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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

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

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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.

The Stress Switch

Experiencing severe stress during childhood can cause lasting damage to brain cells, making individuals more sensitive to stress later in life. The discovery, published yesterday, may reveal a new biological target for mental health treatments.

The study focused on the chemical messenger dopamine, which helps process rewards and adversity. Researchers found that mice raised in stressful conditions had higher levels of the enzyme SETD7 than mice raised under typical conditions. SETD7 can make dopamine-producing brain cells more responsive to environmental stimuli, leading to a lower stress tolerance. The mice with elevated SETD7 levels displayed more anxious behaviors throughout their lives. However, when researchers blocked the enzyme, these mice became less sensitive to stress.

Prior studies found that people who experience four or more adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, such as physical neglect or household substance abuse, are at significantly higher risk for mental health disorders.

Todd Blanche secures support for attorney general confirmation.

Sen. Bill Cassidy (R, LA) said yesterday he would support President Donald Trump's pick to lead the Justice Department, clearing the way for Blanche's confirmation. The Senate aims to hold a final vote in the coming days. The Senate also confirmed 74 other Trump nominees, including former Navy SEAL Cameron Hamilton as the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Separately, a federal appeals court ruled Trump must get approval from Congress to continue his \$400M White House ballroom renovation. Trump said he plans to bring the decision to the Supreme Court.

Puerto Rico yesterday began rationing water amid severe drought.

More than 180,000 customer accounts in the capital city of San Juan and nearby areas will have running water cut off for 48 hours at a time. July was San Juan's driest month on record since 1899. Experts predict the drought will persist until at least September, and officials warn the rationing periods could be extended to 72 hours. The water shortages come after San Juan's mayor sued the island's Water and Sewer Authority in May over aging infrastructure.

US employers unexpectedly shed 23,000 jobs in July.

The federal jobs report released yesterday suggests the US labor market is weaker than previously believed. Forecasters had expected payrolls to increase by 83,000 jobs last month. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate ticked down from 4.2% to 4.1%, largely because fewer people participated in the labor force. The share of those working or looking for work fell to its lowest level since February 2021.

Thai student kills grandparents before deadly school shooting.

At least seven people were killed and dozens were injured in a shooting at a high school north of Bangkok yesterday. Police identified the shooter as a 14-year-old boy, who was among the deceased. The boy allegedly killed his grandparents, with whom he lived, before carrying out the school shooting and taking his own life. He is believed to have used his grandfather's registered gun in the attacks.

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Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan sign defense agreement.

The deal signed yesterday between the three Sunni Muslim-majority states stipulates that an attack on one will be treated as an attack on all three. Iranian officials warned it would not protect Saudi Arabia, whose critical infrastructure has come under fire as part of the war in Iran. Pakistan has an estimated 170 nuclear warheads, and Turkey has NATO's second-largest army.

First poop transplants show promise as a treatment for food allergies.

Six people with severe peanut allergies can tolerate small doses of the nut after receiving gut bacteria from stool samples of nonallergic donors. The results suggest lower levels of certain gut bacteria cause food allergies. However, nine other trial participants did not respond to the treatment. The authors are planning a larger trial to further explore the approach.

Pentagon releases fifth batch of UFO files.

The 41 new files come from federal offices, such as the Pentagon, the FBI, and the CIA. The documents span from 1950 to this year and include several phenomena documented by military officials. Among the reports is a military pilot's recount of a massive triangular object that appeared to block out part of the night sky over Afghanistan in 2002.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Bob H. in Anchorage, Alaska.

"While traveling in Europe a few months ago, language was sometimes a barrier. On the back of my cellphone, I carried cards I had made up with common phrases used while traveling, starting with 'Hello' in the local language. Each card's word also had the phonetic spelling, so I could attempt to say it. Using these, and even showing them to the locals, changed our interaction completely. Some looked at the cards and even helped me to pronounce them in their language. It was a fun way to communicate, and people became more friendly. A simple, courteous kindness was exchanged between us that formed a lasting memory."

Groton falls to Lennox in state amateur tournament

MITCHELL — Groton Locke Electric was limited to one run Friday morning as Lennox came away with a 2-1 victory in the State Amateur Baseball Tournament being played in Mitchell.

Groton scored its lone run in the top of the second inning to take an early 1-0 lead and held that advantage through the first five innings.

Lennox tied the game with a run in the bottom of the sixth inning. The score remained knotted at 1-1 through the seventh before Lennox pushed across what proved to be the winning run in the bottom of the eighth.

Groton was retired without a run in the top of the ninth as Lennox finished off the 2-1 victory.

Despite the loss, Groton outhit Lennox, 9-6. Errors, however, favored Lennox, which committed just one compared to three for Groton.

The game was a defensive battle throughout, with neither team putting together a big inning. Groton had runners reach often enough to collect nine hits, but was unable to turn those opportunities into additional runs after scoring in the second.

Lennox, meanwhile, made its six hits count, scoring once in the sixth to erase Groton's early advantage and once more in the eighth to move in front for good.

Groton finished with one run on nine hits and three errors, while Lennox scored two runs on six hits with one error.

Name Released in Spink County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle versus train fatal crash
Where: 174th Street and 386th Avenue, 0.25 miles east of Redfield City Limits, South Dakota
When: 7:22 p.m., Wednesday, July 29, 2026

Driver 1: Paul Ray Whitley, 59-year-old male from Redfield, South Dakota, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2013 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited
Seat Belt Used: No

Spink County, S.D.- A Redfield, South Dakota man died last week in a single-vehicle crash versus train crash near Redfield.

Preliminary crash information indicates a BNSF train was traveling southbound on the train tracks. At the same time, Paul Ray Whitley, the driver of a 2013 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited, was traveling westbound on 174th Street. The Jeep struck the train as it entered the intersection. Whitley sustained fatal injuries.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.
The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash
Where: U.S. Highway 14A at mile marker 47, 4 miles east of Deadwood, South Dakota
When: 6:27 p.m., Thursday, August 6, 2026

Driver 1: 59-year-old male from Frederick, Colorado, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2020 Harley Davidson Street Glide
Helmet Used: No
Passenger 1: 54-year-old female from Frederick, Colorado, fatal injuries
Helmet Used: No

Driver 2: 15-year-old female from Sturgis, South Dakota, no injuries
Vehicle 2: 2009 Jeep Grand Cherokee
Seat Belt Used: Yes
Passenger 2a: 67-year-old male from Lead, South Dakota, minor injuries
Seat Belt Used: Under Investigation
Passenger 2b: 59-year-old female from Lead, South Dakota, no injuries

Lawrence County, S.D.- Two people from Colorado died Thursday in a two-vehicle crash near Deadwood, South Dakota.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2009 Jeep Grand Cherokee was traveling westbound on U.S. Highway 14A near mile marker 47. At the same time, the driver of a 2020 Harley Davidson Street Glide was traveling east and failed to negotiate a turn. The Harley Davidson crossed into the westbound lanes and collided with the Jeep. Both the driver and passenger of the Harley Davidson sustained fatal injuries. One of the Jeep's passengers sustained minor injuries.

U.S. Highway 14A was closed for approximately three hours.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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

Pennington County Fatal Crash

What: Three-vehicle fatal crash

Where: U.S. Highway 385 at mile marker 89, 8 miles northeast of Hill City, South Dakota

When: 1:51 p.m., Thursday, August 6, 2026

Driver 1: 69-year-old male from Emden, Illinois, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 1953 Harley Davidson

Helmet Used: Yes

Passenger: 69-year-old female from Emden, Illinois, fatal injuries

Helmet Used: Yes

Driver 2: 72-year-old male from Glendale, Arizona, serious non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 2: 1956 Harley Davidson FLE 74CI

Helmet Used: Under investigation

Driver 3: 67-year-old female, no injuries

Vehicle 3: 2011 Toyota 4Runner

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger: 62-year-old female, no injuries

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Pennington County, S.D.- Two people from Illinois died Thursday in a three-vehicle crash near Hill City, South Dakota.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 1953 Harley Davidson and the driver of a 1956 Harley Davidson FLE 74CI were traveling northbound on U.S. Highway 385 at mile marker 89. At the same time the driver of a 2011 Toyota 4Runner was in the northbound lanes, waiting for oncoming traffic to pass so she could turn onto Wrinkle Valley Road. A fourth vehicle was between the Toyota and the Harley Davidsons. That vehicle passed the Toyota on the shoulder. The Harley Davidsons attempted to stop and their brakes locked. The driver of the 1956 Harley Davidson laid his vehicle onto the road. The 1953 Harley Davidson collided with the Toyota and caught fire, which spread to the Toyota.

The driver and the passenger of the 1953 Harley Davidson sustained fatal injuries. The driver of the 1956 Harley Davidson was transported to a Rapid City hospital with serious non-life-threatening injuries. The driver and passenger of the Toyota were not injured.

U.S. Highway 385 was closed for approximately four hours.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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

Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash

Where: U.S. Highway 14A at mile marker 50, 2 miles south of Sturgis, South Dakota

When: 1:06 p.m., Thursday, August 6, 2026

Driver 1: 77-year-old male from Wrentham, Massachusetts, serious non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2013 Victory Jackpot

Helmet Used: Yes

Driver 2: 46-year-old female from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 2013 Suzuki Gladius 650

Helmet Used: Yes

Lawrence County, S.D.- A Sioux Falls woman died Thursday from injuries sustained in a two-vehicle crash near Sturgis, South Dakota.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2013 Suzuki Gladius 650 was traveling eastbound on U.S. Highway 14A. At the same time, the driver of a 2013 Victory Jackpot was traveling westbound and failed to negotiate a curve. He crossed into the eastbound lane and struck the Suzuki. The driver of the Suzuki sustained fatal injuries. The driver of the Victory was transported to a Sturgis hospital with serious non-life-threatening injuries.

The eastbound lanes were closed for approximately one hour.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Noem 'not planning to run' but doesn't rule out a political future as her statue is unveiled

Republican former governor of South Dakota returns to Pierre for ceremony

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — Former South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Friday after the unveiling of a statue in her honor that she won't rule out any future campaigns but is not planning to run for U.S. Senate in two years.

Noem, a Republican, was rumored as a possible Senate candidate this year but is not challenging incumbent Republican Sen. Mike Rounds. Another South Dakota Republican U.S. senator, Majority Leader John Thune, will face a decision about running for reelection in 2028. Politico reported earlier this week that Thune anticipates running, but the outlet anonymously quoted other senators who said he might retire.

Noem is serving as special envoy for the Shield of the Americas, a position that President Donald Trump created earlier this year. She said the job includes working with other countries to secure their borders.

"I'm not planning to run for Senate in 2028," Noem said. "So, I'm planning to build a lot of fence, continue to help other countries build departments of homeland security and work with the State Department to help President Trump continue to be successful."

She also expressed confidence in her ability to win if she decides to seek an elected office in the future. "Oh, I wouldn't take it off the table," Noem said. "I may someday, but you know, we ran 13 races and won them all, so campaigns don't scare me, but I've got a lot of other things to do, too."

Noem's comments to a gaggle of reporters came after a South Dakota foundation unveiled a bronze statue of her outdoors in the state's capital city — part of a project to honor all the state's ex-governors with statues — in front of a crowd of about 100 people. The statue is at the entrance to the Hilger's Gulch nature area near the Capitol complex. Noem's official portrait was also unveiled for display with other ex-governor portraits inside the Capitol building.

During her speech, Noem extended thanks to her daughters, sons-in-law, four grandchildren and mother for attending. Her son is serving as a missionary in the Middle East, Noem said, and was unable to attend. Noem said her husband, Bryon, also could not attend.



A close-up view of former Gov. Kristi Noem's statue featured on the Trail of Governors in Pierre, South Dakota. Beside her is a statue of her horse, Iceman. (Photo by

Meghan O'Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Noem praised the work of her former lieutenant governor and successor, Gov. Larry Rhoden, along with his wife, first lady Sandy Rhoden, who both attended.

"They have been incredible people of integrity to lead South Dakota," she said. "I've been grateful for them and all that they have done."

Noem's statue was added to Pierre's Trail of Governors. It's supported by a foundation that uses donations to commission, build and maintain the dozens of statues throughout the city. All former governors are now represented on the trail.

Noem's statue depicts her leading her favorite horse, named Iceman, by the reins. It cost \$150,000, which was more than past statues that cost \$78,000, according to Leroy Foster of the foundation.

Donors for Noem's statue included family members and political allies, according to the Trail of Governors website. The biggest donation was for at least \$68,000, from the late Wyoming investment manager Foster Friess, who unsuccessfully sought the Republican nomination for Wyoming governor in 2018.

The sculptor, John Lopez, is an artist from Lemmon, South Dakota, known for his large, welded creations of figures including bison, horses and cowboys.

Noem's path through politics

Noem entered politics by winning a seat in the state House of Representatives in 2006, where she served from 2007 until 2010. That year, she entered a competitive field to secure the Republican nomination for U.S. House, winning the primary election and later ousting incumbent Democrat Stephanie Herseth Sandlin.

Noem was elected as the first female governor of South Dakota in 2018, with an endorsement from Trump, defeating the state's attorney general in a Republican primary. She sparked national controversy during her first term in office with her hands-off approach to managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Noem won a second term as governor in 2022, and then became the subject of negative headlines and scrutiny nationwide in 2024 with the release of her book, "No Going Back," in which she recounted fatally shooting a misbehaving hunting dog and an unruly goat.

She resigned in 2025 to become secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, responsible for immigration enforcement, border security, disaster response, cyber and airline security, and protecting dignitaries.

Protests against increased enforcement activity by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which is part of the department, spread across the nation during Noem's tenure. In January, ICE agents shot and killed two American citizens during enforcement actions in Minneapolis.

Following the shootings, Noem faced congressional hearings where she was criticized for her handling of ICE and numerous other actions, even including questions from a Democratic lawmaker about multiple media reports that she has a romantic relationship with her adviser, Corey Lewandowski, who was not in attendance Friday.

Trump reassigned Noem to her newly created position in March.

Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

Candidates for South Dakota governor will debate twice in September

BY JOHN HULT

Two debates between South Dakota's candidates for governor will take place in September.

The first will be at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron during the fair Sept. 2-7, with the time and date of the debate yet to be confirmed.

The second is scheduled for 8 p.m. Central, 7 p.m. Mountain on Sept. 28, and will take place at the South Dakota Public Broadcasting studio in Sioux Falls, in partnership with South Dakota News Watch.

Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden won the nomination to be his party's candidate after finishing second in a four-way primary on June 2, and then defeating Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden in a July 28 runoff.

The general election will take place on Nov. 3.

Rhoden is seeking to be elected governor for the first time. The former lieutenant governor assumed the governorship in January of 2025, when then-Gov. Kristi Noem took a job with President Donald Trump's administration.

Rhoden is running with his lieutenant governor, Tony Venhuizen.

Democrat Dan Ahlers, a former lawmaker from Dell Rapids, has yet to announce a running mate, but told South Dakota Searchlight on Friday he expects to reveal his pick "very shortly."

In a press release announcing Rhoden's intention to participate in the two debates, Venhuizen preemptively challenged Ahlers' running mate to a debate.

Ahlers, who said he'd accepted the invitations for the two debates, said his running mate is prepared to debate Venhuizen.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.



Democratic nominee Dan Ahlers, left, will face Republican nominee Gov. Larry Rhoden in the Nov. 3 general election.

(South Dakota Searchlight photos by Joshua Haiar and Makenzie Huber)

US Senate confirms FEMA administrator alongside dozens of nominees

BY JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate on Friday approved Cameron Hamilton to lead the Federal Emergency Management Agency, giving the agency its first administrator since President Donald Trump took office last year.

The 51-47 vote confirmed more than 70 nominees as part of one package, including the administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and the director of the Indian Health Service.

The rest of the batch contained a mix of deputy directors, under secretaries, assistant secretaries, ambassadors, U.S. attorneys and judges.

Hamilton's confirmation vote follows a bit of a rollercoaster for him at FEMA. He ran the agency in an acting capacity for the first few months of 2025 before being fired after testifying to Congress that he personally did "not believe it is in the best interest of the American people to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

He then spent several months working as a senior adviser in the Education Department before being hired as the senior vice president of response and recovery at LTS, Inc., a consulting firm in Virginia. He stayed there until April, when he became a senior adviser/senior counselor at the Department of Homeland Security.

'Fair and reasonable'

Trump formally nominated Hamilton as his pick for FEMA administrator in May without the hype he's doled out for some of his other picks.

Hamilton testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee in June that if confirmed to run the agency he wouldn't provide more resources to Republican regions of the country over Americans who vote for Democrats.

"What I can tell you is that if confirmed, my focus will be to ensure that FEMA is objective, is fair and reasonable, follows the law, and is consistent in the approach to how we adjudicate and process claims and requests for disasters," he said.

Shifting responsibilities to states

During his time away from the federal government, Hamilton spoke about his experiences running FEMA in an acting role on an episode of the "Disaster Tough" podcast released in September.

"I was not hired to abolish FEMA. That was never a part of the conversation and that's never something that I would have agreed with," he said at the time. "And I was very clear, I wanted some reform. I wanted to cut wasteful spending. I wanted to downsize the agency. There's no denying that. And I think most of those things could be done wisely and properly."

Any offloading of responsibilities from the federal government to states, he said, would include "a gradual phasing out."

"We needed to give the states some time to see what that entails and to respond accordingly," he said on the podcast. "Not just, 'Hey, the water is now shut off. You're on your own.' That's not wise. That's not being a good partner."

Trump has spoken throughout his second administration about shifting some of the responsibility for natural disaster preparedness and response to state governments.

"We want to wean off of FEMA and we want to bring it down to the state level," Trump said in June 2025. "We're moving it back to the states so the governors can handle it. That's why they're governors. Now, if they can't handle it, they shouldn't be governor."

Trump established a FEMA Review Council to propose changes, which it did in May, though neither the president nor Congress has taken significant steps in the months since to implement any of the suggestions.

Funding debate

Congress approved a budget of \$32 billion for FEMA for the current fiscal year with \$26.4 billion of that for the disaster relief fund.

The Trump administration asked lawmakers to cut funding for non-disaster FEMA grants by \$1.3 billion in the spending bill for the upcoming fiscal year, which is set to begin Oct. 1.

