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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.

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

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Community Calendar

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

Monday, Aug. 10

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.

First day of boys golf practice

First day of cross country practice

School Board meeting, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Senior Citizens meet at the Community Center, 1 p.m.

School Board Meeting, 6 p.m.

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We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.

By David Adler

Celebrating Adams and Jefferson: Will Their Work Inspire the Hopes and Dreams of Mankind?

As the two venerable titans of our nation's Heroic Age—the season of the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence and the framing of the Constitution—neared the end of their long lives, both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson yearned to see on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of our country's birth. Whether providential or not, their dreams were fulfilled when their last wishes were confirmed by family and friends gathered at bedside that, indeed, they were awake on July 4th. They died mere hours later. Adams's last words, "Jefferson survives," uttered just after 6 p.m., were not literally correct, for Jefferson had passed away at 1 p.m., five hours earlier. But some have understood Adams' s last words as metaphorical truth, an expression that in Jefferson, the apostle of freedom, the Spirit of '76 lived on.

Adams and Jefferson had struggled in the last weeks of their lives, each frail and consigned to bed, Adams at his homestead in Quincy, Massachusetts, and Jefferson at his estate in Monticello, near Charlottesville, Virginia. They were separated by 600 miles, but their thoughts were filled with memories of one another, and they had nothing but praise for their respective roles in securing Independence and founding our nation. Their closing arguments about the American Revolution were drawn out by the numerous invitations from officials in cities up and down the Eastern seaboard, those who hoped that the pillars of the Declaration of Independence could participate in the jubilee that spread across the land, with words to commemorate the events that changed history. The remarkable coincidence of the passing of these two giants on the same day could be explained, it was maintained, as providential, a sign that the revolutionary period had been ended.

Neither Adams, nor Jefferson, could accept the invitations, but they shared in letters final words about the revolution and the Declaration, how they hoped the epochal achievements would be remembered by posterity, and the light that they might provide for generations to come. On June 7, Adams wrote an old friend and called the American Revolution "a memorable epoch in the annals of the human race," and said it was destined to form "the brightest or the blackest page" in history, depending on the use or abuse of the legacy by posterity. Jefferson, in a letter dated June 24, summoned his eloquent powers to write his last testament to the American people, for a celebration in Washington. "All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man," Jefferson wrote. "The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor the favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God."

Americans' jubilee celebration of the genius of Adams and Jefferson, led early on to discussion of how they would be remembered. Jefferson has lived on in the poetry of our nation's history, while Adams' influence has survived as governing prose. The Declaration of Independence, largely the work of Jefferson, has assured his place in the minds of the citizenry as a symbol of liberty. A great monument, the Jefferson Memorial, honors his contributions to humanity.

Adams, on the other hand, has not enjoyed similar tributes, but he always knew that he would not enjoy comparable honors. "Mausoleums, statues, monuments will never be erected to me," he wrote, "nor flattering orations spoken to transmit me to posterity in brilliant colors."

Jefferson has been invoked by Democratic and Republic presidents, from Lincoln and FDR to Reagan and Obama. In 1874, the biographer James Parton, wrote, "If Jefferson was wrong, America is wrong. America is right, Jefferson was right." Adams's influence is reflected in his seminal works inscribed in our institutions. America is less inclined to honor Adams for his seminal contributions to our constitutional doctrines, which he championed in the 1760s—separation of powers, checks and balances and the rule of law, but the work of both is critical to American success. Whether the final legacy of the Revolution will constitute "the brightest or darkest page" in history, depends entirely on whether Americans now, and in the future, honor or dishonor it. Will we, indeed, inspire the hopes and dreams of mankind?

