called shadow fleet, which Russia uses to evade Western restrictions on its oil exports. He did not give any details.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its air defenses overnight shot down 605 Ukrainian drones over its territory.

Ukraine seeks more interceptor missiles to bolster air defenses

Drone and glide bomb attacks across Ukraine overnight killed at least three civilians and wounded 22 others, authorities said Thursday, as countries helping Kyiv resist the invasion scrambled to find more vital air defenses for its fight.

Moscow's forces have in recent weeks pummeled Ukraine with ballistic missiles that Kyiv officials say only the U.S.-made Patriot air defense system can stop. But the Iran war has drained stocks of Patriot interceptor missiles, leaving Ukraine at the mercy of Russian bombardments that seek to exploit the

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weakened air defenses.

"We are working as hard as possible with all partners who can assist with the supply of interceptor missiles to protect against such insane Russian strikes targeting life, people, and civilian facilities," Zelenskyy said on social media late Wednesday.

He said he had spoken to NATO chief Mark Rutte and Finnish President Alexander Stubb about urgently procuring interceptors from stockpiles. Zelenskyy said he and Rutte "coordinated our efforts regarding countries that have the necessary missiles and the capacity to help."

Rutte said on X that he was discussing with allies "how we can continue to get Ukraine the air defenses they urgently need."

Russian glide bombs wound 12 in Sumy region

Russia appears determined to exhaust Ukraine through sheer weight of numbers in terms of soldiers, armor and weapons. Russian President Vladimir Putin believes time is on his side, that Western support will fade and that Ukraine's resistance will eventually collapse under pressure, Western analysts and officials say.

Ukraine's air force said Russia fired four missiles and 101 long-range strike drones overnight, with air defenses shooting down or jamming 66 drones.

Three people were killed in Balakliia in the Kharkiv region of northeastern Ukraine, said Vitalii Karabanov, head of the city's military administration.

In the neighboring Sumy region, Russian glide bombs wounded 12 people, the National Police said. Apartment buildings and infrastructure were damaged, with hundreds of windows shattered, said regional military administration chief Oleh Hryhorov.

In the Kherson region of southern Ukraine, a Russian drone struck a bus carrying farmworkers, injuring six people, regional authorities said.

A Russian drone also struck a residential area in the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia, injuring four, said regional administration head Ivan Fedorov.

UN chief condemns escalating attacks

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned both sides for their attacks, his spokesman said.

"These latest series of attacks follow an alarming pattern of escalating strikes against populated areas, reportedly resulting in a record-level increase in numbers of civilian casualties and widespread destruction of residential and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, as well as increasingly in the Russian Federation," said Farhan Haq, Guterres' deputy spokesman.

The U.N. chief also called for freedom of navigation in the Black and Azov seas, expressing concern at the risks to shipping, the spokesman said.

Iran war renews concerns about the lasting toll of traumatic brain injuries to US troops

By BEN FINLEY and LAURAN NEERGAARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Joe Shearer was a Marine fighting in Iraq, a blast from an enemy mortar round knocked him down and made him vomit. He got up and kept going despite a searing headache.

When a roadside bomb struck his Humvee convoy months later, the explosion's shock wave swept through his body before headaches and sleeplessness set in for days.

"As long as you got back up and could go back on patrol, that's kind of what you did," he said.

Shearer, 40, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, links both events in 2005 to traumatic brain injuries, which were only recently diagnosed. He's still plagued with symptoms ranging from dizziness and migraines to forgetting daily tasks and responsibilities to his wife and children.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at 988lifeline.org.

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The lasting effects of traumatic brain injuries are raising fresh concerns about the toll of the Iran war on American troops who are suffering those wounds during a conflict without a clear end. Nearly 700 U.S. service members have been wounded by drone and missile attacks on bases in the Middle East and other fighting. Most have experienced traumatic brain injuries, or TBIs, and returned to duty, according to public statements from military officials.

The Pentagon's chief spokesman, Sean Parnell, last month called the vast majority of injuries over a two-week period "minor concussions."