The White House budget office wrote in its proposals that reduced funding for those programs would refocus "the agency on sound emergency management while encouraging States and communities to build resilience and use their unique local knowledge and resources in disaster response."

House Republicans proposed a total spending level of \$34.1 billion for FEMA in fiscal 2027. Of that, \$28.39 billion would be dedicated to the disaster relief fund.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has yet to release its annual funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security, which includes FEMA.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

More states ban child marriage, though it's still legal in most of the US

A high-profile Ohio child abuse case has renewed attention on state laws that permit some teens to marry

BY ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS

After authorities rescued 16 children last month who had been confined to a single room in a home in rural Ohio, attention turned to their mother, who had been 15 and pregnant when she married their father.

The child endangerment case has recharged a national conversation around child marriage, which is defined by the United Nations as any marriage involving someone under age 18.

Earlier this year two Ohio state senators — one Democrat, one Republican — introduced a bill that would require Ohio residents to be at least 18 to get married. Current state law allows 17-year-olds to marry with court approval. The bill passed out of a Senate committee in June but didn't get a full Senate vote before lawmakers adjourned for the summer.

Until the last decade, marriage under age 18 was legal in all 50 states. In 2018, Delaware and New Jersey became the first states to outright ban it. More states followed: Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, Michigan, Washington, Virginia, New Hampshire, Washington, D.C., Maine, Oregon, Missouri and most recently, Oklahoma, have banned it since 2020.

In May, Oklahoma passed a Republican-sponsored bill that removed all exceptions for a person under 18 to marry.

"Oklahoma children must be able to grow up free from coercion and exploitation, and it is our duty to guarantee those protections are enacted and enforced," said Oklahoma state Sen. Warren Hamilton, a Republican who sponsored the bill, in a May statement.

Hamilton said the law protects minors from forced marriage and helps prevent child trafficking and exploitation, ensuring "that no minor, even those who are close to adulthood, is placed in a marriage that puts their safety or well-being at risk."

In 33 states, marriage under 18 is still allowed with varying restrictions, such as requiring parental consent or court approval for marriage involving someone aged 15-17. Only three states — California, Mississippi and New Mexico — do not specify a minimum age for marriage.

As of 2021, the most recent year for which data is available, Nevada, Idaho and Utah had the highest rates of child marriage, according to a 2025 study by Unchained At Last, a nonprofit that advocates for the end of child marriage. Nevada's rate — 6 per 1,000 minors — was nearly twice that of Idaho and Utah. Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island had the lowest rates, at less than 0.2 per 1,000 minors. The U.S. average was more than 2 per 1,000 girls and 0.31 per 1,000 boys.

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Between 2000 and 2021, nearly 315,000 children under age 18 were legally wed, according to the group. Most of those were girls wed to adult men.

Advocates for ending child marriage point to research that has found lifelong consequences for those involved, including greater vulnerability to sexual and domestic violence, worse health outcomes, higher likelihood of dropping out of high school, greater risk of poverty and higher divorce rates.

A 2022 study from researchers at McGill University found that the proportion of child marriages that met the definition of a sex crime varied across states from 1% to more than 50%.

Oklahoma's bipartisan bill sailed through the Senate earlier this year but encountered fierce opposition in the House, where it passed by a single vote.

Some Republican lawmakers argued that the measure amounted to government overreach and would increase the number of babies born out of wedlock. One Oklahoma Republican lawmaker who opposed the bill said it would take away parents' rights to give permission for a teen to marry.

Republican lawmakers in states including Missouri have made similar arguments. One Missouri Republican legislator said he believed banning child marriage would result in more abortions, reported the Missouri Independent.

Oklahoma Democratic state Rep. Michelle McCane told her colleagues earlier this year that she gave birth at 15 and that her life would have been far different if her mother had let her marry the person she "picked in eighth grade." She pointed out that married minors can't legally seek a divorce or stay at a domestic violence shelter.

"I don't know about you all, but please think back to who you picked in eighth, ninth, 10th grade, and I think many of you would be very disappointed to be saddled with that person for the rest of your life," McCane said.

Children under 18 typically lack the legal rights that give adults agency in a marriage, such as being able to file for divorce or to file court actions in their own name.

While Republicans have been divided recently on the issue, underage marriage bans have drawn criticism from liberal groups in the past. The American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood opposed a 2017 California bill to ban marriage before age 18, arguing it intruded on the fundamental rights of marriage.

This week, a bill in California that would raise the minimum marriage age to 18 with no exceptions is headed to a vote in the state Senate.

One of the advocates pushing for the bill this year in California is Courtney Stodden, a model and singer who, at age 16, married a 51-year-old actor.

"I cannot rewrite my childhood, but I can spend the rest of my life helping rewrite the future for children who deserve more freedom, more protection, and more choices than I had," Stodden wrote on social media in a July post supporting the California bill.

Stateline reporter Anna Claire Vollers can be reached at avollers@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.

Marriage age law in South Dakota FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

South Dakota's legal marriage age is 16, and attempts to raise it to 18 have failed in recent years. Instead, lawmakers approved new restrictions earlier this year on marriages involving 16- or 17-year-olds. State law already required marriages involving minors of those ages to include parental or guardian consent. The new law still requires consent, plus a court's determination that the marriage is voluntary and in the best interest of the minor or minors involved. The new law also prohibits 16- and 17-year-olds from marrying someone more than four years older.

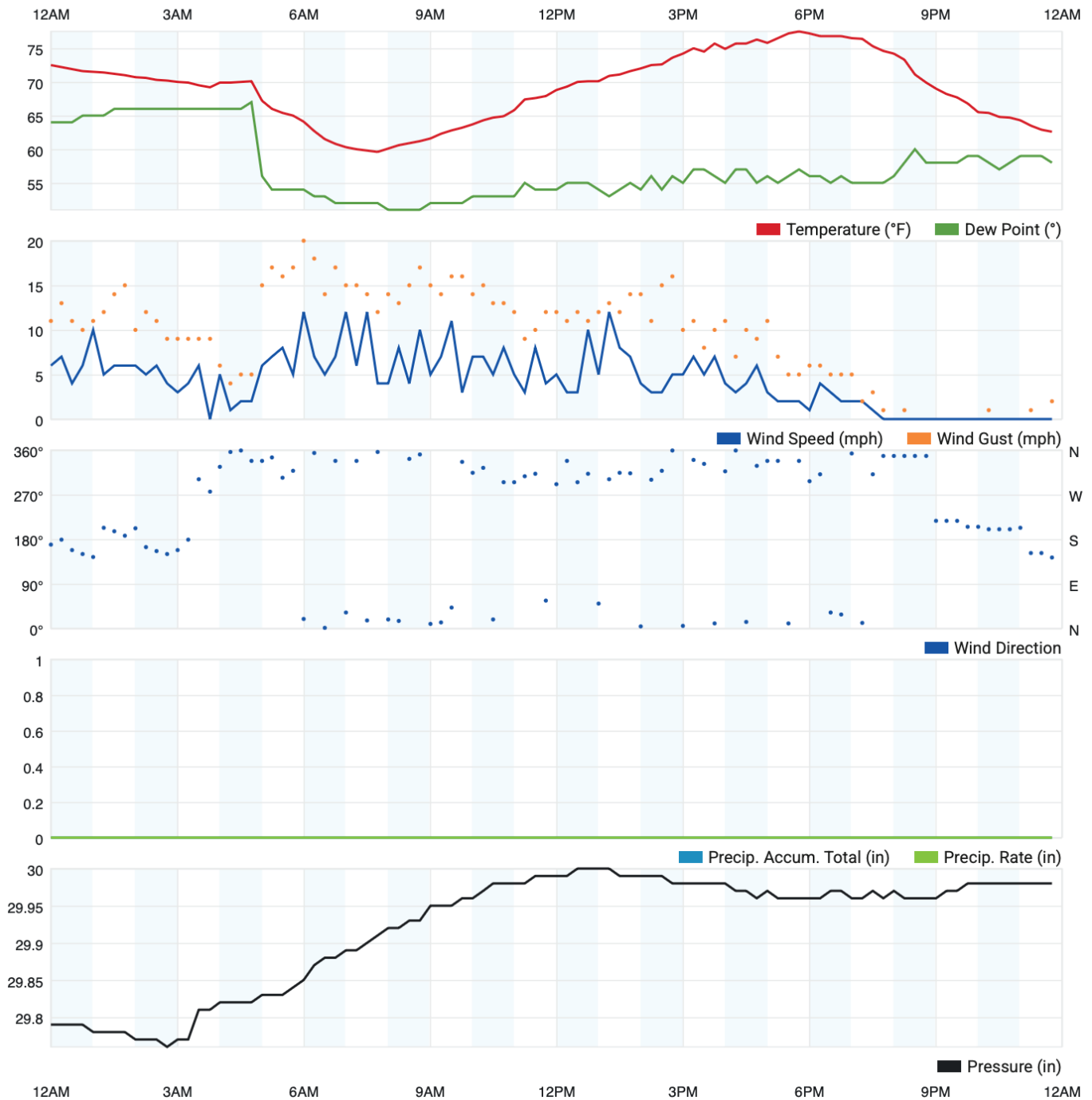
Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

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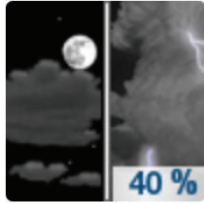
Today



High: 84 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 60 °F

Partly Cloudy
then Chance
T-storms

Sunday



High: 82 °F

Partly Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 58 °F

Chance
Showers

Monday



High: 83 °F

Slight Chance
Showers



2 Rounds of Severe Weather Saturday

August 8, 2026
1:32 AM

Marginal Risk

Timing/Location

- First round will be Sat morning in south central SD, second round will be Sat afternoon/early Sun morning across northeast SD.

Primary Threats

for the **Green** areas

Tornado Potential

Very Low	Low	Medium	High
----------	-----	--------	------

Max Hail Size

Dimes	Quarters	Golfball	Baseball
-------	----------	----------	----------

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph	60-70 mph	70-80 mph	> 80mph
----------	-----------	-----------	---------

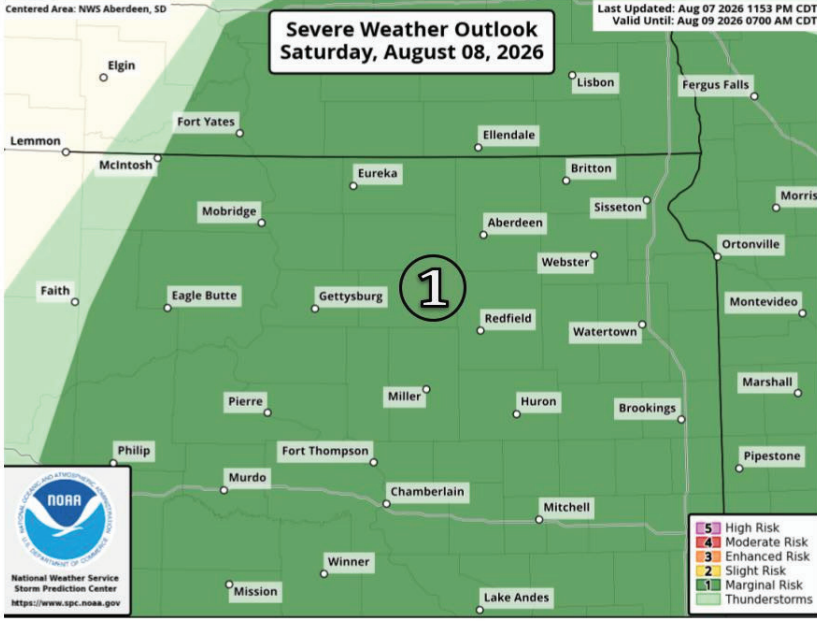
Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low	Low	Medium	High
----------	-----	--------	------

Centered Area: NWS Aberdeen, SD

Severe Weather Outlook Saturday, August 08, 2026

Last Updated: Aug 07 2026 1153 PM CDT
Valid Until: Aug 09 2026 0700 AM CDT



5 High Risk
4 Moderate Risk
3 Enhanced Risk
2 Slight Risk
1 Marginal Risk
Thunderstorms

National Weather Service
Storm Prediction Center
<https://www.spc.noaa.gov>



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

There is a Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) for two rounds of storms today (Saturday) and tonight. The first could be this morning mainly in central and south central SD; the second could be kicking off as early as this afternoon over portions of north central and northeast South Dakota. But, the probability is a little bit higher for this second potential round of storms to happen later this evening into early Sunday morning across northeast South Dakota. The main threats with both rounds will be 1 to 2 inch hail and 60 mph wind gusts.

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Severe Weather Sunday

August 8, 2026

1:45 AM

Marginal Risk

Timing/Location

- Storms will impact central and eastern SD Sunday afternoon into the overnight hours.

Primary Threats for the **Green** areas

Tornado Potential

Very Low Low Medium High

Max Hail Size

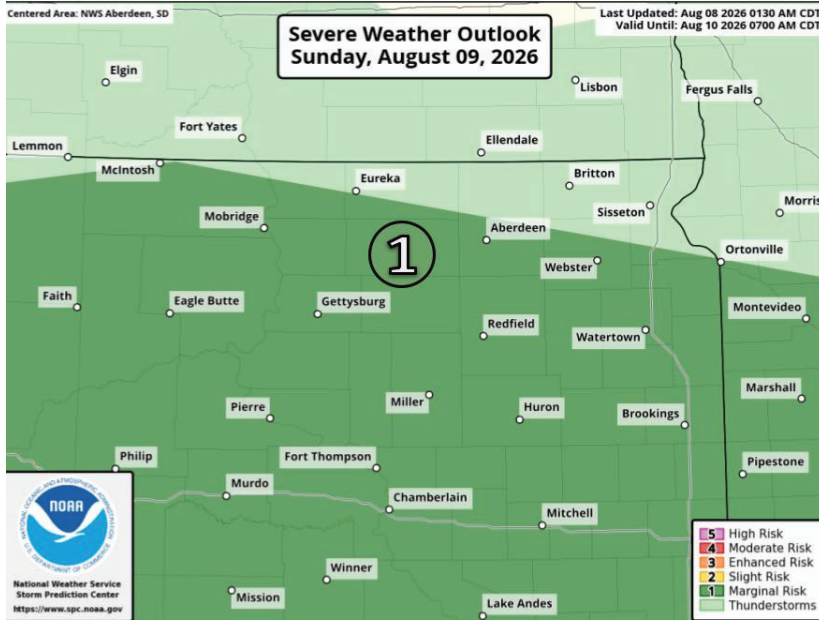
Dimes **Quarters** Golfball Baseball

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low Low Medium High



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

There is a Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) for severe storms Sunday. If these storms form, they will impact portions of central and eastern South Dakota into west central MN during the afternoon into the overnight hours. The main hazards will be 1 inch hail and 60 mph wind gusts.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 78 °F at 5:44 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 7:39 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 5:59 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 108 in 1936

Record Low: 42 in 1939

Average High: 84

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in Aug.: 0.58

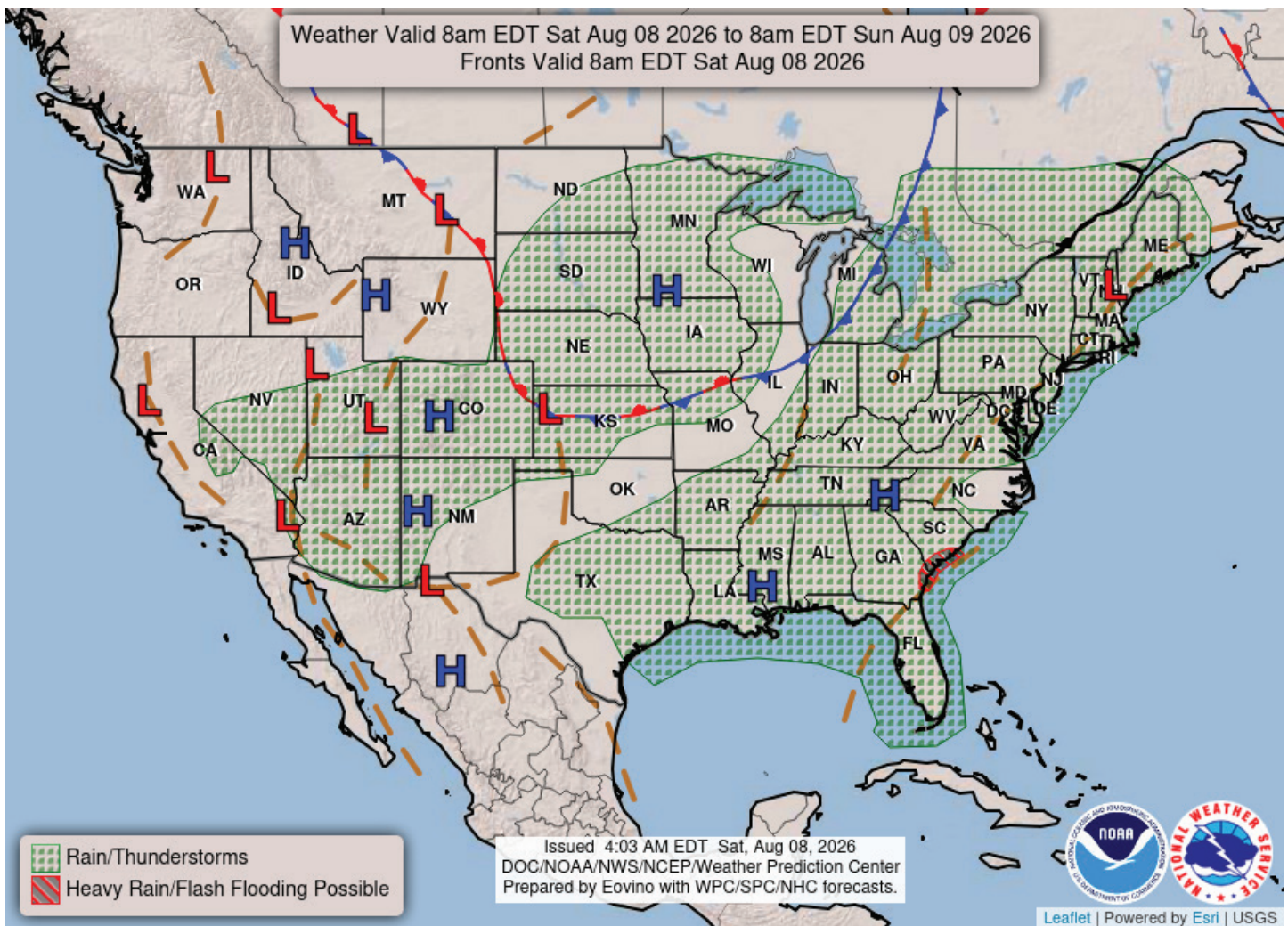
Precip to date in Aug.: 9.79

Average Precip to date: 14.68

Precip Year to Date: 19.26

Sunset Tonight: 8:51 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:25 am



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Today in Weather History

August 8, 2010: Thunderstorms produced damaging winds and flash flooding from heavy rain along and near the Missouri River in southeast South Dakota during the late afternoon. Bon Homme and Yankton Counties were among the hardest hit areas. Avon in Bon Homme County, thunderstorm winds caused widespread damage to trees and power lines. The tree damage included large trees uprooted or blown down, and falling trees destroyed at least two houses. The damage to power lines caused a power outage over the town which lasted about 5 hours. The winds also destroyed a large shed and damaged a camper parked in the shed. In Tyndall, thunderstorm winds of 70 mph caused tree damage, including large trees blown down. The winds also blew down power lines, damaged several small sheds, and tore shingles off roofs. Thunderstorm winds also ripped through Yankton County. Near Napa, winds overturned several campers and caused widespread tree damage, including large trees blown down at a Lewis and Clark Lake campground.