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Acts 17:30-31

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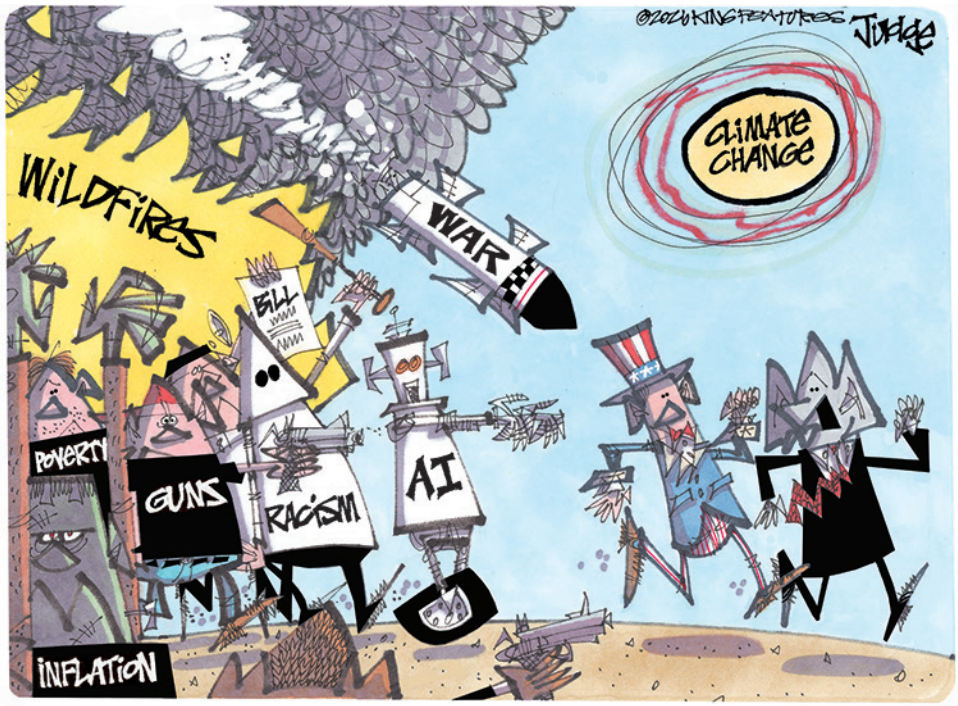

BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Agrabah (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. By Roman reckoning what time of day did Jesus meet the Samarian woman at the well? *Daybreak, Noon, Midafternoon, Dusk*
3. On the island of Patmos, to whom was the book of Revelation given? *John, Paul, Matthew, Luke*
4. Who hid 100 prophets in two caves and supplied them food and water? *Solomon, Philemon, Obadiah, Hosea*
5. On what day did God create the sun, moon and stars? *3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th*
6. The Semites were descended from Shem, the son of whom? *Moses, Noah, Paul, Jacob*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Noon, 3) John, 4) Obadiah, 5) Fourth, 6) Noah

Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscriber site at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.