Doctors can't predict who may have lasting effects from a TBI

Concussions often are termed "mild" TBIs, and many people recover within weeks. But sometimes those with seemingly mild initial symptoms go on to have problems persisting for months or years, such as headaches, dizziness or difficulties with memory or attention that's sometimes called "brain fog."

Doctors have no way to predict who will suffer lasting problems, a vexing enough question that there's medical debate over whether to retire the term "mild TBI." Repeated blows are known to increase the chances of lasting problems, including a degenerative brain disease called chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE. It has gained attention for links to deaths in the National Football League and other sports.

It's imperative that people recover from a concussion before doing activities that put them at increased risk of another, said Dr. David Okonkwo, a University of Pittsburgh brain trauma specialist.

Doctors also are still learning how explosive blasts injure the brain versus a physical blow.

"The blast wave itself can be injurious," said Dr. James Kelly, an emeritus professor of neurology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and chief medical scientist at the Invisible Wounds Foundation, which is focused on military brain injuries. "It's a different cellular injury. Blast is a different thing than a blunt injury to the head."

Troops have been facing a new type of warfare with Iran in which drones may explode closer to their heads, as opposed to the ground-level roadside bombs and improvised explosives that were more common in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Democratic lawmakers are calling for an investigation into the care that wounded troops received following an Iranian drone strike in Kuwait that killed six U.S. soldiers early in the war. Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin pressed the military in a letter on Wednesday to release the findings of its investigation into the March 1 attack.

"I spoke directly with Wisconsinites who sustained traumatic brain injuries from (President Donald) Trump's war in Iran and went weeks without so much as a screening, let alone specialized care, for their injuries," Baldwin said in a statement.

Defense Health Agency spokesman Peter Graves said in an email that "it is policy that service members are screened for TBI."

Experts say the military has made strides in screening and treating TBIs, a signature injury in Afghanistan and Iraq. More than 500,000 service members were diagnosed between 2000 and 2025, with 82% of cases considered mild and not all of them related to combat. But advocates say the injuries could still be undercounted because symptoms often overlap with post-traumatic stress disorder and other conditions.

A TBI diagnosis can emerge years later

Neither of the two blasts Shearer experienced in Iraq produced obvious injuries, and medics prioritized Marines who were more badly hurt.

"You don't want to be the guy who goes to sick call or says, 'Oh, I'm hurt,' because you're away from your team," Shearer said. "There's this culture of you don't want to be seen as lesser or weak, so you hide injuries inherently."

When he came home at age 19, he denied he had PTSD and didn't know what a TBI was. Plagued by nightmares, sleeplessness and headaches, he initially turned to drugs to self-medicate and considered suicide.

Shearer eventually got help for PTSD, but it took years for him to consider that he suffered traumatic

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brain injuries. He was working for the Wounded Warrior Project and screening fellow vets for TBIs when he realized he checked many of the same boxes.

He's since been diagnosed and received treatment. But challenges remain, including vertigo and light sensitivity. He also forgets important conversations with his family.

"I know that some of that stuff is stereotypical, but for me, it's got a different ring to it," Shearer said. "There will be no memory of the conversation happening."

The brain can adapt with treatments and therapies

Memory loss is something Army veteran Frank Sonntag also experienced following a TBI from a mortar blast in Iraq in 2004.

He was in his 50s and training reservists when he felt a blast of wind against his ear from an explosion 70 feet (21 meters) away. He didn't know he was hurt and didn't seek treatment for two years, ignoring intensifying headaches and brain fog.

It got to the point where it took 30 minutes to write an email, while colleagues told him he spoke one word every 10 seconds. He considered suicide and was diagnosed only after he got lost driving home. Neurologists prescribed medication for his migraines, among other treatments.

"Speech therapy was one of the greatest things I had," added Sonntag, 75, of Queen Creek, Arizona. "They taught me how to practice the words I was speaking and how to put sentences together again."

Kelly Parker, director of independent services at the Wounded Warrior Project, said it's hard to predict an injury's trajectory.

"If you've seen one TBI, you've seen one TBI," she said.

Screening, early treatment and support can be crucial to returning to a more normal life. Physical, speech and art therapies can lead to improvements, she said.

"There's still so much we don't know about the brain, but one thing that we do know is it can heal itself," Parker said. "We know that new neural pathways can be created, and we absolutely believe that the brain can adapt. We've seen it happen."