1874: Swarms of Rocky Mountain locust invaded Denver, Colorado. Millions were seen cruising through the air. The insects were picked up by a thunderstorm gust front and carried into the city. The grasshoppers ravaged crops in surrounding counties for the last month.

1878 — The temperature at Denver, CO, soars to an all-time record high of 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1881 — A cloudburst and flash flood occurred at Central Springs, CO, and Idaho Springs, CO. (David Ludlum)

1882 — An August snowstorm was reported by a ship on Lake Michigan. A thick cloud reportedly burst on the decks covering them with snow and slush six inches deep. Snow showers were observed at shore points that day. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1983 — The temperature at Big Horn Basin, WY, reached 115 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorm rains in eastern Nebraska sent the Wahoo River and Ithica River above flood stage. Thunderstorm rains in western Iowa sent the Nishnabotna River over flood stage. Up to seven inches of rain deluged the Council Bluffs area Friday evening and Saturday morning. Thunderstorms produced 4.4 inches of rain in three hours Friday evening, along with golf ball size hail. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms developing along a slow moving cold front produced severe weather from central Kansas to southern Wisconsin late in the day. Thunderstorms in Iowa produced hail three inches in diameter at Vinton, and produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Donohue and near Mount Pleasant. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — A total of ninety-nine cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Alpena MI with a reading of 40 degrees. Mount Mitchell NC was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 35 degrees. Early evening thunderstorms around Las Vegas NV produced wind gusts to 116 mph. The high winds damaged or destroyed about eighty- two aircraft at Henderson Sky Harbor Airport and McCarran International Airport, causing fourteen million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2007: A tornado bounces across Staten Island and Brooklyn, New York, ripping off roofs and damaging dozens of buildings. The EF-2 twister hop-scotched through Brooklyn's Bay Ridge and Sunset Park neighborhoods around 6:30 am.

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Daily Devotion

Refocusing on Jesus

Fixing our eyes on Jesus leads us on the path to peace, joy, and contentment.

John 15:4-6: 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

Today's passage urges us to stay connected to Jesus. The image of Him as the vine and believers as the branches helps us understand that apart from Him, we can do nothing. It is possible to receive His salvation yet still act out of the flesh, separated from His protection, strength, and power. All believers find their focus wandering at times, but some have strayed so far that it's hard to see their way back.

If you discover your heart is loyal to something besides Christ, it's vital to acknowledge that this has happened. Repent of whichever attitudes and activities are drawing you away, and choose to focus on Him instead.

Once the distraction is gone, refocus on Jesus by reading the Word, praying, learning from biblical messages, and spending time with godly friends who will encourage you. After living outside of God's best for a while, it can be hard to discipline yourself to function as the Lord desires. But remember that those who abide in God will bear much fruit (John 15:5).

Hebrews 12:1 urges us to "lay aside every encumbrance" so we can run with endurance the race set before us. Following His plan in His strength is the way to peace, joy, and contentment in life.

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:

08.07.26

16 33 35 47 49 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT 15 Hrs 48 Mins 18
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.07.26

17 20 32 54 57 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$80,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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 14 Hrs 48 Mins 18
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.05.26

8 18 28 31 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$21,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 3 Mins 18
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.05.26

6 33 54 63 66 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 32 Mins 19
DRAW: 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 15 Hrs 32 Mins 19
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Mark Cruz to lead Indian Health Service amid staffing and infrastructure challenges

By SAVANNAH PETERS Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The U.S. Senate voted Friday to confirm Mark Cruz, a citizen of the Klamath Tribes, to lead the federal agency that provides healthcare for some 2.8 million Native American and Alaska Native patients.

Cruz was confirmed to serve a four-year term as director of the Indian Health Service, a position that has sat vacant since late 2025.

At his July confirmation hearing, Cruz said he would advocate “ferociously” to improve health outcomes in Indian Country and bring lived experience to the role.

“My family, my friends and my tribal community will live with the consequences of the work I do for decades to come,” Cruz told the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

Cruz was confirmed by a 51-47 vote along with more than 70 other nominees of President Donald Trump — one of the Senate’s last actions before taking an August recess.

Cruz is a senior adviser on tribal health to Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and will retain that newly created role while leading the IHS. In Trump’s first administration, Cruz oversaw the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development under the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The IHS operates 21 hospitals and 78 smaller health centers nationwide as part of the federal government’s legal responsibility to provide healthcare for Native Americans. The average age of those facilities is around 40 years old and one-third are in “poor” physical condition, according to a 2023 U.S. Government Accountability Office report.

Cruz assumes leadership of an agency grappling with stubbornly high provider vacancy rates and a 30-year backlog of facilities in need of replacement. He has pledged to address those challenges, better insulate tribal health programs from federal budget impasses and fund overhead costs tribes take on when they manage their own healthcare systems.

In a statement Friday, the National Congress of American Indians said Cruz’s confirmation comes at a “critical time.”

“We congratulate him on his confirmation and look forward to working together to ensure the federal government fully upholds its trust and treaty obligations,” NCAI executive director Larry Wright Jr. said.

The National Indian Health Board also applauded Cruz’s confirmation. By that nonprofit’s most recent estimate, it would take some \$73 billion for the IHS to fully meet the healthcare needs of tribal nations. For fiscal year 2026, Congress appropriated just over \$8 billion to fund the IHS. ____

This story is published through the Global Indigenous Reporting Network at The Associated Press.

Yemen attacks Houthis, Turkey’s Kurdish peace bill wins approval, and other Middle East news

By The Associated Press undefined

The UAE said one of its ships was targeted by an Iranian missile, Yemen’s military has attacked Houthi rebels as the United Nations warns that fighting could escalate, and Turkey’s Kurdish peace bill wins approval in parliament.

Here’s a look at developments across the Middle East on Saturday. Full coverage can be found [here](#).

Iran attacks vessel in Strait of Hormuz, UAE says

A vessel owned by Abu Dhabi’s state-owned ADNOC oil and gas company was attacked on Saturday while transiting through the Strait of Hormuz, Emirati authorities said.

The UAE’s Foreign Ministry said the missile was fired by Iran as part of attacks on commercial shipping.

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ADNOC said in a statement that there had been no casualties following the attack in the early hours of Saturday. The company said that over a dozen of its vessels have been attacked by missiles and drones while passing through the Strait since the United States and Israel launched the war on Iran in February. One crew member has been killed and 20 others wounded, it said.

ADNOC did not immediately respond to AP questions about the latest attack.

Yemen's military attacks Iran-backed Houthis

The attacks were in response to the Houthis' recent strikes in central and eastern Yemen. Col. Majed al-Nazili, spokesperson for Yemen's military, said the attacks targeted the rebels' "sites and capabilities" on multiple front lines, without elaborating further.

He said the attacks were aimed at defending the military's security, marking a major escalation since a truce in 2022 largely halted fighting.

The country's civil war pits the Iran-backed Houthis against a Saudi-led coalition allied with Yemen's internationally recognized government.

On Friday, United Nations envoy Hans Grundberg urged the parties to exercise restraint.

"Yemen today faces a greater risk of renewed large-scale conflict than at any point since the UN-brokered truce of April 2022," he said in a statement.

Turkey's Kurdish peace bill wins approval in parliament

A Turkish draft law aimed at advancing a peace effort with Kurdish militants passed its first hurdle in parliament on Saturday, with a parliamentary committee approving the measure that includes a conditional pardon-like mechanism for thousands of former fighters.

Last year, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, declared its decision to disarm and disband as part of the peace initiative aimed at ending the decades-long conflict with the Turkish state.

The draft legislation, expected to be debated and approved in the general assembly early next week, defines the procedures for the group's disarmament and the rehabilitation of some PKK members. It would suspend some prison sentences for people convicted of membership in the group and postpone the prosecution of others.

The measures would come into effect once Turkey's National Security Council confirms that the group has disbanded and surrendered all weapons.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people since it began in the 1980s and has spilled into neighboring Iraq and Syria.

Turkey and its Western allies consider the group a terrorist organization.

Russian attacks kill 4 in Kyiv and surrounding region as air defenses fall short

By VOLODYMYR YURCHUK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Four people, including a child, were killed in Russian attacks on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and the surrounding region, local officials said Saturday, as Ukraine hit another oil refinery in Russia.

Residents endure regular drone and missile barrages that Kyiv's depleted air defenses are struggling to counter amid Moscow's 4-year-old full-scale invasion, while repeated Ukrainian strikes on oil facilities have caused fuel shortages and rattled Russians.

Grandparents and grandson killed in Ukraine's Kyiv region

Two grandparents and their 3-year-old grandson were killed after multiple Russian drones destroyed their home in the Brovary district of Kyiv region, northeast of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, early Saturday.

Three other members of the same family and a neighbor who came to their aid were hospitalized, local authorities said. The attack reduced the house to rubble and wrecked outbuildings and cars.

In the city of Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at least one other person died in a "strike involving six ballistic missiles against civilian infrastructure."

In its daily report, Ukraine's air force said it had downed or intercepted 135 of 151 drones launched by Russia overnight. The attack also involved six ballistic missiles and other guided missiles.

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Russia has relentlessly pounded civilian areas of Ukraine, even though Moscow insists its forces target only military facilities.

Moscow is exploiting Ukraine's critical shortage of interceptors for the U.S.-made Patriot systems, the sole air defense weapon in its arsenal able to shoot down ballistic missiles.

Zelenskyy has pleaded with other countries, especially the U.S., to send more of the ammunition made scarcer by the Iran war. Failing that, he wants to make Patriot ammunition in Ukraine or win permission from Elon Musk to use his Starlink satellite communications system to guide strikes inside Russia that can hit its missile launchers.

Following the latest attacks, Zelenskyy appealed on X for more sanctions to "prevent the production of these ballistic missiles," along with "anti-ballistic capabilities" and "interceptor missiles."

Ukraine's air defenses shot down around 5,300 drones and missiles last month, Ukraine's defense ministry said Friday, just under 60% of the around 9,000 attack drones and missiles Russia fired in the same period.

Ukraine strikes a Russian oil facility

In Russia, six people were wounded when a fire broke out at the Ilsky Oil Refinery in the southern Krasnodar region due to debris from a falling drone, local officials said.

Ukraine's General Staff said Ukrainian forces struck the refinery in Krasnodar, along with the Syzran Oil Refinery in the Samara region, more than 800 kilometers (500 miles) inside Russia.

The governor of Russia's Samara region, Vyacheslav Fedorishchev, said drones hit an "industrial enterprise," but he did not mention the refinery.

Ukraine's almost daily long-range drone and missile strikes using domestically developed weapons have battered Russian oil facilities for months. The operation has brought a fuel crisis that is embarrassing the Kremlin.

Zelenskyy in Serbia for talks

The latest attacks came hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived Friday for his first official visit to Serbia, one of the few European countries that have maintained friendly relations with Russia despite its invasion of Ukraine.

"Important talks are scheduled for today and tomorrow," Zelenskyy said Friday. He added that he will meet with Vucic and Serbia's Prime Minister Djuro Macut.

"We will discuss expanding economic ties between our countries, relations with the European Union, and other areas where we can find practical opportunities that benefit our peoples, as well as security issues," Zelenskyy said.

'We saw death and suffering': Dozens of Nigerians freed after 6 months in jihadi captivity

By PELUMI SALAKO Associated Press

ILORIN, Kwara (AP) — Some of the 163 kidnapped Nigerians rescued from jihadi captivity have spoken of the suffering and fear they lived in for six months.

The freed captives, mostly women and children, were among over 300 kidnap victims freed by Nigerian forces this week.

They were handed over to the authorities by security forces in Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state, on Friday for medical attention and routine checks, and were anticipating their return home to reunite with their families.

Mary Ishaya recalled days without food, and being asked alongside others to bury other hostages who died in captivity.

The 44-year-old, who had never touched a dead body or buried one before, said: "I still cannot find the right words to describe what has happened to us. We saw death and suffering."

The Nigerians were abducted on Feb. 3 when jihadi militants stormed the village of Woro, killing over 160 others.

In the hospital where they were receiving medical attention, the freed captives looked emaciated with

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many laying on the floor, barely able to stand, while others had injuries and emotional scars from their ordeal. Some of the women were informed that their husbands had been among those killed during the February attack.

Some told The Associated Press how they had given up on any hope of returning home. Others recounted people falling sick, being beaten by the rain, and told to hide whenever Nigerian military helicopters flew over the forest hideouts where the captors held them.

Amira Saliu, a nurse who was among those freed, said she helped about 10 pregnant women deliver their babies in the forests.

"I had no choice but to use my bare hands," she said.

Locals in Woro said they suspected the killings and kidnapping were a punishment for their resistance to the preachings of the jihadis.

Hauwa Saliu recalled how the captors constantly asked the abductees if they had accepted those preachings. Saliu, whose husband was killed in the attack, said she refused to accept them.

"We prayed to God to help us go back home, but it never really crossed our minds that we were going to go back home," the 30-year-old said.

'Largest rescue operation ever'

February's attack was one of the deadliest in Nigeria in recent years, and showed how militants who had previously focused their activities in the north are moving south through Africa's most populous nation, where gangs compete for territory and control of natural resources in villages where they outnumber the country's overstretched security forces.

The U.S. is providing military support to Nigeria under an agreement it says aims to protect Nigerian Christians, though much of that support is restricted to logistics and intelligence-gathering at the heart of the violence in the north.

Mass kidnappings have come to define Nigeria's security issues, with schoolchildren also targeted.

The victims in the Muslim-majority Woro were rescued this week alongside 145 other victims who had been kidnapped, mostly from the neighboring Niger state.

Local authorities did not say how the captives were rescued from the dense, expansive forest of the Kainji Lake National Park.

Nigerian President Bola Tinubu described it as the "largest rescue operation ever" undertaken on a single day, and promised to intensify operations against armed gangs.

Recruitment drive and pay rises for the military

Some of the jihadi militants in Nigeria have presented themselves as an alternative to the government in areas with limited government and security presence.

A key issue in Nigeria is the poor welfare of the country's overstretched and underpaid security forces, which Tinubu has sought to address by recently announcing pay rises and mass recruitment for the military.

The government must find ways to act on intelligence and prevent militant attacks, rather than simply responding to them, according to Sekinat Ojeniyi, a senior analyst at global risk consultancy Africa Practice.

"It is time for us to recheck how much our security apparatus does to prevent" attacks, said Ojeniyi.

Senators head for the exits without meeting Trump's demands for voting bill

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators headed for the exits in the predawn hours Saturday, ending for now a crushing standoff over President Donald Trump's demands that they stay in session to pass a strict proof-of-citizenship voting bill before the summer recess.

While they wrapped up many key priorities in the overnight votes, advancing Trump's SAVE America Act was not among them.

Instead, Republican senators who had brought the chamber to a standstill spoke to Trump late in the evening about an alternative plan: They would try again to approve elements of the voting bill as part

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of a broader GOP budget package to fund the Iran war and replenish the Pentagon when they return to work in September.

"Obviously, with the president at his direction, this is what he wants to do," said Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, the GOP budget committee chairman, flanked by Sens. Mike Lee, R-Utah, and Rick Scott, R-Fla., after their phone call with the president.

The sudden wind-down after weeks of Trump ramping up his demands shows just how deeply the president is able to reach into the halls of Congress to set the agenda or disrupt it, the executive directing the affairs of the legislative branch. While Trump is often seen as a de facto speaker of the House, he is invariably trying his hand at mastering the Senate.

Trump had poked and prodded Senate Majority Leader John Thune for weeks to pass the SAVE America Act, a bill that does not have enough support from the Republicans who hold majority power, let alone the Democrats whose votes would be needed to advance it in the Senate.

The president has gone so far as to insist the Senate abandon its filibuster rules to jam the SAVE America Act past the 60-vote threshold that is typically needed to advance legislation in the chamber — something Thune and most senators have no interest in doing.

"John's trying. He's trying hard. I really believe that. But if he doesn't get there, it would be unfortunate," Trump said in an interview with Punchbowl News that posted Friday.

Trump's pressure couldn't overcome Thune's reality

Thune himself has worked to carefully balance the often unusual demands of the president with the political reality of his slim GOP majority. Republicans are down one vote with the prolonged absence of Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the former leader, who said this week he was released from a rehabilitation center and is recovering at home.

"I think everybody's, for the most part, on the same page," Thune, R-S.D., said about the trio's call with Trump, adding that eventually the Senate would have to tackle another budget bill.

During a daylong session that dragged for nearly 20 hours, Thune successfully powered through a lengthy list of other Trump priorities. Senators confirmed the president's pick of Todd Blanche as the attorney general, passed a sweeping Russian sanctions package to aid Ukraine, and approved a bipartisan package to fund the government into December in an early step toward avoiding a government shutdown.

The Republicans also tried to push forward a slimmer voting bill that would require people to show IDs before casting ballots for federal elections. It failed to advance, largely on a party-line vote with Democrats opposed.

But the failure to make progress on the SAVE America Act had erupted as an online crusade for Trump's allies in Congress, amplified by activists urging them on.

Led by Lee, a growing group of senators was refusing to adjourn for the summer break without passing Trump's priority voting bill.

At dinnertime, Thune gathered all the Republican senators for a meeting as the standoff deepened at the Capitol. There was no immediate way forward for the SAVE America Act or the broader budget bill. Thune encouraged the trio of senators to talk to the president, which they did, before regrouping back at Thune's office.

"We had about a two-hour conference meeting trying to figure out, you know, what we need to do to, to come to an agreement, to accomplish what the president wanted," Johnson said. "Then we had discussion with the president, he agrees."

Lee acknowledged he was disappointed by the outcome, but said he understood the political reality of the situation.

"We are not in a position right now where we have the wherewithal to pass it," Lee told reporters at the Capitol, after the three senators emerged from Thune's office following their call with Trump.

Near daybreak, when the Senate did call for the vote to adjourn, Lee and others objected with hearty nos. On the simple voice vote, the ayes had it, and the motion to adjourn was adopted.

Todd Blanche narrowly confirmed as Trump's attorney general in overnight vote

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate confirmed Todd Blanche as attorney general in a vote early Saturday morning, cementing President Donald Trump's former personal attorney's command of a Justice Department the Republican president has sought to bend to his will.

The Republican-led Senate voted 50-49 to make Blanche the second confirmed attorney general since Trump returned to the White House last year with a stated desire to use the law enforcement agency to investigate his political enemies. While Blanche has already been leading the department in an acting capacity, his confirmation could free him to pursue the Trump administration's agenda even more aggressively.

Blanche said on social media that he was "deeply honored by the trust and confidence President Trump has placed in me," adding that he was "grateful" to senators for working late to confirm him.

The vote followed a tumultuous confirmation fight that exposed deep concerns — from some Republicans as well as Democrats — about installing Trump's close ally atop a Justice Department that historically prided itself on its independence from the White House.

In the end, Blanche was confirmed by the narrowest of margins, opposed by two Republicans — Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska — and by every Democrat.

The path to confirmation for Blanche was unusually rocky, due in large part to Republican concerns about a controversial settlement of Trump's lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service.

Under pressure, Blanche publicly promised in writing that the department would abandon Trump's proposed \$1.8 billion compensation fund for the president's allies, including those who attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and rein in another piece of the settlement designed to shield Trump and his family from IRS tax audits.

His appeals were enough to win over Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, the decisive vote who threw his support behind Blanche Friday morning. Cassidy said no other nominee may be able to run the department better under Trump and suggested Blanche's role as Trump's former criminal defense lawyer can make him more effective at pushing back on the president's demands.

"This is not a referendum on President Trump. It is a decision regarding Mr. Blanche in very specific circumstances," said Cassidy, who lost his primary this year to a Trump-backed challenger.

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said confirming Blanche would be a "serious mistake." He begged his colleagues not to be on the "wrong side" of history.

"If there is ever a moment in history when we need an Attorney General above reproach, who is clearly dedicated to ending corruption, even at the highest level of our government, it's right now," Durbin said.

Blanche's loyalty to Trump left senators skeptical

The vote capped off a bruising confirmation fight, with Blanche's loyalty to Trump at the center of the stalemate.

Blanche was elevated to the top Justice Department post in an acting capacity after Trump fired Pam Bondi in April. Blanche moved swiftly to advance the president's interests, accelerating investigations into Trump's perceived foes and announcing the settlement that created the \$1.8 billion "Anti-Weaponization Fund" to compensate people who feel mistreated by the criminal justice system and provided Trump and family members with immunity from tax audits.

The controversial settlement threatened to torpedo Blanche's nomination until he formally rescinded the fund in writing under pressure from Republican Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina. The deal reached between the senators and the department unlocked a vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee, which advanced Blanche's nomination earlier this week.

Even after the deal, Blanche faced opposition from some Republican senators concerned with the "Anti-Weaponization Fund" and the tax audit immunity deal.

Murkowski announced early Friday that she would join Collins in opposing Blanche's nomination, saying the country needs an attorney general "who will check the worst impulses of this administration."

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Former prosecutor rises as Trump's defender

A former federal prosecutor in New York, Blanche rose to public prominence as a lead attorney on Trump's defense team, including during the Republican's hush money trial in New York. He also defended Trump against criminal charges in the two federal cases brought by the Biden administration's Department of Justice — an experience Blanche has said provided him a firsthand look at what he contends was the weaponization of the criminal justice system against Trump.

Blanche entered the Justice Department last year as deputy attorney general under Bondi, overseeing the agency's day-to-day operations and serving as the public face for high-profile and controversial matters, like the release of millions of investigative files related to disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein.

Democrats have accused Blanche of prioritizing his loyalty to Trump above all else through investigations against Trump foes such as former FBI Director James Comey and a radical reshaping of the department. Under Bondi and Blanche's leadership, the department has lost thousands of employees through firings, resignations or voluntary departures.

Blanche's supporters say his experience as a federal prosecutor and the trust he earned from Trump in the courtroom make him better equipped than Bondi to explain to the White House the legal constraints of its demands. Republicans have also touted his efforts to bring down violent crime, tackle illegal immigration and combat violent cartels and drug trafficking.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee, gave a full-throated endorsement of Blanche ahead of voting, saying he's led the Justice Department with distinction. "Mr. Blanche is the right choice," he said.

But it remains unclear whether Blanche will fare any better in delivering on Trump's desire for retribution than Bondi, whom Trump fired amid resistance from judges, grand jurors and the department's own workforce as prosecutors sought to establish criminal conduct by one Trump foe after another.

Shortly after Blanche took the top post, the Justice Department moved to indict Comey on charges of threatening the 47th president by posting a social media photograph of seashells in the numerical arrangement of "86 47." Comey's lawyers are pressing to have the case dismissed, accusing the department of misleading judges, submitting documents containing false statements and withholding key facts.

Blanche has also appointed Joseph diGenova, a former Justice Department prosecutor from the Reagan administration, to oversee a Florida-based investigation into whether former law enforcement and intelligence officials conspired over the last decade to undermine Trump. But it remains uncertain whether that probe will result in any criminal charges.

Families retrieve bodies after a 14-year-old killed at least 7 in a shooting outside Bangkok

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Relatives of victims of the shooting at a high school and a home outside Bangkok retrieved the bodies of their loved ones Saturday, a day after the gunman killed at least seven people.

A 14-year-old schoolboy opened fire at around 10 a.m. Friday at Debsirin Nonthaburi School in Nonthaburi province northwest of Bangkok before taking his own life. He also appeared to have killed his two grandparents at the family home earlier in the morning, officials said.

Sixteen people remain hospitalized, with seven of them in critical condition on Saturday, according to the Health Ministry. Most of those wounded were between 12 and 14 years old.

All eight bodies — five school staff members, the alleged shooter and his grandparents — were collected by early Saturday afternoon from Bangkok's Institute of Forensic Medicine. Emergency workers brought out a coffin and loaded it onto an ambulance, which will transport them to their hometown for funeral rites.

Wiroon Supasingsiripreecha, head of the institute, said most of the victims suffered a single fatal gunshot wound to a vital area, including the chest or head.

He said the gunshot wound found on the alleged shooter was consistent with the weapon he had used. More detailed forensic findings, including toxicology results, are expected later, he said.

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Officials said the gun, described as small and compact, was legally registered to the boy's grandfather. There were reports that the boy, who lived with his grandparents, had shown signs of stress connected to school, although some of his relatives told Thai media that they were unaware of any troubles he might have been facing.

The school said all classes would be suspended between Aug. 10 and Aug. 14. School staff were instructed to work from home during that time.

On Saturday morning, the school was quiet with only a minor police presence at the entrance. A few mourners came to lay flowers at the gate.

Charin Siriananchai brought his two sons, ages 9 and 6, to pay their respects. He said while his sons do not study here, he lives in the neighborhood and drives past this school almost every day, often stopping to allow students to cross the road.

"Everyone was saddened and shocked, because it was unexpected that this would happen in Thailand, and also it's quite a great loss," he said.

Some parents also came with their children to collect their belongings left behind after the shooting. A father, who declined to identify himself, said his son, who was at the school during the shooting, was still in shock and could not sleep alone.

Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in Asia, second only to Pakistan and far surpassing its Southeast Asian neighbors.

Data collected in 2017 by the groups Small Arms Survey and GunPolicy.org in their last extensive international study found civilian gun ownership in Thailand was about 15.1 guns per 100 people, compared with less than one per 100 in neighboring Malaysia.

Thailand had 3.49 deaths by firearms per 100,000 people, according to 2023 statistics published by World Population Review. That puts it well behind parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, but relatively high in Asia. Only the Philippines is higher in Southeast Asia.

While shootings involving indiscriminate killings are not common, the country has seen an uptick in high-profile shooting deaths in recent years.

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 wounded two others.

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

Wall Street week ahead: inflation, retail sales updates

NEW YORK (AP) — Reports on inflation and retail sales are the central updates for Wall Street this week.

The reports help give investors and economists a better sense of where prices are moving on a wide range of goods and services, while also providing a clearer picture on the impact to businesses and households.

On Wednesday, the U.S. will release its consumer price index, or CPI, for July. It is a detailed report on prices for a wide range of goods and services. Economists expect it to show that the rate of inflation remains above 3%.

On Thursday, the U.S. will release its producer price index, or PPI, for July. It shows costs for businesses before they've passed them along to consumers. That helps give a more detailed view of some of the inflation pressures facing companies.

On Friday, the U.S. will release its retail sales report for July. It gives details on monthly sales for a wide range of businesses. The data in the report can also give clues as to how much people are spending and where they are focusing their spending.

Inflation remains a key focus for Wall Street and the Federal Reserve. Stubborn inflation could hurt consumer spending, and in turn, the broader economy. The Fed has been closely watching inflation's direction and is expected to raise interest rates in order to help tame rising costs before the end of the year.

Senate approves funding bill to avoid a shutdown before the election

By KEVIN FREKING and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate in an overnight vote Saturday approved a short-term measure to fund federal agencies into early December and avoid a potentially chaotic government shutdown during the middle of campaign season.

The late-summer action on a funding fix is unusual. Normally, Congress waits until the final days or hours of a funding deadline to pass short-term patches, but this time senators acted nearly two months before the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30.

The 90-6 vote showed lawmakers are still smarting from the two historic shutdowns that occurred this past year and want to avoid another before voters go to the polls.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune wanted the funding dealt with before senators went home for the next five weeks to focus on their reelection campaigns and other matters. It got caught up with other issues that pushed votes into the night, but the bill had broad bipartisan support. The House will also have to approve the measure when members return from their August recess before it can go to President Donald Trump's desk for his signature.

The bill generally funds the federal government at current levels through Dec. 11, but includes a variety of exceptions that senators negotiated with the White House.

Democrats secured language to ensure no money could be transferred to the Border Patrol. They also rejected the White House's request of \$1 billion for early work on a new "Trump-class" battleship that the administration announced on Dec. 22.

"The only person who wants these golden ships is Donald Trump so he can slap his name on them," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said.

Hemp provision became a point of contention

The bill also includes language delaying a national ban on most intoxicating hemp products. That one-month delay prompted outrage from some Senate Republicans who say that too many such products are falling into the hands of often unsuspecting children. The packaging of the products often relies on bright colors and intentionally mimics popular snack brands to attract consumers.

Sen. Ted Budd, R-N.C., said that since 2017 there has been nearly a 10-fold increase in cannabis-related emergency room visits by minors in his home state.

"This is a public health crisis that deserves this Senate's immediate attention," Budd said. "Our children should never be the testing ground for an industry willing to exploit a loophole in federal law for profit."

But the hemp industry said the delay buys time for Congress to craft legislation that protects hemp farmers and businesses while also putting in place safeguards to protect children.

Trump himself has called Budd to discuss the issue, though the president did not specifically ask the senator to drop his effort, Budd's spokesman said.

"Senator Budd had a friendly phone call with President Trump discussing the legislative efforts regarding THC," said spokesman Christian McMullen. He said the senator outlined his concerns about "any delay to closing the hemp loophole."

Budd tried to strip the hemp delay from the bill, but the Senate turned aside his effort.

The bill delays a Trump administration rule on grants

Democratic lawmakers, along with Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, also got language in the bill that would block, for the duration of the funding patch, new regulations on federal grants. The regulations would require a senior political appointee to review grants before they are awarded to ensure, among other things, that they advance the president's policy priorities. Democrats worry it's an effort to kill grants destined for Democratic-leaning states.

"They are not interested in making our tax dollars work better — they just want them to work for Donald Trump," said Sen. Patty Murray, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The White House Office of Management and Budget says its effort is about improving accountability to ensure taxpayer dollars aren't wasted or misused. The issue is sure to be a topic of future negotiations on a full-year spending measure.

But Collins said the vast majority of the nearly 500,000 people and groups weighing in on the rule are opposed to it.

"I don't think in my time that I've been privileged to serve in the Senate that I have ever seen a proposed rule generate that many negative comments," Collins said.

Student kills at least 7 people at a high school and a home outside Bangkok, officials say

By TIAN MACLEOD JI Associated Press

NONTHABURI, Thailand (AP) — A student opened fire at a high school outside Bangkok on Friday, killing at least five people and wounding more than 20, according to authorities, who said he also appeared to have killed his two grandparents at the family home earlier in the morning.

The 14-year-old shooter took his own life at the school, officials said.

Five school staff members, including teachers and administrators, died in the shooting around 10 a.m. at Debsirin Nonthaburi School in Nonthaburi province northwest of Bangkok, Deputy Interior Minister Polapee Suwunchwee said at the scene.

The boy also killed his grandparents at the home he shared with them prior to the school shooting, Polapee said.

Bangyai Hospital, about 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the school, said 23 people were wounded, of whom 10 were in critical condition, with most suffering gunshot wounds. Earlier reports gave conflicting casualty numbers.

A witness said 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.

Amporn Niamfuang, who owns a restaurant 50 meters (160 feet) from the school, said there was the sound of a single gunshot and then a pause.

"And then there were multiple continuous shots," Amporn said, recalling the narrow road outside the restaurant filling with fleeing students. "Students were running scared and pouring onto the street. Young girls were holding each other's hands and crying. I went inside to hide."

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, speaking after touring the school, confirmed reports that the shooter was 14 and had killed himself. He said the student had shown signs of stress connected to school.

The gun, described by police as small and compact, was legally registered to his grandfather, he said.

About an hour after the shooting, people stood outside comforting one another as police and first responders walked around the co-educational state school, which has an enrollment of about 3,000 students ranging from 12 to 18 years old.

All classes will be suspended between Aug. 10 and Aug. 14 and school staff have been instructed to work from home during that time, the school said.

Police find grandparents dead at family home

After the shooting, police went to his home and found both grandparents dead of apparent gunshot wounds, regional police Commander Wattana Yeejeen said.

The student appeared to have shot them before attending school as normal. He waited until classes started and began shooting inside his classroom before walking out and firing more shots, Police spokesperson Trairong Piwpan said.

The boy fired more than 20 shots and police found he still had 30 rounds after shooting himself, he said.

Several family members, including his uncle and sisters of the grandfather who were at the family home while police investigated, said he usually kept to himself and was a good student.

The family members said they were unaware of any troubles he faced at home or school.

Thailand has high rate of gun owners

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Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in Asia, second only to Pakistan and far surpassing its Southeast Asian neighbors.

Data collected in 2017 by the groups Small Arms Survey and GunPolicy.org in their last extensive international study found civilian gun ownership in Thailand was about 15.1 guns per 100 people, compared with less than one per 100 in neighboring Malaysia.

Thailand had 3.49 deaths by firearms per 100,000 people, according to 2023 statistics published by World Population Review. That puts it well behind parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, but relatively high in Asia. Only the Philippines is higher in Southeast Asia.

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

Iran's leaders think they have Trump cornered, but their strategy carries great risks

By JOSEPH KRAUSS and AMIR-HUSSEIN RADJY Associated Press

The Strait of Hormuz is, by some accounts, named for a Zoroastrian deity destined to emerge victorious after a 9,000-year standoff with an adversary.

Iran's leaders feel their own victory is at hand and won't require the same epic patience.

They are betting that military pressure will ultimately force the United States to accept their control over the crucial waterway for global energy — and that time is on their side.

They know about the diminishing stockpiles of key U.S. weapons such as advanced missile interceptors. They know the war is deeply unpopular with Americans. They know that as long as the strait is largely closed, the price of gas and other goods will stay high ahead of U.S. congressional elections in November. They know that trying to open it by force would be costly and may require American ground troops. They know their Houthi allies in Yemen could widen the war and disrupt another major trade route.

By that logic, U.S. President Donald Trump has no choice but to capitulate.

But Iran's strategy carries risks.

Trump points to strikes that have decimated Iran's top leadership, navy and air force. He alternates between threatening escalation and saying talks are going well. Iran's own economy has been battered, in part because of a U.S. blockade. Iranians rose up in mass protests just months ago and could do so again.

And Iran's leaders need only look to how Trump's "short-term excursion" to the Middle East has bogged down to be reminded that wars rarely turn out as expected.

An evolving deal could give Iran a major win

Iran says it is close to reaching a deal with Oman to manage the strait, which runs between the two countries. But it would be conditioned on the U.S. lifting its blockade, so even if there are no direct negotiations — as Iran says — Trump would have to approve.

It's unclear whether the deal would allow Iran to charge fees. But it would formalize its control over what had been an open international waterway before the war, one that carried a fifth of the world's traded oil and gas.

Abdolreza Davari, an analyst who once advised former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said Iran's effective control of the strait has given it leverage with the U.S. and regional countries that can help guarantee its security.

"More than revenue from the strait, Iran wants to confirm its management and sovereignty over the strait," he said by phone from Tehran.

Formal control over even part of the strait would be a clear win for Iran and a loss for the U.S., which has yet to accomplish some of its various and shifting goals in the war.

It would also deal a blow to global norms on freedom of navigation and set a precedent that much of the world would find disturbing — that nations can shut down trade choke points at will.

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China, which buys oil from Iran and has influence over it, said as recently as May that "normal and safe passage" through the strait should be restored.

Iran feels time is on its side

To borrow a phrase from Trump's own theory of geopolitics, Iran believes it holds the cards.