Army veteran Spencer Milo said some people struggle to understand why he's still dealing with migraines, seizures and forgetfulness after so many years out of uniform.

His first TBI occurred in Iraq in 2008, when his Humvee smashed into a wall to evade fire. His second came from the blast of a suicide bomber in Afghanistan in 2011.

"I've had fellow service members that were even with me on those days, and they're like, 'Dude, why can't you just kick it?'" said Milo, 41, of Parker, Colorado. "I really wish it was that simple. It's tough because when you can't see something, it's hard to believe that it's really there."

New kind of flu shot is on the way as the FDA approves Moderna's mRNA-based vaccine

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration has approved a new kind of flu vaccine for older people, the first made with the same mRNA technology that was key to ending the COVID-19 pandemic, manufacturer Moderna said.

The shot, named mFlusiva, is intended for adults age 50 or older. Other brands of flu shots already have begun arriving in pharmacies ahead of fall vaccination season, and Moderna said late Wednesday that it expects some of its new version to be available soon at select retailers.

While there already are multiple flu vaccine options in the U.S., including three specifically recommended for people age 65 or older, tens of thousands of Americans die from influenza every year and older adults are among the most vulnerable.

Flu vaccines must be updated annually to best match circulating strains of the virus. Vaccines made with the Nobel Prize-winning mRNA technology are faster to manufacture than other types, and experts say this additional option might help if the shape-shifting flu virus mutates in a way that requires suddenly brewing new doses.

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Moderna said the FDA granted full approval for mFlusiva's use in people ages 50 to 64, based on a study of 40,000 people that found 27% fewer flu cases among people who got the new shot compared with those who got a different common flu vaccine brand. For people 65 or older, the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based manufacturer said the FDA granted what's called accelerated approval for the shot -- based on a smaller study showing it generated a strong immune response compared with an existing high-dose vaccine for seniors -- while it conducts an additional study.

Moderna's data showed no major safety issues although the shot did cause some temporary reactions including injection site pain, fever, headache, tiredness and aches that occurred somewhat more than with today's flu shots.

The FDA action comes after a highly unusual public dispute over mFlusiva earlier this year. A then-top FDA official blocked the company's application, a sign of the agency's heightened vaccine scrutiny under Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Days later, the agency changed course after Moderna publicly challenged the ruling — and in June a panel of independent advisers to the FDA unanimously recommended the vaccine's approval.

Uganda approves sending troops for international force in Gaza

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Ugandan authorities sought and won parliamentary approval Thursday to deploy troops to Gaza as part of the international force proposed by U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace to secure the territory following the devastating Israel-Hamas war.

The successful motion, brought by the defense minister, is Uganda's first public indication of its willingness to join the International Stabilization Force for Gaza. Morocco also has pledged troops for the mission.

It was not immediately clear why Uganda agreed to deploy in Gaza, or if there was a quid pro quo involved, and some opposition lawmakers immediately questioned Uganda's motive in the decision. Lawmaker Hassan Kirumira said the deployment would raise "diplomatic concerns" for a country that is a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The "big question" for supporters of the deployment to clarify is: "On which side is our army going to fight?" he said in parliament.

Defense Minister Kiryowa Kiwanuka, seeking the support of lawmakers, cited Uganda's military capabilities stemming from its peacekeeping deployments in countries such as Somalia.

The force, proposed by Trump's Board of Peace in February, would be led by American Maj. Gen. Jasper Jeffers, who said in May that the 20,000-strong force would ensure "future prosperity and enduring peace."

Last week Trump announced a deal for Hamas to disarm and for Israel to withdraw its forces from Gaza. According to that deal, the International Stabilization Force would be deployed to Gaza after the completion of a phased withdrawal of Israeli troops.

The agreement, part of a broader ceasefire deal reached last year, calls for Israel to cease its military operations and for Hamas and its allies in Gaza to halt all militant activity. The agreement also laid out in general terms what the decommissioning process would look like.

After the text of the agreement was released, Israel said it had "serious security concerns" and that it shared those with the U.S.