"They started the war, but its end was never with them. We always decide for ourselves when it ends," Mahdi Mohammadi, an adviser to Iran's chief negotiator, posted on social media. "Iran is going after the enemy's defeat — not an agreement."

He said a surprise Iranian attack on Jordan in July "compensated" for a drop in oil prices. That contributed to the collapse of an interim agreement reached in June that had offered significant concessions to Iran, including a U.S. waiver to sell oil internationally and the promise of broader sanctions relief.

Iran has repeatedly said the Strait of Hormuz will not go back to being an open waterway, and that it will keep attacking ships trying to transit without its permission. Iran's joint military command has called it an "unbreakable red line."

"For Iran, the Strait of Hormuz has become a strategic lever for deterrence, maintaining the regional balance of power, and reshaping the security rules in the Persian Gulf," said Mostafa Najafi, a Tehran-based security analyst.

That poses a major obstacle to ending the war, much less resolving the even more complex, long-standing dispute over Iran's nuclear program.

"The atomic issue, because of the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz, has been pushed to the side, and in reality, that is in Iran's interests," said Rahman Ghahremanpour, an Iran-based analyst. Control of the strait would give Iran leverage if the nuclear talks resume, he added.

It's still a risky gamble

The economic fallout from the war has spread worldwide but is particularly acute in Iran.

U.S. and Israeli strikes have pummeled its industrial base. The U.S. blockade has choked off much of its oil exports. Iranians are grappling with triple-digit food inflation. Trump has repeatedly threatened major strikes on civilian infrastructure like water and electricity.

In December, a currency crisis sparked some of the biggest anti-government protests in the 47-year history of the Islamic Republic. Authorities responded with a bloody crackdown in which thousands were killed and tens of thousands detained.

Many in Iran, including those close to its moderate President Masoud Pezeshkian, fear it may go too far.

Mohammad Javad Zarif, who as foreign minister helped negotiate the 2015 nuclear deal, wrote in a recent essay that Iran's achievements in the war had opened "an exceptional window for diplomacy." But he warned that if it doesn't strike a deal soon, then "economic recovery will be difficult, and the possibility of internal unrest or renewed aggression, especially after the U.S. elections, cannot be ruled out."

The war has already been marked by surprises.

After the first wave of U.S. and Israeli airstrikes on Feb. 28 killed Iran's supreme leader and other top officials, Trump suggested it would be over in a matter of weeks.

Instead, the conflict has emboldened Iran's leaders and mobilized their supporters. Tehran is using the strait "to show that it has not been defeated," Ghahremanpour said. "It can increase its legitimacy at home."

But the strategy could also backfire. Iran's resilience has limits and there are concerns that an economic crash could trigger unrest. "Iran cannot continue with this strategy forever, and at a certain point, in reality, it has to reach a deal with America," he said.

But Davari said that for now, Iran can withstand the pressure. "It's unlikely, despite the difficulties of the economic situation, that Iran will retreat from its positions," he said.

Eastern China braces for Typhoon Dolphin, shutting schools and tourist activities

BEIJING (AP) — Authorities in eastern China shut schools and tourist sites as Typhoon Dolphin made its way toward land on Saturday.

The storm's maximum sustained winds were estimated at about 162 kilometers per hour (101 mph). It will bring heavy rains, creating a risk of severe flooding as well as landslides and is expected to hit Zhejiang province and northern parts of neighboring Fujian province late Sunday. Shanghai is also in the path of the storm.

Forecasters predicted that areas could see 200-400 mm (7.9–15.7 inches) of rainfall over the next few days.

National authorities declared a level III emergency response, the second lowest level.

Many tourist destinations in Zhejiang are shut Saturday and Sunday, as well as all water-based activities, including ferries and cruises.

Authorities in the city of Ningbo, one of the province's largest, ordered schools and other educational facilities shut this weekend and all water-related activities to halt. Some 800 ships are docked at the port.

A New Mexico judge ordered new child safeguards for Meta. Advocates hope other courts follow

By KAITLYN HUAMANI and MIKELLA SCHUETTLER Associated Press

In a landmark ruling against Meta, a New Mexico judge likened the company's social media platforms to factories. The psychological harm to children who use Facebook and Instagram, he said, can be seen as their pollution.

Judge Bryan Biedscheid fined the company \$567 million in his ruling Thursday, but he also prescribed steps to clean up what he described as its byproducts. He ordered new safety measures, including a time limit of 90 hours per month for users under 18, AI chatbot restrictions, and mandatory warnings on the platforms.

How easily those features can be implemented, and how effective they could be at protecting young users from mental health harms, are unresolved questions. They also would apply only to children in New Mexico, Meta has no deadline to introduce them, and the company has said it will appeal the ruling.

But the judge's order showed a possible path forward for other court fights around the country as Meta faces mounting legal, regulatory and public pressure to do more to protect young people.

The ruling came in the second phase of a trial in a lawsuit the state of New Mexico filed against the social media giant. The new financial 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.

Meta said in a statement Thursday that it works to keep people safe on its platforms and has been transparent about the challenges of identifying and removing bad actors and harmful content.

"We remain confident in our record of protecting teens online and will continue to defend ourselves against claims that misrepresent the facts," the company said.

Implementation of court-ordered measures poses challenges

Many of the changes ordered by Biedscheid hinge on strong age-verification measures. The ruling says Meta must improve its age assurance models and tools in New Mexico and proactively request proof of age for users they know or estimate to be under 13.

What that proof of age could look like, however, is unclear.

Age verification "can be done well in a privacy-protective way, but it is not easy," said Peter Ormerod, an associate professor of law at Villanova University.

Federal children's privacy laws prevent Meta from applying age-verification tools to children under 13. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act means the court cannot order Meta to request children to

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submit personal data or be passively tracked online, even for age verification purposes.

Identifying which users are in New Mexico, and subject to the court-ordered protections, could also pose a challenge. Ormerod said Meta could likely check if a user is accessing the platform from an IP address associated with New Mexico, a solution "that works reasonably well enough."

Meta has several safety tools already in place. Instagram Teen Accounts, for one, have built-in protections to limit who can contact teens and what content they can see, and give parents the ability to set time limits.

Brooke Istook, the president and chief strategy officer at the advocacy organization Heat Initiative, said she was glad to see the judge's reforms will be court-supervised.

"Now, we will have someone in an official capacity checking the homework of these companies," she said. "The fact that we have the court now involved, they're able to evaluate how they're implemented, whether or not they're effective and whether or not they are actually working to keep kids safe online."

Experts say the ruling leaves out some of the most harmful features

Meta's critics say some of the most recognizable and potentially harmful aspects of Instagram and Facebook's designs are untouched by the ruling.

Features like autoplay, infinite scroll and algorithmic content recommendations have been the prime targets of legal arguments that social media platforms are designed to be addictive. But Biedscheid wrote in his ruling that these features are used across the social media industry on other platforms, so restricting Meta's features but not those of its competitors would harm the company.

That was disappointing to see for Sophia Choukas-Bradley, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Pittsburgh.

"Those design features have played a very important role in what leads to problematic use of social media by adolescents and, in turn, mental health problems," Choukas-Bradley said.

Still, Choukas-Bradley said she was in favor of several safety measures in the ruling, especially one that orders the "like counts" on the apps be hidden by default on minors' accounts, a setting that could only be overridden by a parent or guardian. She also supports a measure that would create a stronger separation between children and "unconnected" adults on the platforms. Meta would not be able to recommend a child's account to an adult's account, and adults who are not "friends" or followers of a minor's account would be barred from messaging the child.

"There are just too many documented cases of sextortion, sexploitation and sex trafficking that start in the online context for us to ignore this any longer," Choukas-Bradley said.

It is unclear which features on social media platforms are most harmful for children's mental health, said Sonia Livingstone, a professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science. There is ample evidence, however, that more vulnerable children are more susceptible to the companies' design features, she said.

"Tested one by one, the evidence for each design feature will be weaker, as it is the combination of features that really will make the difference for children's outcomes," said Livingstone, who leads the Digital Futures for Children research center.

Some hope New Mexico's actions lead to further regulations

Because the measures in the judge's order are specific to users in New Mexico, experts say piecemeal rulings and inconsistent legislation at the state level could create a new crop of issues.

"It really needs to be uniform at the congressional level, it causes all sorts of problems," said Neama Rahmani, a former federal prosecutor and president of West Coast Trial Lawyers. "It just doesn't make sense in today's era of technology."

Some advocates say they hope similar rulings in other states could stir action in Congress, and spur new efforts to pass federal legislation.

For parents in New Mexico, the ruling could change the conversations with their teens about social media use. Heather Statum, an Albuquerque mother of a 13-year-old girl, says her daughter is constantly requesting access to various social media platforms.

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Statum has heard horror-stories about predators lurking on Instagram or Snapchat. She's also aware that among her daughter's peers, discussions of suicide and other mental health issues are prominent online and worries about her daughter being exposed to disturbing content.

"The stuff (social media companies) have in place to protect them, I don't think any of it actually works," Statum said. "It does cause major problems between us because she thinks that I'm too strict."

Statum says the platform-level changes from the ruling could promote safe usage, but said it will be hard to balance safety with freedom. She believes educating kids on dangers is the best path forward.

What to know about Trump's new attempt to limit birthright citizenship

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

The Trump administration is once again trying to limit who can become an American, with a pair of executive orders issued this week that attempt to place restrictions on birthright citizenship and on foreigners who give birth in the U.S.

A Supreme Court decision in June struck down a previous attempt at restricting birthright citizenship, but Thursday's orders were made with "adjustments" keeping the decision in mind, President Donald Trump said.

Still, some of the restrictions announced by the White House are expected to face legal challenges.

The 14th Amendment, which makes a citizen of anyone born in the country, and two subsequent Supreme Court decisions interpreting it provide guidelines that already exclude certain births from receiving the citizenship benefit.

Trump's new attempt to restrict birthright citizenship even after the Supreme Court loss highlights the administration's drive to limit who can become an American.

New categories of restricted citizenship benefits

Birthright citizenship is guaranteed under current law for anyone who is born on U.S. soil, with a few exceptions.

The executive order released 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.

U.S. immigration law says babies born to a "foreign diplomatic officer accredited to the United States" are not entitled to birthright citizenship under the Constitution, including ambassadors, ministers, *chargés d'affaires*, counselors, secretaries and *attachés* of embassies and legations, and members of the Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities.

Trump's orders Thursday would sharply expand those exemptions.

One order disqualifies babies who are products of "birth tourism." The other applies to children of anyone working in a foreign embassy or representing a foreign government and employees of the United Nations or other international organizations. Children of parents tied to groups that are deemed terrorist organizations, like Antifa or Tren de Aragua, are also excluded.

"How is the federal government going to decide that a child is born to a member of a designated terrorist organization?" said César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández, a law professor at Ohio State University. "These are not organizations that are sharing the membership lists if they even have them."

Citizenship through surrogacy has become a concern for Republican members of Congress, some of whom proposed a bill this year that would restrict citizenship for children of noncitizen parents born to surrogates in the U.S.

García Hernández said he believes the new executive order addressing surrogacy could raise new legal questions. "Neither the 14th Amendment nor any of the Supreme Court's decisions about how to interpret the 14th Amendment mentions or hints at surrogates," the law professor said.

Questions over the scope of birth tourism

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Trump's executive order defines birth tourism as someone who enters the United States on a "nonimmigrant visa for the purpose of giving birth on American soil."

Birth tourism is already considered fraud and grounds to restrict a visa if someone seeks one specifically to come to the U.S. and obtain citizenship for a child.

Advocates said the executive order would give immigration officers discretion to deny entry to pregnant women suspected of wanting to give birth in the U.S. without providing clearly defined guidelines.

The president did not offer data indicating the scope of the problem, but said Thursday: "I'll tell you right now, hundreds of thousands, OK? Hundreds of thousands."

Although there's no official estimate of how many births can be considered "birth tourism" cases, experts say Trump's approximation is exaggerated.

"The hundreds of thousands just seems like an overestimate based on the sort of limited data that we have available," said Colleen Putzel-Kavanaugh, an associate policy analyst at the Migration Policy Institute.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that in 2024 nearly 9,600 children were born to foreign mothers with an official address outside the country. Another estimate from the Center for Immigration Studies, a think tank that advocates for lower immigration, estimated that 20,000 to 26,000 birth tourists come to the U.S. each year.

Facilitators of birth tourism targeted

The order provides a sweeping indictment of "birth tourism operators" with no evidence of how widespread they are or how or why anyone accused of using their services would be exempt from constitutional protection.

Those efforts are not new either. 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.

"Birth tourism operators use deceptive advertisements and inducements to entice foreign nationals to travel to the United States for the purpose of giving birth on American soil," the order says.

"They promise citizenship; access to public benefits; and short-term stays in specialized facilities, hotels, or rentals, but often fail to deliver on these promises. These operators coach their clients to misrepresent the purpose and duration of their travel to consular and border officials to obtain visas authorizing entry into the United States."

The Republican Party has embraced the mission. In late July, the office of the attorney general in Texas announced a "sweeping investigation" into potentially unlawful birth tourism schemes after some south Texas hospitals advertised birthing services in Mexico.

Legal challenges expected

Asked Thursday how his orders would survive Supreme Court scrutiny when his last attempt failed, Trump deferred to White House staff secretary Will Scharf, who, like his boss, sounded alarms about "birth tourism." He emphasized consular discretion to grant visas.

"What we're doing is taking legally validated means that are clearly within our disposal and targeting them to this birth tourism industry. There's absolutely nothing here that runs afoul of any of the Supreme Court rulings on the subject," Sharf said.

Advocates against the proposed changes said they believe the constitutional amendment and Supreme Court decisions will again stop the administration's efforts to restrict birthright citizenship.

"The bottom line is that the Supreme Court already considered the Trump administration's plea to rewrite the Constitution and rejected it," said Cody Wofsy, deputy director at the American Civil Liberties Union Immigrants' Rights Project.

"Birthright citizenship is guaranteed by the 14th Amendment, and no amount of executive orders is going to change that."

California may fine content creators who don't disclose they were paid to post about politics

By SOPHIE AUSTIN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Weeks before voting ended in California's primary for governor, Los Angeles-based influencer Shaka Smith took to Instagram to tell his more than 700,000 followers whom he was voting for and why.

"Healthcare shouldn't bankrupt you, housing should not feel impossible, polluters shouldn't pass their bill to us and artists should not be replaced by AI," Smith said. "That's why I'm supporting Tom Steyer for governor."

But Smith started the video with a disclaimer: "This is an ad, and honestly, I wish more political content said that first." His caption specified that he was paid by Steyer's campaign.

California is one of two states, along with Texas, that have passed policies requiring content creators to say if they've been paid by a political campaign to post, and the Golden State is considering cracking down by fining people who don't.

Campaigns have long worked with celebrities and major influencers to win over voters, but now they are teaming up with smaller creators — sometimes with fewer than 100,000 followers — to reach more tailored audiences. That has sparked debates about whether disclosure rules for political advertisements should apply to content creators, who are expected to play prominent roles in the upcoming midterms and the 2028 presidential election.

"If you're running for president and you are not currently trying to court some of these people or lining up your own people to act as surrogates for you, you're already behind," said Mike Nellis, a Democratic strategist who worked for Kamala Harris' presidential campaign.

Campaigns tap creators to spread their message

Questions about transparency have been fueled by high-profile instances of influencers making content intended to change minds or votes without disclosing they were paid for it.

In 2022, the campaign of then-Senate candidate John Fetterman paid Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi of "Jersey Shore" to record a video teasing his GOP rival for leaving New Jersey before announcing his run in Pennsylvania. In 2023, content creators were paid by an influencer marketing agency with conservative ties to defend Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, after he was impeached for alleged bribery and other accusations of misconduct, according to the Texas Tribune. The payments weren't clearly disclosed in either case.

Steyer, a Democratic billionaire who spent more than \$215 million of his own money in his unsuccessful bid for governor, took fire from rivals for paying content creators. He wasn't the only hopeful in the race paying influencers, but he faced much of the blowback since he'd already been accused of trying to buy the election. Many of the creators who worked with Steyer's campaign disclosed that they were paid, but the state's campaign finance watchdog is investigating several other instances in which creators allegedly didn't.

There are no federal disclosure rules

California Sen. Adam Schiff introduced federal legislation last month, but it hasn't received a vote yet. Some outside groups are urging the Federal Election Commission to pass its own rule.

California's law requiring disclosure, passed in 2023, is difficult to enforce. The state's campaign watchdog can seek a court order compelling an influencer to disclose that they were paid, but that can take months.

That prompted Democratic Assemblymember Marc Berman to write a new bill to penalize content creators and political committees if the creator fails to state they were compensated. The bill would give the state's Fair Political Practices Commission the power to fine influencers and committees if they are found to have violated the law, allowing the commission to bypass the court process. They could face fines of up to \$5,000 per violation, according to the commission.

"Voters should have a right to know whether or not campaigns are paying for the messaging that they're seeing," Berman said.

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Texas' campaign watchdog passed a rule in 2024 requiring content creators to include disclaimers when they are paid for political advertisements, and the New York Legislature is considering a similar requirement. Other disclosure bills failed in recent years in Utah and Georgia.

Influencer says his ad had an impact

Smith, the L.A. influencer, hadn't committed to a candidate for governor when a trusted friend told him to look into Steyer. That friend had been paid to post about Steyer.

Smith liked Steyer's promise to increase taxes on billionaires and his refusal to accept donations from corporate political action committees.

He ended up doing two paid ads, both of which included compensation disclaimers that the Steyer campaign told him were a requirement.

Smith wouldn't say exactly how much the campaign paid him, but he said it was in the thousands of dollars. He thinks the posts had an impact on his followers, with only a few detractors pushing back.

"They kind of trust my voice," he said of his audience. "They knew that if I'm saying it, it's at least something they should look into."

Creators respond to proposed policy changes

Dustin Torreverde, a content creator in Southern California who hasn't been paid by a political campaign for social media posts, said it's important for influencers to be transparent with their audiences. But the bill could pose an unfair burden on creators who are just trying to make a living, he said.

"A lot of us are very small creators," he said. "So if we were to get penalized and we have to get lawyers, stuff like that, it's going to be very difficult for us."