Israeli attacks have killed 1,250 people since the ceasefire deal was reached in October, an agreement that ended major fighting in the Israel-Hamas war that had raged for two years.

Climate change created conditions for Canada fires, scientists say, as Trump blames mismanagement

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Human-caused climate change doubled the likelihood of the tinderbox weather conditions that sparked Canada's massive summer wildfires and in turn angered U.S. President Donald Trump, according to a study released Thursday.

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And fire and climate scientists said Trump, who has talked about punishing Canada for poor fire management and sending days of choking smoke across the border, should look more in the mirror than up north when it comes to blame. They point to the United States' huge historical emissions of heat-trapping gases from the burning of coal, oil and gas.

The fire weather conditions in the Northwest Territories and northwestern Ontario, while unusual but not that rare, were still made twice as likely by global warming, said Thursday's study by World Weather Attribution, a group of international scientists who examine extreme weather conditions to see if there are climate change fingerprints. It's about the same as the team found for summer fires in France, but not nearly as clear a climate fingerprint as they calculated in Spanish fires, which the scientists said were 20 times more likely because of climate change.

The study, which was done so quickly it has not been peer reviewed yet, looked at the weather conditions that are connected to large wildfires and the Canadian index for those conditions, which are heat, lack of rain, humidity and wind. The researchers found the doubling of frequency when — using scientifically accepted techniques to search for climate fingerprints — they compared current conditions to a world without the 2.5 degrees (1.4 degrees Celsius) of warming that's occurred since the industrial age and burning of fossil fuels started. The weeklong weather conditions that led to the fires in Ontario are now the type that can happen every six years or so, the report said.

"In a pre-industrial climate this would have been much less likely to occur, maybe once in a lifespan. So climate change has made those events more likely," said study co-author Jonathan Boucher, a fire scientist at Canada's Forest Service.

Hotter, drier conditions connected to burning

Outside climate and fire scientists said the flash study made sense and reflects a world where hotter and drier conditions are making fires burn more often and more intensely.

"Mother Nature's been burning. Now she's on amphetamines and she burns more and more," said Thompson Rivers University fire scientist Mike Flannigan, a Canadian expert who wasn't part of the study.

Hazardous smoke spread across both the United States and Canada, choking large cities such as New York.

By burning more and more fossil fuels, "we're putting nails in our coffins," Flannigan said.

In the larger and remote Northwest Territories fires, where more than 5,000 square miles (12,950 square kilometers) burned, it's clear the spark was from lightning but it was the climate conditions that took that initial ignition and made the fire burn intensely and spread too fast to control, said Boucher and report lead author Theodore Keeping, a climate scientist at Imperial College in London.

While people start about half of Canada's wildfires — accidentally or on purpose — fires sparked by lightning are responsible for more than 90% of the land area burned in Canada, Flannigan said.

"What we're facing here is more of a climate related problem than a forest management problem," Boucher said.

That's not how Trump sees it.

Trump blames mismanagement, but scientists point to carbon

"A lot of damage has been done. They're not managing their forests properly," Trump said July 21. "And the wind has a tendency to blow right over New York City, right over, you saw Detroit, they had to close the whole place. Michigan was really affected. They had to close businesses for four days. It's very serious what they're doing, and they don't seem to be able to do anything about it. If they managed their forests, they wouldn't have the fires."

When asked Sunday about punishing Canada, Trump on Air Force One told reporters he has decided on a punishment, adding "you'll find out about it soon."

Canadian climate and fire scientists said Trump doesn't understand the root causes.

"Smoke does not carry a passport, but carbon pollution does have a history. That history shows that the United States contributed more than any other country," said University of Victoria climate scientist Andrew Weaver. "President Trump is pointing at the smoke while ignoring America's fingerprints on the climate conditions behind it."

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Study co-author Friederike Otto, an Imperial College London climate scientist, said, "if you care about anyone but the super rich, you have to stop burning fossil fuels because the impacts are here and they're now and have huge consequences."

Canada has warmed 65% more than the United States in recent decades. In the past 30 years, the amount of land annually burned by Canadian wildfires has gone up by about 50% while the amount in the United States has more than doubled.

A big problem that Trump doesn't appear to understand is that much of Canada's forests are remote, northerly and full of spruce and pine that burns hard and fast, all making it difficult to get a handle on, Boucher and Flannigan said.

"In Canada, when things are extreme, you have about a 30-minute window to put that fire out," Flannigan said. "If you don't get there in 30 minutes, you're out of luck. And many of the fires that start in Canada are northern remote areas that are more than 30 minutes away from an airport. So even with perfect detection systems, we would get there too late and these fires are going to burn."

North Korea conducts ballistic missile test days before US and South Korea begin drills

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea launched a short-range ballistic missile toward the sea on Thursday, its neighbors said, resuming weapons tests days before its rivals the U.S. and South Korea begin annual military drills that North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal.

The launch from North Korea's eastern coastal Wonsan area was detected around 5 p.m., South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, adding that South Korea's military has bolstered its surveillance posture and is closely coordinating with the U.S. and Japan.

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi told reporters the missile landed in the waters off North Korea's east coast and that there were no reports that the weapon reached Japanese territory.

Koizumi said North Korea's repeated missile launches pose a threat to Japan and the region and that Tokyo lodged a protest to Pyongyang through their embassies in Beijing. South Korea's presidential national security council called the North Korean ballistic launch "a provocation" that violates U.N. Security Council resolutions and urged the North to stop it.

It was North Korea's first ballistic missile launch since late June, when it tested a tactical ballistic missile with a "special mission" warhead and other weapons. After watching the testing activities, leader Kim Jong Un said at the time that the military needed to bolster its "deadly and destructive offensive posture."

Thursday's launch came ahead of large-scale, annual exercises to be conducted by the U.S. and South Korean militaries later this month. U.S. and South Korean officials say the training is defensive in nature, but North Korea says the maneuvers are a practice invasion and often responds with missile tests.

South Korean and U.S. officials haven't yet released details about this year's joint exercise, but the drills are typically held in the latter half of August.

Kim has been focusing on enlarging his country's nuclear arsenal since his high-stakes diplomacy with U.S. President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019. Experts say Kim wants international recognition as a nuclear state so that he can demand the lifting of international economic sanctions on North Korea.

U.N. Security Council resolutions ban North Korea from launches involving its huge stockpile of ballistic missiles. Tests of other weapons including cruise missiles and artillery systems are not banned, but experts say they still pose a security challenge to South Korea and the U.S.

In early July, Kim supervised tests of a nuclear-capable cruise missile aboard a destroyer. After years of prioritizing ballistic missile development, Kim has increasingly turned his focus to naval capabilities, including the construction of a nuclear-powered submarine.

In recent years, Kim has boosted his diplomatic credentials by expanding cooperation with Russia. North Korea has supplied conventional weapons and troops to Russia to support its war against Ukraine.

Kim also has pushed to deepen cooperation with China, the North's economic pipeline. Chinese President

Xi Jinping visited the North Korean capital Pyongyang in June for the first time in seven years.

In response to Trump's repeated outreach to restart diplomacy, Kim has suggested talks can resume if the U.S. drops its demand for North Korean denuclearization as a precondition.

How extreme heat is changing Americans' lives, according to a new AP-NORC poll

By ALEXA ST. JOHN and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

Elisa Bracamonte has lived in Arizona her whole life, so she's used to adjusting her schedule and outdoor activities around high temperatures, especially during the summer months.

But the 74-year-old retired nurse from Tucson said she feels the heat has been impacting more of her day-to-day: summer plans with family members across the region, meetups with friends, road trips and her daily morning walk routine.

"I've noticed at least a 10 degree difference in the weather," Bracamonte said. "Every summer, it seems to be getting hotter and hotter."

Like Bracamonte, Americans are increasingly feeling a personal impact from extreme heat, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

According to the survey, U.S. adults are more likely to say extreme heat has had either a "major impact" or "minor impact" on their travel or vacation plans, electricity bills, their sleep, their family's outdoor activities and more parts of their day-to-day life than in July 2024.

Much of that shift was among people who live in the West or Midwest.

Democrats are also more likely than Republicans to say that extreme heat has had a "major" impact on each item asked about.