Adina Flores, a libertarian content creator in Northern California who votes for both parties, said influencers should have to disclose if they are paid and she generally supports penalties. She worries that some people may take money to post political content without doing a "deep dive into the candidate to make sure that's somebody they should support."

Saurav Ghosh, a lawyer with the Campaign Legal Center, a nonprofit focused on protecting U.S. democracy, hopes disclosure requirements passed by states will lead to federal rules.

"Transparency is one of the most important pillars of our election system," he said.

Democrats try to present a united front in Michigan after bitter primary

By JACQUELINE GANUN Associated Press/Report for America

DETROIT (AP) — Michigan Democrats on Friday urged voters to rally behind their statewide candidates, three days after a bitter U.S. Senate contest highlighted divisions between the party's progressive and moderate wings.

A slate of nominees and other notable Democrats emphasized unity to a crowd of more than 1,000, who cheered loudest for Abdul El-Sayed, a former public health official. He narrowly beat establishment-backed Rep. Haley Stevens in a contentious, closely watched primary for an open U.S. Senate seat.

"Michigan, we will fight to build the America that we are proud to hand off to our kids and our grandkids," El-Sayed said at a podium beneath a scoreboard in a Detroit high school gym.

With less than three months before the general election where El-Sayed will face Republican Mike Rogers, the Democratic Party is under pressure to close ranks in a race that will help determine control of the Senate.

"In the spirit of coming together, I want to thank both of my colleagues who ran, Haley Stevens and Malory McMorrow, for an incredible race," El-Sayed said. McMorrow, a state senator, suspended her campaign in July and appeared alongside El-Sayed at a Wednesday event after his victory.

Current Democratic Sen. Gary Peters' decision to not seek reelection left the seat open. Michigan is a perennial battleground state, having voted for President Donald Trump in 2016, Joe Biden in 2020 and Trump again in 2024.

Former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, a potential 2028 presidential contender and Michigan

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resident, referenced the seat's national implications, prompting cheers from the crowd.

"The stakes are high, and people from around the country, people from around the world, are watching the state of Michigan right now to see if we have the capability to put together that coalition to win," he said. "And we will win."

Jocelyn Benson, Michigan's secretary of state who is running for governor, referenced an attempt by the Trump administration to access Michigan voters' personal information. A federal judge ruled in June that the state does not have to share voters' information with the federal government. Benson won her primary easily and will face Trump-backed Rep. John James in the general election.

"You all know who I work for. All of you and every Michigander in this state — not the highest bidder, not corporate interests, not Donald Trump," Benson said.

Other statewide candidates who spoke included Eli Savit, who is running for attorney general, and Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, who is running for secretary of state. The crowd cheered and stomped their feet on the gym bleachers when speakers talked about reproductive rights, protection for voters and opposing the Trump administration.

Before the rally started, attendee Tom Moran carried a banner that read "Unite behind the winner." The school bus driver from Fenton, Michigan, voted for Stevens in the primary.

"Now I'm saying, take the pledge. Unite behind our nominee," Moran, 71, said.

The messy primary between El-Sayed and Stevens occasionally got personal. El-Sayed told Semafor in early July that Stevens couldn't "string together two coherent sentences." In a separate interview, he called Stevens "the least capable candidate in America."

Stevens, in turn, accused El-Sayed of chasing publicity.

"I'm the only one on this stage who doesn't have a talent agent trying to pitch me for paid speeches," she said during a debate against El-Sayed. "And unlike my opponent, I'm not running at the first mic or camera I see."

Stevens, who lost the primary by just under 1 percentage point, told CBS News on Thursday that she was willing to campaign with El-Sayed.

"Whatever he wants me to do," she said. Stevens appeared Thursday with El-Sayed at a breakfast hosted by the Michigan Democratic Party.

Blanche wins support for attorney general from GOP Sen. Cassidy, likely paving way for confirmation

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, LISA MASCARO and BILL BARROW Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy said Friday that he will back Todd Blanche's nomination as attorney general, likely paving the way for Blanche's confirmation to lead President Donald Trump's Justice Department.

The Louisiana senator announced his support on the Senate floor after Blanche's confirmation was thrown into doubt over opposition from two other Republican senators, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine.

Cassidy said Blanche "is not perfect," citing concerns over a proposed \$1.8 billion fund to compensate Trump allies, a tax audit immunity deal for the Republican president and investigations targeting the president's political opponents.

But Cassidy said no other nominee may be able to run the department better under Trump, and he added that Blanche's role as Trump's former criminal defense lawyer can make him more effective at pushing back on the president's demands.

"This is not a referendum on President Trump. It is a decision regarding Mr. Blanche in very specific circumstances," Cassidy said. The senator, who lost his Republican primary after Trump endorsed his rival, appeared to choke up as he described the criticism he expected to face for his Blanche vote, adding, "What's new?"

Blanche's nomination came after Bondi was ousted

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Blanche would become Trump's second confirmed attorney general since the president returned to the White House last year with a stated desire to use the law enforcement agency to investigate his perceived enemies. He has been serving as acting attorney general since Trump fired Pam Bondi in April after she failed to deliver on criminal cases against Trump's foes.

Blanche's path to confirmation has been complicated over a settlement of Trump's lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service that has drawn intense scrutiny by Republicans and Democrats alike. The settlement called for the creation of the \$1.8 billion fund to compensate people who feel mistreated by the criminal justice system and provided Trump and family members with immunity from tax audits.

Republican senator cites concerns about Blanche

Murkowski, in announcing her opposition to Blanche, cited concerns over the Justice Department's handling of files related to disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, the sweeping tax audit immunity deal and the proposed "Anti-Weaponization Fund." The Alaska senator said she is worried the Trump administration could proceed with the fund despite the administration's promises that it is dead, noting that the Senate has leverage over the fund only because Blanche's nomination is pending.

"The country needs an Attorney General who will check the worst impulses of this administration," Murkowski said. "I hope Mr. Blanche is able to achieve that, if confirmed, but I simply do not have confidence that will be the case."

The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced Blanche's nomination only after a deal reached last weekend with two other Republican senators — John Cornyn of Texas and Thom Tillis of North Carolina — who had been threatening to block his confirmation over aspects of the settlement.

Under the deal, Blanche formally rescinded the "Anti-Weaponization Fund," writing in an order that "there is no Fund."

The Justice Department also clarified in writing that the tax audit immunity agreement applies only to claims open at the time of the settlement and does not protect Trump from examination of future tax filings. It also makes clear that only the parties that brought the lawsuit — Trump, two of his sons and the Trump Organization — are covered by the tax agreement.

Democrats accuse Blanche of prioritizing his allegiance to Trump

But Democrats say Blanche's order doesn't stop the Trump administration from reviving the fund after his confirmation and have called for legislation to permanently bar it. Trump has repeatedly defended the fund and has threatened to push forward with it if Republicans don't support Blanche's nomination.

Lawmakers and legal experts have also questioned the lawfulness of the tax protections for Trump. A federal judge who oversaw the IRS case has described Trump's lawsuit as an improper exercise in self-dealing, and on Thursday the union representing IRS workers asked another judge to block the immunity agreement.

Democrats have accused Blanche of prioritizing his loyalty to Trump above all else through investigations against Trump foes such as former FBI Director James Comey and a radical reshaping of a department that historically prided itself on its independence from the White House. Under Bondi and Blanche's leadership, the department has lost thousands of employees through firings, resignations or voluntary departures.

Blanche's supporters say his experience as a federal prosecutor and the trust he earned from Trump in the courtroom makes him better equipped than Bondi to explain to the White House the legal constraints of its demands. Republicans have also touted his efforts to bring down violent crime, tackle illegal immigration and combat violent cartels and drug trafficking.

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said it would be a "serious mistake" to confirm Blanche, begging his colleagues not to be on the "wrong side" of history.

"If there is ever a moment in history when we need an attorney general above reproach, who is clearly dedicated to ending corruption, even at the highest level of our government, it's right now," Durbin said.

Appeals court rules Trump can't build White House ballroom without congressional approval

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A divided federal appeals court ruled Friday that President Donald Trump's administration must stop construction of the \$400 million White House ballroom because Congress has not approved the project, a decision he blasted as "unjust" while vowing to appeal it to the nation's highest court.

Trump doesn't have the unilateral authority to build a 90,000-square-foot (8,400-square-meter) ballroom where the White House's East Wing stood before he ordered its demolition last fall, according to the decision by a three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

The Republican president said on social media that the administration will immediately appeal what he called an "unjust decision" to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Friday's ruling marked the second time this week that the Trump administration has made headlines for construction plans that have been called into question. An assessment by the National Park Service found that a 250-foot-tall (76-meter-tall) triumphal arch that Trump has proposed building could compromise the historical significance of dozens of sites near its planned location on a traffic circle between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery.

In a 2-1 decision on the ballroom, the appeals court sided with historic preservationists who sued to stop construction of the massive structure, which has begun to rise above ground on the east side of the White House, according to the most recent aerial photos of the site. The court said it would stay its ruling for two weeks to give the administration time to appeal to the Supreme Court.

"Whether or not a massive ballroom should be constructed is for Congress to decide and is not a matter for Executive self-help," the court wrote.

"This holding has nothing at all to do with whether the proposed ballroom is desirable, or not, as a matter of policy. This ruling does not even necessarily mean that the Defendants may not ultimately construct the ballroom.

"What it does mean," the court continued, "is that the Defendants may not do so during the district court's expeditious litigation without securing Congress's authorization, as the Constitution and laws require."

Trump insists Congress' approval is unnecessary

The president reacted to the ruling with a lengthy post on social media in which he quoted from a dissenting opinion issued by Judge Neomi Rao, whom he nominated. He also described the plans for the facility to include bomb shelters, a hospital and medical facilities, "Top Secret Military Facilities" and other security features.

"The Military and Secret Service are viewing this horrendous, politically motivated, and unlawful ruling as a National Security threat to our Nation in that the entire Complex is being built for the protection of our Country and, additionally, all future Presidents," Trump wrote.

After the lower court earlier this year ordered a halt to aboveground construction, the president argued that permission from Congress was unnecessary because public money was not being used to pay for it.

Trump has said he has raised hundreds of millions of dollars from corporations and wealthy people, including himself, to cover the construction costs.

But the Trump administration had requested \$1 billion for the ballroom, which Congress refused in May. In June, Democrats warned that \$350 million in funds from a tax cuts law appeared to have been redirected to the White House for security, including the ballroom.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the nonprofit organization that brought the lawsuit against the Trump administration, said Friday's decision affirmed "the American people's right to voice their opinions about the historic places they cherish," including the White House.

"From the beginning, our position has been clear and consistent: the law states that only Congress can authorize the construction of a ballroom at the White House," Brent Leggs, the group's president and CEO, said in a statement. "We are pleased with the DC Circuit Court's decision to uphold the District Court's

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preliminary injunction, which although stayed for 14 days will block any above-ground ballroom construction unless and until Congress takes action.”

The divided appeals court panel upheld an April 16 order from U.S. District Judge Richard Leon for the Trump administration to halt aboveground work on the ballroom. Leon, who was nominated to the bench by Republican President George W. Bush, allowed construction to continue on underground work on a bunker and other “national security facilities” at the site.

The appeals court case was assigned to Judges Rao, Patricia Millett and Bradley Garcia. Millett was nominated to the court by Democratic President Barack Obama. Garcia was nominated by Democratic President Joe Biden. Both Millett and Garcia backed the decision, while Rao opposed it.

Preservationists challenge Trump in court

The National Trust for Historic Preservation sued over the project in December 2025, a week after completion of the East Wing demolition to make way for a ballroom that Trump says would hold 999 people.

Government lawyers have argued that the project — the biggest structural change to the White House in more than 70 years — must move forward because it includes critical security features to guard against a range of threats, such as drones, ballistic missiles and biohazards.

“These upgrades, alterations, and improvements are essential to protecting the President, his family, and his staff, as well as the White House itself, and the entire project flows from them,” government attorneys wrote in a court filing.

Attorneys for the preservation group countered that the lack of a White House ballroom doesn’t constitute a national security emergency.

“That commonsense conclusion is not clearly erroneous, and there is no basis to disturb it,” they wrote.

In an initial ruling that the government also appealed, Leon barred aboveground work on the ballroom from proceeding without congressional approval. In response, the appeals court instructed the judge to reconsider the national security implications of stopping construction.

In his most recent decision, Leon ordered a stop only to the aboveground construction of the planned ballroom. The judge stressed that the White House is free to proceed with underground work, including the construction of any bunkers, military installations and medical facilities.

On April 2, Trump’s ballroom won final approval from the 12-member National Capital Planning Commission, which is charged with approving construction on federal property in the Washington region.

Remains of 56 people found improperly stored and decomposing at Chicago funeral home

By DAVE COLLINS and CYBELE MAYES-OSTERMAN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The remains of 56 people were found improperly stored and decomposing Thursday at a Chicago funeral home run by a couple who previously operated a crematory that was similarly shut down because of mishandled remains, authorities said.

Illinois state officials, meanwhile, suspended the license of one of the funeral home’s directors, alleging bodies were being kept in an unrefrigerated area in “deplorable conditions.”

The discovery came months after neighborhood residents began noticing a “stench” emanating from the funeral home, which led some to complain to the city.

The Cook County Medical Examiner’s Office said it was notified by state and local officials that bodies were being stored improperly at South Chicago Chapel, and investigators and forensic pathologists were dispatched Thursday. The remains were in various states of decomposition, officials said.

“Staff is assessing the conditions of the remains, searching for documentation regarding identification of the decedents as well as death certificates. This process could take several days to ensure proper disposition,” the medical examiner’s office said in a statement, adding that family notifications will be made following the identifications.

Police said Friday that their preliminary statement on the case incorrectly said that fire department officials declared the scene a hazardous materials incident.

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No arrests have been announced, but city police said detectives are investigating.

Messages for the funeral home were left by phone and through its website Friday.

Funeral home client, community advocate express dismay, frustration

Later Friday, a small number of residents and people seeking information about their deceased loved ones gathered in front of the brick-walled funeral home, which is on a South Chicago street lined with trees, homes and businesses.

Latasha Johnson, 55, said her mother's funeral was held at South Chicago Chapel on Thursday before authorities arrived and she later heard of their gruesome discovery. She said authorities told her that her mother's body would have to undergo an autopsy and she would have to identify the remains in a day or two.

"I'm discombobulated," she said. "My heart is broken."

Blaise Von Bruchhaeuser, who described herself as a community advocate for the neighborhood, said it was upsetting that complaints about a terrible odor had been made for months before the decomposing bodies were found.

State business records show that funeral director Johanna Morgan incorporated South Chicago Chapel Inc. in 2022 and her funeral director's license was temporarily suspended on Wednesday.

The state Department of Financial and Professional Regulation said the license suspension was due to "a finding that Respondent's continued practice is a danger to the public safety, interest and welfare due to Respondent allowing multiple decedents to be kept in an unrefrigerated area with deplorable conditions including rodent infestation, causing decomposition and maggot infestation of the bodies."

The state business records also list Clark Morgan, who state officials say is Johanna Morgan's husband, as the funeral home's president. The Department of Financial and Professional Regulation said Clark Morgan's funeral director license was revoked in 2024 for practicing with an expired license and "unprofessional conduct" that it did not specify.

Funeral home owners also ran crematory that was shut down by the state

State Comptroller Susana Mendoza said Friday that Johanna and Clark Morgan previously ran a crematory in Chicago Heights, south of Chicago, which had its license revoked last year after authorities discovered improperly stored bodies and hundreds of cremated remains that had never been returned to their families.

"Horrificed. Again," Mendoza said in a statement. "The discovery of decomposing remains waiting to be laid to rest this week at a South Side funeral home is heartbreaking and an abomination. These are people – someone's mother, father, sister, brother, child or friend, and they deserve better."

Both Johanna and Clark Morgan are listed in Cook County court records as defendants in connection with lawsuits involving Heights Crematory in Chicago Heights, south of Chicago.

Messages were left Friday at phone listings for the Clarks and an attorney listed in records as their business agent. Public records indicate the Clarks live in the Chicago suburb of Evergreen Park.

The case is the latest in a series of incidents involving mishandled remains over the past three years.

Last month, police arrested two men in Pueblo, Colorado, for allegedly mishandling at least two dozen decomposing bodies and other remains found behind a hidden door in a funeral home.

That followed the discovery of 18 bodies in various stages of decomposition at a funeral home in Georgia in 2024. In 2023, nearly 200 decomposing bodies were found in a building in Colorado, and another 31 decomposing bodies were discovered at an Indiana funeral home.

Lindsay Clancy trial spotlights her psychiatric care before she killed her 3 children

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

Lindsay Clancy's murder trial zeroed in Friday on her psychiatric care before she killed her three children, with testimony tracing a monthslong path to a final appointment the day before the tragedy.

In that virtual visit on Jan. 23, 2023, the Massachusetts mother appeared depressed, said she felt no motivation and reported bouts of heart-racing anxiety, psychiatrist Dr. Jennifer Tufts told jurors. But she

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said Clancy gave no indication of hearing voices that, according to her defense, commanded her the next day to take her children's lives so she could end her own.

"Did she tell you that she was planning to kill the children?" prosecutor Jennifer Sprague asked.

"No," Tufts replied. "Absolutely not."

Clancy's psychiatric treatment is a key chapter in both the prosecution and defense narratives about her mental state when she strangled the children in their suburban home and then jumped out a second-story window.

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.

In questioning Tufts and a different psychiatrist who treated Clancy during a five-day hospital stay in early January 2023, prosecutors underscored that the defendant denied wanting to hurt anyone else or planning to kill herself. Clancy's lawyer, meanwhile, aimed to flesh out the defense's claim that various providers didn't properly diagnose her and put her on a series of medications that left her worse off.

Clancy has pleaded not guilty to murder charges in the strangling deaths of Callan, Dawson and Cora Clancy, who ranged from 8 months to 5 years old. They were found in the basement of the family's home in coastal Duxbury, Massachusetts, and their mother was lying, badly injured, in the yard. She remains paralyzed from the waist down.

Prosecutors argue that Lindsay Clancy, a 35-year-old former labor and delivery nurse, was an intentional killer who attacked her children after getting her husband out of the house by asking him to run errands. The defense doesn't dispute that she killed the children but says she was so mentally ill that she shouldn't be held criminally responsible.