Warming has endangered the globe especially in recent years; scientists calculated that Earth's average temperature in 2025 hovered among one of the three hottest on record, along with 2024 and 2023. The U.S. has sweltered under dangerous heat domes over the past few years, and unusually high temperatures even early in the year.

The recent scorching weather has played a role in thousands of heat-related deaths — killing more people every year than all other weather-related events. It impacts wildfire risk, strains public infrastructure, devastates agriculture and wreaks havoc on gatherings such as sporting events.

Now, the poll shows how extreme heat is reshaping Americans' daily lives.

"I have to get up at 5 in the morning to walk before 6, because by 7 it's already in the 80s ... I lose a couple hours of sleep because I'm having to wake up earlier," added Bracamonte, who said she identifies as a very liberal Democrat. "You can't stay outside without being sick unless you're guzzling water the whole time — it's just so, so hot."

Electricity bills going up

About 8 in 10 Americans say their electricity bills have seen a "major" or "minor" impact from extreme heat over the last year, compared with 69% in July 2024, according to the survey.

Just under half of Americans living in the Midwest, 44%, say extreme heat has had a "major" impact on their electricity bills, up from 29% two years ago.

Rising household electricity prices have turned into an increasingly prominent political issue over the past few years. Extreme weather is just one factor that affects electricity bills, but it means that people are using more energy for air conditioning — or in the colder months, heat.

"I feel like my utility costs probably doubled in the last three or four years," said Daemien Williams, a 50-year-old bridge inspector living in Cahokia Heights, Illinois, who identifies as a Democrat. "I do look at my bills pretty in detail and see that the kilowatts and the usage is actually up, not just the price that they're charging for it."

Travel and vacation plans impacted, along with family outdoor activities

Extreme heat is affecting Americans' lives in other ways, the survey found.

Around 4 in 10 Americans say extreme heat has had either a major impact or a minor impact on their

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travel or vacation plans, up from about one-quarter in 2024.

"It has affected my entire family because we usually get together a lot during the summer," Bracamonte said. "We have family in Texas and we have family in upper Arizona. And we've seen that there's been a lot more fires, a lot of more flooding, all that. So that kind of inhibits our plans to travel."

Extreme heat waves increase wildfire risk, and a warmer world supercharges storms that could ultimately send more rainfall.

Around 7 in 10 Americans say extreme heat has had either a major impact or a minor impact on their family's outdoor activities, compared with about 6 in 10 in 2024.

Sean Conway, a 41-year-old direct marketer in North Shore, Massachusetts, said his kids' soccer practice might either be postponed or canceled due to extreme temperatures, for example.

But to Conway, who considers himself a moderate independent, leaning Republican, this is minor. "Sometimes, you've got to just be out in the bad weather."

It's not surprising many Americans say they are feeling the impacts, said Jennifer Francis, a climate scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center who was not involved with the polling.

"Brutal, life-threatening heat waves have become more frequent, more intense, and more persistent in many parts of the globe, including our Western and Midwestern states," Francis said. "Extreme heat compounded with long dry spells have affected our health directly, along with indirect effects on our wallets."

Climate change belief remains largely stable

Even as more Americans say they feel a personal impact from extreme heat, that does not mean an increasing number believe in climate change.

About two-thirds, 66%, of Americans believe climate change is happening, a slight decline from 73% in September 2025. About 17% say they are not sure if climate change is happening, and about 15% say it is not happening.

Williams, the Illinois resident, attributes his belief in climate change in part to extreme shifts in weather including very high and very cold temperatures.

"My biggest indicator of the change in the climate is just the flooding is a lot more often," Williams said, noting that he believes in both natural and human causes.

John Hazel, a 33-year-old in Waco, Texas, says he's noticed changes from when he was younger.

"When I was a kid, that seemed like a very rare thing when it did hit 100, everybody was like, whoa. And now it's just every day," said Hazel, a crime scene investigator. "Seasons felt a little more balanced. Now it feels like summer's a bit lingering, it starts earlier and lasts longer."

Hazel, who identifies as a conservative Republican and believes in climate change, said he plans around the heat.

"As soon as you walk outside, you're already sweating even if you're not doing much of anything. I've definitely noticed you're having to take breaks from being outside, you have to bathe, shower more often," Hazel said. "It's definitely a bigger consideration."

Testing is underway on vaccines to intercept brewing colon cancer before it takes root

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Dr. Stacy Norton was only 7 years old when her mother died of colon cancer, one of several family members struck by aggressive tumors at unusually young ages. Decades later, Norton rolled up her sleeve to help test if a new kind of vaccine might protect her and her own children from cancer.

The Houston doctor is among an estimated 1 million Americans who have Lynch syndrome, a faulty gene passed from a parent that puts them at extremely high risk of colorectal cancer and more vulnerable to certain other cancers, too. They're often urged to get yearly colonoscopies — far more often than usual — that can spot and remove precancerous growths called polyps.

Now scientists are creating vaccines that aim to go further, teaching the immune system to intercept this type of brewing colon cancer before it turns into a full-fledged tumor. At least three potential Lynch

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syndrome vaccines are in development, including two in early clinical trials in the U.S. and a third beginning in Britain.

The shot that Norton helped test appears promising enough that its lead researcher, Dr. Eduardo Vilar-Sanchez of the MD Anderson Cancer Center, expects a larger study to begin early next year.

"It gives me hope," said Norton, 59, of Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital. She had already survived a different Lynch-caused cancer and has two children in their 20s who inherited her mutation. If a vaccine pans out, "perhaps they won't have to have a colonoscopy every single year for the rest of their lives."

Lynch syndrome is caused by an inherited genetic mutation

Everyone has what are called mismatch-repair genes, which are essentially spellcheckers to help fix DNA mistakes that can occur when our cells multiply. With Lynch syndrome, one of those genes can't do its job properly, making it harder for the body to stop a buildup of abnormalities that can lead to tumors, often before age 50.

Colorectal cancer is the most common consequence. The average person has a 5% risk of developing it during their lifetime. A Lynch carrier's risk can reach as high as 80% depending on which faulty gene they inherit, Vilar-Sanchez said.

Another big risk is endometrial, or uterine, cancer. Lynch carriers also are more likely to get other cancers including pancreatic, stomach, ovarian and certain skin cancers — and a kind of brain tumor that killed Norton's sister at age 25.

Norton knew some of her mother's relatives had also experienced colon cancer, but she was in her 40s before a gene test confirmed she has Lynch syndrome. She switched from every-so-often to yearly colonoscopies. As an obstetrician/gynecologist familiar with other Lynch risks, Norton also decided to have a precautionary hysterectomy. Surgeons discovered early-stage cancer in her removed uterus.

Possible vaccines to stop gene-caused cancer

Today there are two cancer-preventing vaccines, the HPV and hepatitis B shots that block infection from those tumor-causing viruses. But developing vaccines to prevent gene-caused cancer is more challenging than alerting the body to foreign intruders like a virus.

Lynch-fueled growths "tend to accumulate hundreds of mutations that are going to generate proteins that are novel, not made by our normal cells," Vilar-Sanchez said. "You can train the immune system to recognize those proteins."

In a first-step study, Norton and 44 other Lynch carriers tested a vaccine made by Swiss biotech Nouscom that teaches the immune system to spot 209 of those abnormalities in Lynch-caused precancers. That revved up tumor-eliminating T cells and a year later, colonoscopies showed fewer precancerous growths and no advanced polyps, the MD Anderson team reported in *Nature Medicine*.

"Can we even further stimulate the immune system" to keep up with Lynch syndrome-spurred tumor formation, asked Dr. John Marshall, a Georgetown University oncologist and adviser to the Colorectal Cancer Alliance who wasn't involved with the study. "This early paper suggests that yeah, maybe we can."

For the first time since 2014, Norton's own colonoscopies one and two years after vaccination were polyp-free. She's also part of a subset of study participants given a booster shot a year later; more data on that is expected this fall.

Oxford University researchers are beginning initial testing of a similar approach to attack Lynch-spurred precancers, a vaccine made by Massachusetts-based Moderna using the mRNA technology behind its COVID-19 shot.

And scientists are awaiting results from a slightly larger study comparing California-based ImmunityBio's Tri-Ad5 vaccine, which flags some different cancer markers, to a placebo.