In the criminal trial and a medical malpractice lawsuit, Clancy's attorneys say she had bipolar disorder and postpartum psychosis — a break with reality that a small fraction of women have after childbirth.

When Clancy first sought care

Tufts first saw Clancy in September 2022. Consulting her notes on the witness stand Friday, she recalled that Clancy reported feeling anxious, "overwhelmed" by caring for the three children and worried about infant Callan's refusal to bottle-feed. Her maternity leave was set to end, though she would go on to extend it.

Tufts diagnosed generalized anxiety disorder and an adjustment disorder with depressed mood, and she recommended therapy and an antidepressant. It became the first in a constantly-remixed cocktail of drugs that Tufts and others prescribed as Clancy reported increasing symptoms, complained of side effects and questioned whether the pills were making her worse.

Clancy's malpractice suit argues that her mounting anxiety and sleeplessness after that first antidepressant were a reaction that signaled bipolar illness. Tufts said she considered such a diagnosis in December 2022 but that Clancy didn't meet the criteria.

Another provider, a nurse-practitioner, did consider bipolar disorder and prescribed an antipsychotic that's often used to treat it, as well as insomnia. Clancy's condition continued declining.

Clancy's stay in a psychiatric hospital

By New Year's Day 2023, Clancy checked herself into McLean Hospital, a prominent psychiatric facility. Clancy said she felt numb and expressed concerns about depending on the antipsychotic to sleep, hospital psychiatrist Dr. Alia Goodheart testified Friday. She diagnosed Clancy with insomnia with a mental health condition and tapered down the drug.

Clancy then reported she could sleep, was eager to go home in time for a long-planned belated birthday party for Cora, and booked herself follow-up outpatient care, the psychiatrist testified. The hospital discharged her that Jan. 5 with prescriptions for an anti-anxiety drug and a sleep aid.

"She had never stated that she had any thoughts of harming anybody else," Goodheart told jurors. And although Clancy said she'd had suicidal thoughts, she denied having them in the moment and indeed said

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she had reasons not to take her own life: "her children and her family, her mother," Goodheart recalled.

Clancy saw Tufts, her original outpatient psychiatrist, by video four more times that January. At their last appointment, Tufts adjusted her medication dosages. She saw no reason to order Clancy to be hospitalized, she said.

Defense lawyer Kevin Reddington hasn't yet had his turn to question Tufts. But in questioning Goodheart, he emphasized that the hospital care team didn't do various tests — Goodheart said they weren't necessary — or learn that Clancy had called a suicide hotline that fall. Nor did the providers talk to her outpatient clinicians.

"She was very sick, wasn't she?" Reddington asked at one point.

"I don't know what you mean," Goodheart responded.

If convicted of murder, Clancy faces life in prison without parole. If found not guilty due to a lack of criminal responsibility, she would be committed to a state mental health facility.

Trump administration moves ahead with efforts to fire Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook

By ERIC TUCKER and PAUL WISEMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is moving ahead with its efforts to fire Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook, two months after the Supreme Court allowed her to retain her job while she fights the president's effort to terminate her over mortgage fraud allegations that she has denied.

The justices in a 5-4 decision in June said Cook, who was nominated to the Fed's Board of Governors by President Joe Biden, could remain in her post at least as long as her lawsuit challenging her firing goes on. The Trump administration is appealing a lower-court ruling in Cook's favor.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in a footnote in his opinion that nothing forbids President Donald Trump from "trying again" to fire Cook provided she is given proper notice and a chance to contest it. Trump indicated after the opinion that he would do just that, vowing to "take appropriate action immediately."

In a letter this week obtained by The Associated Press, White House aide Dan Scavino told Cook that Trump was "considering removing you from your position" but cited the Supreme Court's requirement of proper notice in giving her until August 26 to challenge it.

The attempt to fire Cook is rooted in a criminal referral made last August by Bill Pulte, the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, that accused her of committing mortgage fraud by declaring two different homes — one in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and one in Atlanta — as "primary residence." Homebuyers can get lower mortgage rates or smaller down payments on their primary homes compared to second or vacation homes.

Cook has aggressively defended herself against the allegations, saying the president had attempted to oust her "on a manufactured pretext because I refused to bow to political pressure and continued to set interest rates based only on what would best serve the American people."

Her lawyer, Abbe Lowell, argued in a November letter that Cook has mostly lived in the Ann Arbor property since first purchasing it in 2005. As a result, it was accurate for her to refer to it as her "primary residence" in a June 2021 application to refinance its mortgage, the letter said.

A month later, she purchased a condominium in Atlanta and, in a July 2021 document, also referred to it as her "primary residence." Lowell said that it was an "isolated notation" that did not reflect an intent to defraud. An earlier mortgage application to the same lender in May 2021 had referred to the Atlanta condo as a "vacation home," Lowell said. Cook also referred to it as a second home in federal filings during her confirmation process to become a Fed governor.

The latest White House letter largely rehashes the year-old allegations.

"These allegations are as baseless now as they were a year ago when President Trump tried to remove Governor Cook and interfere with the independence of the Federal Reserve," Lowell said in a statement.

"No matter what President Trump tries to do next, this much is clear under the facts and Supreme Court

precedent — there is no valid cause for removing Governor Cook. As we did before, we will challenge this latest pretext and preserve her position and the historic role of the Fed,” he added.

Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia sign a mutual defense deal, and other Middle East news

By The Associated Press undefined

Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have signed a mutual defense agreement, while the Iran-backed Houthi rebels have stepped up attacks on Saudi-linked targets.

Here’s a look at developments across the Middle East on Friday. Full coverage can be found [here](#).

Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia sign a mutual defense agreement

Oil-rich Saudi Arabia, nuclear power Pakistan and Turkey, which has NATO’s second-largest army and a rapidly growing defense industry, signed a mutual defense agreement on Friday.

The deal stipulates that an armed attack on either of the three countries will be regarded as an attack against them all. It was signed during a meeting in Saudi Arabia between Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan’s foreign ministry said.

“The Agreement is intended to strengthen collective deterrence against any act of aggression,” the ministry said in a statement.

The deal comes at a time when Saudi Arabia, whose critical infrastructure and oil facilities have come under attack as part of the war in Iran, has been looking to diversify its defense partnerships.

US would end blockade if an acceptable Strait of Hormuz deal emerges, official says

If an acceptable deal is reached to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, U.S. President Donald Trump would end the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports as long as the terms of the agreement are respected, a U.S. official said Friday.

The administration has been told by regional mediators that a deal between Iran and Oman on the crucial waterway could be finalized in the coming days, the official said. The U.S. would study whatever comes from the Iran-Oman talks before taking a position.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration deliberations, reiterated that the U.S. would not accept any agreement that allows Iran to charge tolls or service fees or otherwise interfere with ships.

— By Matthew Lee in Washington

Houthi rebels blamed for attack on eastern Yemen

Iran-backed Houthis launched attacks on Marib province in eastern Yemen on Friday morning, in the latest escalation with Saudi-backed forces, a military official with the forces in Marib said.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to speak to the media, said the missiles were fired from west of the Yemeni capital, Sanaa.

Qassem Bahaibah, health minister in Yemen’s internationally recognized government, said in a statement on social media that the attacks targeted a refugee camp and residential areas, killing at least two people and injuring 14 others.

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said in a statement late Friday that the rebel group targeted a Saudi-backed military camp in Marib, using drones and missiles to destroy storage facilities and military equipment. He added that the rebel group will target any Saudi-supported troop buildup or allied groups meant to keep the Saudi blockade on Yemen.

Separately, the rebel group struck the Najran region in southwestern Saudi Arabia near the Yemeni border on Thursday, the official spokesperson of the Saudi-led Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen, Maj. Gen. Turki al-Malki, confirmed in a statement on X overnight.

He said the attack wounded 11 civilians, including a woman and a child who suffered second-degree burns, and accused the rebels of carrying out “indiscriminate shelling against civilian objects.”

The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack on Najran in Saudi Arabia.

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The 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.

— By Ahmed Al-Haj in Aden, Yemen and Fatma Khaled in Cairo

Israeli strike wounds Lebanese soldier

The Lebanese army said the soldier was lightly wounded on Friday while he was in a bulldozer opening roads in the southern village of Mansouri.

Mansouri was subjected to Israeli shelling earlier this week, according to Lebanon's state news agency.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

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

US stocks jump as employers unexpectedly cut 23,000 jobs, raising hopes that rate hikes can wait

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks rose on Wall Street Friday and Treasury yields fell after the government reported that employers unexpectedly cut 23,000 jobs last month.

Every major index notched a second straight week of gains, which included several fresh records. It marks a strong start to August following several weak months.

The S&P 500 rose 47.68 points, or 0.6%, to 7,757.64. That topped the all-time high it set on Tuesday. The benchmark index has been on a record run throughout the year.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 151.83 points, or 0.3%, to 54,036.93. That put it just short of the record it set on Wednesday. The Nasdaq composite rose 342.26 points, or 1.3%, to 26,690.62.

Technology stocks, with their big market values, did much of the heavy lifting for the broader market. They are often the heaviest weights determining the market's direction. Nvidia jumped 2.3% and Broadcom rose 1.7%.

The bond market reacted more strongly to the weaker signal on the jobs market, which can be seen as allowing the Federal Reserve more time before raising interest rates to fight inflation.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.64% from 4.67% just prior to the jobs update. It was as low as 4.60% before recovering a bit.

The yield on the two-year Treasury, which more closely tracks expectations for Fed action on interest rates, fell to 4.20% from 4.22% prior to the report's release. It was as low as 4.15% before edging back up.

"Although the stock market is likely to welcome the dovish implications of the report, investors should be wary of the future growth potential of an economy where fewer people are working," said Peter Graf, chief investment officer at Amova Asset Management Americas, in a research note.

Overall, the report paints a dimmer picture of the jobs market, which has been one of the brighter areas of the economy amid rising inflation and worries about household spending. It included a revision to the figures for June and May that involved slashing a combined 103,000 jobs from payrolls for those months.

Eyes on the Fed's next move

The Fed has been holding interest rates steady amid worries about hotter inflation, fueled by a rise in oil prices because of the U.S. war with Iran. Wall Street expects at least one rate increase by the end of the year, with forecasts shifting for the next meeting. Expectations for a rate cut in September are down to 42%, from 55% on Thursday and from 67% a week ago, according to CME FedWatch.

A weakening jobs market could make matters more complicated for the Fed, which has to balance supporting job growth with fighting inflation. Raising interest rates can help tame inflation by slowing economic growth. A weaker jobs market, though, could become even shakier under higher interest rates as businesses find it more difficult to expand under increased borrowing rates.

Businesses, and Wall Street, prefer lower interest rates because it can help boost investments. That might bolster a weakened jobs market, but it could worsen already stubborn inflation.

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Wall Street will get several important inflation updates next week. The most closely watched will be the consumer price index, or CPI, which measures costs for consumers. Wall Street expects it to show that inflation in July rose at a 3.4% rate, which would be a slight easing from the 3.5% rise in June. Inflation has held stubbornly above 3% for most of the year.

"Today's weak payrolls print may ease the pressure on the Fed to raise rates at its September meeting, but next week's inflation data will still likely be the deciding factor," said Ellen Zentner, chief economic strategist for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, in a research note.

The earnings picture

The jobs report caps a week dominated mostly by corporate earnings and concerns about the ongoing U.S. war with Iran.

Corporate earnings for the second quarter are on track for the strongest growth since 2021. Nearly 90% of companies in the S&P 500 have reported their results and analysts expect profit growth of 50% overall. That has helped allay some concerns on Wall Street about whether big gains for stocks in 2026 are justified. Strong profits help support those gains in stock values.

It was a light day for earnings as companies near the close of the latest round of reports.

Airbnb jumped 17.4% following the vacation-rental company's report late Thursday that showed stronger profit and revenue for its most recent quarter than analysts expected.

Oil prices gained ground. The price of Brent crude, the international standard, rose 1.3% to \$83.55 a barrel.

Rising oil prices have been behind hotter inflation. Prices were as high as \$113 per barrel at one point during the now five-month U.S. war with Iran. That raised prices for gasoline and shipping for a wide range of products. The U.S. and Iran have both said they are working on deals that could reopen the Strait of Hormuz, where a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas once passed through.

New video shows gunman shooting victims at Idaho In-N-Out Burger drive-thru

By SARAH RAZA and ED WHITE Associated Press

Police released video Friday of a mass shooting that killed three people at an Idaho In-N-Out Burger, and praised an employee from a nearby store who engaged the gunman outdoors, slowing him down and possibly preventing more deaths as authorities were catching up.

The story of heroism told by police for the first time adds to the list of at least three more people who confronted the gunman with their own weapons as well as numerous others who rushed to comfort victims.

"What happened here was violent, frightening and deeply traumatic," Twin Falls Police Chief Matthew Hicks said during a news conference.

The video revealed more details of the chaotic scene last weekend. The gunman walked up to the drive-thru window four times and opened fire, killing an In-N-Out employee, police said.

Ten people were shot — inside the restaurant, directly outside, on an adjacent busy road and at a car charging station in a Twin Falls visitors center lot, Hicks said.

He said investigators still don't have a motive for the shooting. The gunman, Chad Williams, 24, killed himself.

It should have been a "normal Saturday afternoon," Hicks said. "Employees showing up for work. Visitors coming to see our beautiful city. Instead they were confronted with chaos, fear and now loss."

A man who encountered the gunman is a 'hero'

As the shooting unfolded, employees from nearby stores fled to a walking trail. When the gunman headed to the trail, he came across two people, including one with his hands in the air talking to him, according to the video.

That man distracted the gunman from possibly pursuing others on the trail. Williams subsequently killed himself as police closed in. His body was found near a canyon.

"To that young man, you are a hero," Hicks said. "Your courage, your composure, your selflessness in

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that moment likely gave others the time they needed to escape harm. This community is grateful for you, and we will never forget what you did that day."

Hicks also praised the work of an off-duty state trooper, who shot at Williams from inside the restaurant, and former police officer A.J. James, who was wounded while confronting him. Authorities previously credited an armed civilian who fired back and diverted Williams from the restaurant.

An off-duty officer helps the wounded

James ran toward the sound of gunfire from the drive-thru window, while the off-duty officer inside the In-N-Out exchanged gunfire with Williams through the window and directed workers out of the building, Hicks said.

He acted "heroically and unbelievably" to try to slow down the shooter, the police chief said, declining to release the off-duty officer's name.

Braxton Steube said he was the person who encountered Williams on the trail after fleeing a Dick's Sporting Good store.

"I said, 'I have a family.' I said, 'You don't have to do this. I'll tell you whatever you want. I'll do anything,'" Steube told KMVT-TV. "He started to like tear up a bit, it seemed. And he said to me, 'Just get away from me, man.'"

Steube said the gunman shot at him and missed.

The Twin Falls In-N-Out, 130 miles (210 kilometers) southeast of Boise, the state capital, had opened in July as part of the chain's expansion into Idaho.

Police identified those killed as Ashley Garibay, 23, of Stockton, California; Dale Schultz, 66, of Salt Lake City; and Christopher Claunch, 59, of Hagerman, Idaho.

Williams had briefly attended the College of Southern Idaho and previously lived in Arizona.

Senate passes sweeping Russia sanctions bill negotiated by the late Sen. Lindsey Graham

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate overwhelmingly approved a punishing Russian sanctions package Friday, the result of a yearlong campaign by the late Sen. Lindsey Graham to reinforce U.S. support for Ukraine and try to force President Vladimir Putin's hand as the grinding war drags on.

The bipartisan legislation, which passed 86-11, would penalize countries that continue to buy Russian oil, gas and other exports seeking to deprive Putin of revenues fueling the war. It comes after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the Capitol last week following Graham's funeral, met with senators from both parties and watched from the gallery as the Senate took the first procedural votes.

"Today, President Zelenskyy is watching from Ukraine — and Putin is watching from Moscow," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., who had worked with the late South Carolina senator on the package.

"I would like to think Lindsey Graham is watching, too," he said. "Today we say to the people of Ukraine: You are not alone. And today we say to Vladimir Putin: You will not conquer Ukraine."

The sweeping show of force from the Senate is the most substantial move yet during President Donald Trump's second term to shift the dynamic of the four-year war, which has now churned longer than World War I. Congress has struggled to ensure the flow of U.S. funding and munitions to Ukraine, but Trump has given a nod to the package, which includes his push for sanctions on Iran, pressuring the House to pass and send it for his signature.

Graham and Blumenthal had announced a deal with the White House on the sanctions legislation on July 10 after more than a year of negotiations with the White House. Graham, who had just returned from Ukraine, died suddenly the next day, likely from an aortic tear.

The bipartisan package allows the president to impose tariffs on the world's top five purchasers of Russian oil or natural gas, including China and India. It provides exceptions for countries that import less than 15% of their natural gas from Russia and are taking steps to reduce those imports.

The legislation also includes sanctions on Putin, senior Russian political and military leaders, Russian

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financial institutions and Russian energy projects. It would expand U.S. sanctions to target older, reflagged oil tankers that Russia uses to circumvent existing U.S. sanctions on Russian oil and energy revenues. The bill also allows the White House to waive sanctions or restrictions if the president certifies to Congress that it's in the national interest.

Democrats and some Republicans have been wary of giving Trump broad authority to slap tariffs on imports that have spiked prices for goods, worried about inflationary costs for Americans. Those voting against the final package were mostly progressive Democrats.

Sen. Darline Graham, R-S.C., who was appointed by the state's governor to fill her brother's seat, said she was honored to carry on his work. "This legislation hits Putin where it hurts," she said.

Bill sends 'a moral signal' to Ukraine and its allies

Zelenskyy told senators during last week's private meeting at the Capitol that Ukraine is making gains in the war, but still needs more help from the U.S. He publicly thanked them for the sanctions package.

Republican Sen. Todd Young of Indiana, who attended the meeting, said the sanctions legislation "is important as a moral signal to a country that is weary and tired, though holding its own."

New Hampshire Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, said advancing the legislation now, ahead of Russia's own elections, will put pressure on Putin to seriously revisit prospects for a peace deal. And she warned that every time the U.S. backs away from tough actions, Russia ramps up its attacks.

"If we can't shut down the funding for the war machine that Russia is using against Ukraine, then they're going to keep at it," she said.

Ukraine's foreign minister Andrii Sybiha expressed gratitude to the Senate in a post, and said that with U.S. support, "Together, we are bringing a lasting peace closer."

Some say the bill would give Trump too much tariff power

The Senate defeated an amendment by Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon that would have removed the new tariff authority for Trump. Paul says it would be too costly for taxpayers, while Wyden and other Democrats say they don't want to give Trump any new authority to impose tariffs.

"We've got folks who are walking an economic tightrope here in America," Wyden said.

Sen. Raphael Warnock, D-Ga., who had held up passage of the package over the tariff authority, said he received a written commitment from the Trump administration through U.S. Trade Representative Jamie Green that ensures guardrails. The tariffs would be lifted once the countries are no longer on the lists of those purchasing Russian oil and gas, or helping to evade sanctions, he said.

"We should not have to choose between putting a check on Putin's aggression and putting a check on this president's tariffs regime," Warnock said. If Trump "oversteps his power, we will see him in court."

Package next goes to the House

While the Senate momentum puts pressure on the House to act as soon as lawmakers return to session at the end of August, top Democrats still warn against handing Trump too much power in the Russia sanctions package.

Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the bill as is gives Trump too much authority to "weaponize" tariffs in ways that do little to deter Russia, but hurt Americans back home.

"It would allow President Trump to dodge holding Russia accountable and impose yet more tariffs in his destructive trade wars, leaving Americans to foot the bill," Meeks said.

He said the tally on the Paul-Wyden amendment, 32-64, demonstrates the demand among lawmakers to make changes to the package.

The House had already passed a separate measure in June that would provide aid to Ukraine and sanction key segments of the Russian economy. That Meeks-led package from Democrats drew bipartisan support from Republicans, overriding objections from GOP leaders.

US job market stalled in July as employers cut 23,000 jobs, delivering political setback to Trump

By PAUL WISEMAN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. job market stalled unexpectedly last month, delivering a political blow to President Donald Trump three months ahead of midterm elections and complicating decision-making for the inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve.

Employers cut 23,000 jobs in July. And Labor Department revisions slashed 103,000 jobs from May and June payrolls.

The unemployment rate fell but for the wrong reason: Thousands of people dropped out of the labor market so fewer people were competing for work.

The July jobs numbers from the Labor Department Friday marked a sharp setback for the American labor market and for Trump less than three months before his Republican party seeks to keep full control of Congress in the midterm election.

Forecasters had expected job creation to approach 100,000 last month.

Local public schools cut 50,000 jobs in July, restaurants and bars 26,000, retailers 19,000.

The 4.1% unemployment rate was the lowest since June 2025 — but it only fell because 264,000 people dropped out of the labor market last month. The share of those working or looking for work fell to 61.4%, the lowest since February 2021.

"We can't really put lipstick on a pig here," said Daniel Zhao, chief economist at the jobs website Glassdoor. "This is not a great report for July."

Manufacturing up, but public schools down

The Trump administration, which has imposed massive tariffs in an attempt to protect American industry and create manufacturing jobs, noted that jobs were up 22,000 at construction companies and 5,000 at factories.

"The Trump industrial resurgence is on schedule," said White House spokesman Kush Desai. "Manufacturing and factory construction jobs grew again in July even as government payrolls continued to significantly shrink."

Trump has long bragged that jobs have been increasing for native-born citizens in his economy, but that talking point was undermined by the July numbers. The White House declined to comment on why Friday's report showed that employment for native-born Americans dropped by 720,000 over the past 12 months. Those numbers can be quirky. They're not adjusted for seasonal changes and are not seen as a reliable measure of total native-born employment. But the administration had latched onto them as evidence that Trump's immigration crackdown was benefiting people born in the United States.

To raise or not to raise

Policymakers at the Federal Reserve have been divided over whether to start raising interest to combat inflation that has exceeded their 2% target for more than five years. The Fed kept rates unchanged at its meeting last week — but three officials dissented from that decision in favor of a rate hike. Wall Street traders were expecting rate hikes later this year. Friday's report may at least delay higher rates.

"The Fed has to consider the health of the job market as they debate whether a hike is justified," said Glassdoor's Zhao. "The softness in today's report is going to have to give the Fed a little bit of pause."

July wage gains were modest. Average hourly pay was up 3.2% last month from July 2025, the smallest year-over-year increase since May 2021. The smaller wage gains are coming at a time when American families are squeezed by the high cost of living.

"This is a bleak jobs report," said Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union. "The U.S. labor market is stalling again and that is going to make the Federal Reserve's job harder and life for job seekers rough."

Women lost 32,000 jobs last month, the Labor Department reports, accounting for all the job losses in July. But that marked a reversal in women's fortunes: They still gained 321,000 jobs over the past 12 months; men lost 5,000 over that period.

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Economists noted that private payrolls continued to grow in July and that the big drop in public school payrolls might have been a statistical glitch caused by seasonal adjustments.

Rebounding from a miserable 2025

Hiring had rebounded this year from a lackluster 2025 in the face of the conflict in the Persian Gulf that has sent energy prices surging and put a strain on family budgets. Job growth had been solid, if unspectacular. Some businesses are having trouble filling vacancies. Others are using technology to do the work humans used to do.

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.

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

Hiring in the year to date remains weak

So far this year, employers are adding 61,000 jobs a month, up from 9,700 in 2025, the weakest hiring outside a recession since 2002. But job creation this year is well below the 2023-2024 average of 166,000 jobs a month — and it had been even higher during the 2021-2022 hiring boom that followed the end of COVID-19 lockdowns.

At least the United States doesn't need as many jobs as it used to 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.

The jobs outlook 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.

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.”

Senate confirms Hamilton to lead FEMA and clears more than 70 other Trump nominees

By GABRIELA AOUN ANGUEIRA Associated Press

The Senate on Friday confirmed Cameron Hamilton as head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, returning the former Navy SEAL to the embattled agency he led temporarily last year only to be fired after he publicly opposed eliminating it.

Hamilton was among a group of 74 nominations approved by the Senate, including President Donald

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Trump's pick to lead the Transportation Security Administration, David Cummins, and his choice for ambassador to Brazil, Daniel Perez.

Upon his swearing in, Hamilton will take over an agency whose future has been uncertain since Trump threatened to get rid of it days into his second term. Hamilton's nomination signaled that Trump may be moving on from that idea, but his Republican administration is still promising drastic changes in how the government handles disasters.

Hamilton will have to shepherd that overhaul while stabilizing an agency of more than 20,000 employees recovering from Kristi Noem's chaotic tenure as Department of Homeland Security secretary, during which FEMA saw mass staff departures, disruptions to grant programs and delays of disaster aid.

While her successor, former Oklahoma Sen. Markwayne Mullin, has worked to reverse some of the upheaval, Democrats are accusing Trump of politicizing disaster relief. Trump has approved 80% of disaster requests from Republican governors but only about 60% from Democratic governors, a July analysis by The Associated Press found.

In his June hearing before a Senate committee, Hamilton pledged to advocate for FEMA and its workforce while promising to ensure FEMA is "objective, is fair and reasonable, follows the law, and is consistent in the approach to how we adjudicate and process claims and requests for disasters."

He also maintained that the agency is burdened by bureaucracy and cannot be expected to respond to every disaster. "We would need to strike a new balance to encourage cost reasonableness and cost savings," he said.

Hamilton was fired from a temporary role leading FEMA

Hamilton had limited emergency management experience before Trump named him FEMA's temporary leader in January 2025. Formerly a critic of the agency, Hamilton has said he came to appreciate FEMA's mission. His tenure proved short after he broke with Noem and other DHS officials over FEMA's future.

"I do not believe it is in the best interest of the American people to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency," Hamilton told a House panel in May 2025. He was fired the next day.

His stand drew admiration among some emergency management professionals.

"It tells you exactly who he is and how he will lead when the pressure is highest and the easy answer is the wrong one," Pete Gaynor, FEMA administrator in Trump's first term, said in a statement supporting Hamilton's confirmation.

The National Emergency Management Association said it welcomes Hamilton as the FEMA administrator.

Still, some FEMA staffers have remained wary of Hamilton's role in controversial decisions last year like canceling a multibillion-dollar resilience grant program.

FEMA has been an agency under siege

Hamilton will take over in the middle of a busy summer disaster season that has already brought destructive wildfires and dangerous flooding and as FEMA manages more than 1,000 open disaster declarations. He will be FEMA's first permanent administrator in Trump's second term, overseeing an agency eager for stability.

More than 4,300 employees separated from FEMA in the 2025 budget year, more than 1,500 through voluntary reductions, resulting in a "loss of institutional knowledge and experienced personnel," according to a Government Accountability Office report.

Since replacing Noem in March, Mullin has rehired for some eliminated positions and rescinded a rule that any expense greater than \$100,000 needed to be approved by the secretary's office — a requirement that backlogged billions of dollars in disaster aid.

But DHS has also introduced policies stirring up new controversy. Twenty-five states and the District of Columbia sued the Trump administration last month over new election security requirements in FEMA counterterrorism grants to states.

The Trump administration and lawmakers are advocating for sweeping changes to federal disaster response. At a meeting of governors last weekend, Mullin called FEMA "bloated."

"The biggest reform you're going to see is more responsibility is going to go back to your states," Mullin

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said, with "FEMA there for worst of the worst, not every storm."

In May, a Trump-appointed FEMA Review Council recommended major changes to how the federal government supports states, tribes and territories during disasters. That could speed assistance but might reduce how much and how often FEMA helps. Many of the suggested changes require congressional action.

Gaynor told the AP he expects that Hamilton will work quickly to make changes within his authority. "I think his biggest priority in general is making the whole recovery system simpler for disaster survivors, for states and locals to navigate, to make it less of mystery, and cut out red tape," Gaynor said.

Senate approves 74 nominations, including for airport security

Other nominees confirmed included Cummins as head of the Transportation Security Administration, an agency also facing persistent challenges, particularly after this year's record partial government shutdown left TSA employees working for weeks without pay. The funding lapse prompted thousands of officers to call out of work and about 1,100 to quit.

Cummins is a former senior vice president at the government contractor Serco, which runs air traffic control towers at 60 American airports. He is taking over as the Trump administration seeks to expand private airport screening and cut thousands of TSA jobs.

The Senate also confirmed Perez, a close friend of Secretary of State Marco Rubio and a former speaker of Florida's House of Representatives, to be the next U.S. ambassador to Brazil.

Perez has been central to an ongoing diplomatic dispute between the Trump administration and the government of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Earlier this week, the State Department said the Brazilian government's refusal to accept Perez's appointment was a main reason for its decision to revoke the visa of Brazil's ambassador to the United States. International diplomatic protocols demand that host countries approve any foreign ambassadors before they can take their posts.

A Russian retail giant's warehouse burns after Ukraine's latest long-range drone attack

By The Associated Press undefined

Ukrainian long-range drones hit a warehouse of Russia's biggest online retailer in the Ural Mountains, more than 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) from the two countries' border, local officials and the company said Friday.

Ukraine has regularly hit targets in the distant Urals this year and has even struck a Russian oil refinery in western Siberia, nearly 2,500 kilometers (1,550 miles) from the border. The attacks are examples of how Kyiv has used drone innovation as a key part of its response to the invasion by its much bigger enemy more than four years ago.

Its successes have drawn international interest and drone cooperation agreements with nine countries, with further deals being negotiated with 15 other countries, according to Kyiv officials.

Wildberries said its warehouse in Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth-largest city, was set ablaze by the attack. Most merchandise wasn't damaged, the company said, unlike at some of the more than a dozen other Wildberries depots struck by Ukraine in recent weeks that have burned down.

The regional governor, Denis Pasler, said three drones hit the warehouse's roof. Artyom Zhoga, the Kremlin's representative in the region, said that 800 people were evacuated from the warehouse and nobody was hurt.

Kyiv is trying to rattle the Russian public and the Kremlin with the attacks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin chaired a meeting Friday of the country's Security Council. He said in televised opening remarks that the meeting would focus on additional measures to "strengthen ... protection of infrastructure facilities" but gave no further details.

Ukraine presses on with plans for new weapons

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is pushing for his country to keep up the pace of technological development, especially in air defense systems to help stop Russian ballistic missiles that are exploiting

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Ukraine's shortage of American-made Patriot interceptor missiles and battering civilian areas.

A joint European anti-ballistic development program is already underway, Zelenskyy said late Thursday, with 10 countries engaged in developing an anti-ballistic shield. Europe is concerned about Moscow's ambitions on the continent beyond Ukraine.

"Ukraine is capable of producing its (anti-ballistic) missile and launcher, while our partners will provide the necessary components and critical elements — radars, sensors, and everything else required," Zelenskyy said on social media. "An anti-ballistic program of our own — one that is truly large-scale — will greatly benefit everyone in Europe."

At the same time, Ukraine is working on manufacturing its own ballistic missiles to use against Russia. "The tests have shown strong potential. We need to turn this into a real weapon," Zelenskyy said.

Defenders are under pressure in eastern Ukraine

Ukrainian front-line defenses in eastern regions, meanwhile, remain under strain as Russia's bigger army looks for a breakthrough after months of minimal advances that Western analysts and officials say have had a high cost for Moscow in troop casualties.

Ukraine has been evacuating children from Kramatorsk, one of the four eastern Donetsk region cities that make up the Ukrainian so-called Fortress Belt. The line of four large and heavily defended cities, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) long, has been key to denying Moscow its goal of seizing Ukraine's industrial heartland.

The head of the Donetsk region's regional military administration, Vadym Filashkin, said Friday that more than 800 people, including 91 children, were evacuated over the previous 24 hours.

Ukraine has been deploying midrange strike drones to disrupt Russia's supply lines and slow its advance.

Zelenskyy said that the recently appointed commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, Maj. Gen. Mykhailo Drapatyi, reported to him Friday about the military situation in Donetsk.

He said in a social media post that they reached "an understanding of how to strengthen" Ukraine's defenses there but gave no details.

Russia and Ukraine sustain nightly drone attacks

Russia's air defenses downed 203 Ukrainian drones from late Thursday through early Friday, the Defense Ministry in Moscow said.

Over the past week, the Russian military struck 31 bulk cargo vessels and three tugboats that operated "in the interests of the Ukrainian armed forces," it said.

It added that late Thursday two ships were hit by Geran-4 drones in the Black Sea east and southeast of Odesa and one was struck in the Ukrainian port of Chornomorsk.

In other attacks, the ministry said that the military hit a facility assembling long-range drones in Okhtyrka in the Sumy region on Thursday. It also released a video of a train purportedly carrying military equipment struck by a Geran drone and then an Iskander ballistic missile near Vyshneve in the Dnipropetrovsk region.

Meanwhile, Russia attacked Ukraine with 147 long-range strike drones overnight, according to the Ukrainian air force.

In Ukraine's northern Sumy region, a Russian drone struck a busy market Friday morning, wounding 10 people, authorities said.

Russia also launched glide bombs and drones of various types at the regional capital, according to the head of regional administration, Oleh Hryhorov.

The attack targeted residential buildings, transport and infrastructure, wounding two people, he said.

'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 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?" he 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 he has also made on the topic.

Trump's gravitation toward grass speaks to his decades as a New York real estate developer and personal love of building things and overseeing construction projects. But it is also an indication of how much 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. The president has already far outpaced the 26 times he mentioned grass during the entirety of his first four-year term.

The White House didn't answer questions for this story. But the Republican president 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 face-lift — 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.

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"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 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 former 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."

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Today in History: August 8, devastating Maui wildfires

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Aug. 8, the 220th day of 2026. There are 145 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 8, 2023, a series of wind-driven wildfires broke out on the Hawaiian island of Maui, destroying the town of Lahaina and killing more than 100 people.

Also on this date:

In 1814, during the War of 1812, peace talks between the United States and Britain began in Ghent, Belgium.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte set sail for St. Helena to spend the remainder of his days in exile.

In 1876, Thomas Edison received a patent for his electric pen — the forerunner of the mimeograph machine.

In 1908, Wilbur Wright made the Wright Brothers' first public flying demonstration, at Le Mans racecourse in France.

In 1911, President William Howard Taft signed a measure raising the number of U.S. representatives from 391 to 433, effective with the next Congress, with a proviso to add two more when New Mexico and Arizona became states.

In 1963, Britain's "Great Train Robbery" took place as thieves made off with 2.6 million pounds in banknotes.

In 1969, photographer Iain Macmillan took the iconic photo of The Beatles that would appear on the cover of their album "Abbey Road."

In 1974, President Richard Nixon, facing damaging new revelations in the Watergate scandal, announced he would resign the following day.

In 1988, Chicago's Wrigley Field hosted its first-ever night baseball game; the contest between the Chicago Cubs and Philadelphia Phillies would be rained out in the fourth inning.

In 2000, the wreckage of the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley, which sank in 1864 after attacking the Union ship Housatonic, was recovered off the South Carolina coast and returned to port.

In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was sworn in as the U.S. Supreme Court's first Hispanic and third female justice.

In 2022, FBI agents executed a search warrant for former President Donald Trump's residence at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida; over 13,000 government documents, including 103 classified documents, were seized.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Nita Talbot is 96. Actor Dustin Hoffman is 80. Actor Connie Stevens is 88. Actor Larry Wilcox is 79. Actor Keith Carradine is 77. Movie director Martin Brest is 75. Radio-TV personality Robin Quivers is 74. Percussionist Anton Fig is 73. Actor Donny Most is 73. Rock musician Dennis Drew (10,000 Maniacs) is 69. TV personality Deborah Norville is 68. Rock musician The Edge (U2) is 65. Rock musician Rikki Rockett (Poison) is 65. Rapper Kool Moe Dee is 64. Rock singer Scott Stapp is 53. Country singer Mark Wills is 53. Actor Kohl Sudduth is 52. Rock musician Tom Linton (Jimmy Eat World) is 51. Singer JC Chasez ('N Sync) is 50. Actor Tawny Cypress is 50. R&B singer Drew Lachey (Iah-SHAY') (98 Degrees) is 50. R&B singer Marsha Ambrosius is 49. Actor Lindsay Sloane is 49. Actor Countess Vaughn is 48. Actor Michael Urie is 46. Retired tennis player Roger Federer is 45. Actor Meagan Good is 45. Britain's Princess Beatrice of York is 38. Actor Ken Baumann is 37. Pop singer Shawn Mendes is 28.