Is Lynch syndrome tied to the rise in young adult colon cancer?

About 158,000 people are diagnosed with colorectal cancer in the U.S. each year, most of them over 50. Cases in younger adults are increasing, though it isn't clear why.

Lynch syndrome affects about 1 in 279 people. While most don't know it, more may be learning they have the inherited disorder, Vilar-Sanchez said, as genetic testing is increasingly discussed with people with Lynch-related cancer in the family or who get certain tumors at young ages. That in turn can show

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if close relatives might also be at risk.

For the average person, U.S. guidelines call for routine colorectal cancer screening — with a colonoscopy or other kinds of tests — to begin at age 45. But at any age, get a checkup for symptoms such as blood in stool or rectal bleeding; changes in bowel habits such as diarrhea, constipation or narrowing of stool that lasts more than a few days; unintended weight loss; and cramps or abdominal pain.

Today in History: August 7, Twin Tower tightrope walk

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Aug. 7, the 219th day of 2026. There are 146 days left in the year.

On Aug. 7, 1974, French high-wire artist Philippe Petit performed an unapproved tightrope walk between the two towers of the World Trade Center in New York, over 1,300 feet above the ground; the event was chronicled in the Academy Award-winning documentary "Man on Wire."

Also on this date:

In 1789, the U.S. Department of War was established by Congress.

In 1942, U.S. and other allied forces landed at Guadalcanal, marking the start of the first major allied offensive in the Pacific during World War II.

In 1960, Cote d'Ivoire gained independence from France.

In 1964, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, giving President Lyndon B. Johnson broad powers in dealing with reported North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. forces.

In 1971, the Apollo 15 moon mission ended successfully as its command module splashed down in the Pacific Ocean.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter declared the Love Canal environmental disaster in Niagara Falls, N.Y., a federal health emergency; it would later top the initial list of Superfund cleanup sites.

In 1989, a plane carrying U.S. Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Texas, and 15 others disappeared over Ethiopia. (The wreckage of the plane was found six days later; there were no survivors.)

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush ordered U.S. troops and warplanes to Saudi Arabia to guard the oil-rich desert kingdom against a possible invasion by Iraq.

In 1998, terrorist bombs at U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania killed 224 people, including 12 Americans.

In 2007, San Francisco's Barry Bonds hit home run No. 756 to break Hank Aaron's storied record with one out in the fifth inning of a game against the Washington Nationals, who won, 8-6.

In 2012, to avoid a possible death penalty, Jared Lee Loughner agreed to spend the rest of his life in prison, accepting that he went on a deadly shooting rampage at an Arizona political gathering in 2011 that left six people dead and 13 injured, including U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords.

In 2015, Colorado theater shooter James Holmes was spared the death penalty in favor of life in prison after a jury failed to agree on whether he should be executed for his attack at a packed movie premiere that left 12 people dead.

In 2020, an Air India Express flight returning Indians stranded abroad by the COVID-19 pandemic skidded off a runway in heavy rain and cracked in two in southern India. Eighteen people including both pilots were killed and more than 120 were injured in the accident as the flight from Dubai was landing in Kerala state.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Lana Cantrell is 83. Actor John Glover is 82. Actor David Rasche is 82. Former diplomat, talk show host and activist Alan Keyes is 76. Country singer Rodney Crowell is 76. Actor Caroline Aaron is 74. Comedian Alexei Sayle is 74. Actor Wayne Knight is 71. Rock singer Bruce Dickinson is 68. Actor David Duchovny is 66. Actor Delane Matthews is 65. Actor Harold Perrineau is 63. Jazz musician Marcus Roberts is 63. Country singer Raul Malo is 61. Actor David Mann is 60. Actor Charlotte Lewis is 59. Actor Sydney Penny is 55. Actor Greg Serano is 54. Actor Michael Shannon is 52. Actor Charlize Theron is 51. Rock musician Barry Kerch is 50. Actor Eric Johnson is 47. Actor Randy Wayne is 45. Actor-writer Brit Marling is 44. NHL center Sidney Crosby is 39. MLB All-Star Mike Trout is 35. Actor Liam James is 30. Actor Luca Luhan is 19.