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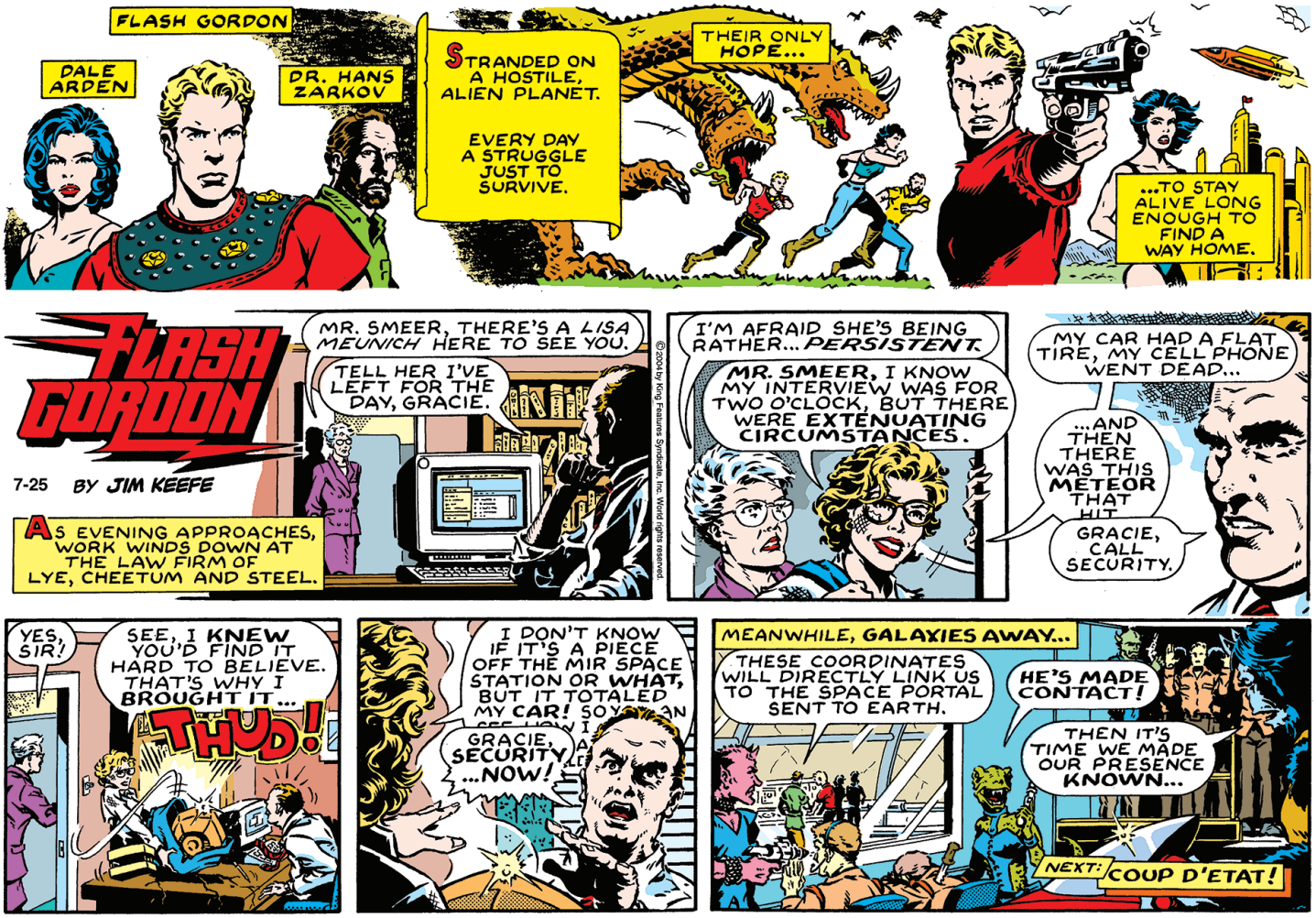
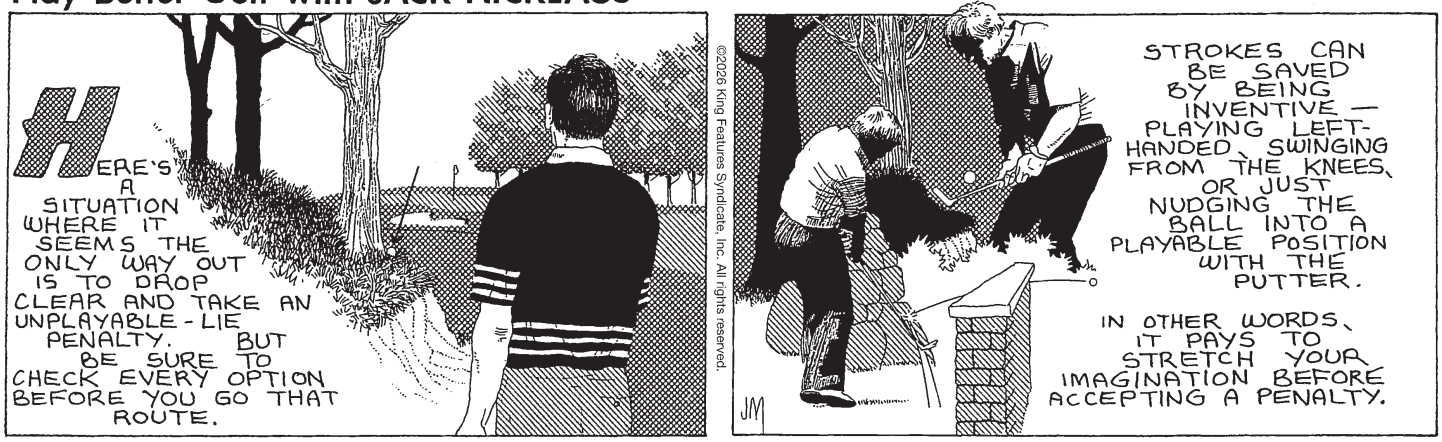


Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



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Leg Cramps and Digit Spasms Occur Due to Lactose Intolerance

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 74-year-old woman who's quite healthy (I am active and don't take any medications), but I have a history of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS-C). Recently, I experienced bad-smelling gas, leg cramps, and finger and toe spasms. I quit eating milk products, and my symptoms almost immediately disappeared.

My question is: Do food intolerances increase with age? Also, can leg cramps and digit spasms be attributed to a food intolerance? -- H.W.

ANSWER: The most likely diagnosis is lactose intolerance. This is caused by a deficiency in the enzyme lactase, which is used to split milk sugar into its constituent simple sugars. This condition is rare in childhood and does increase with age.

I've seen people with lactose deficiencies who complain about abdominal cramps, but digit spasms and leg cramps aren't usually described with this deficiency. I've seen these symptoms in people with severe celiac disease due to low calcium levels.

Since your symptoms disappeared when stopping milk products, it seems clear that these are, indeed, symptoms of a lactase deficiency, but they're unusual enough that they aren't well-described.

***\

DEAR DR. ROACH: My husband has had neck pain for over two years. He has been treated with ablation of the neck nerves but hasn't experienced any significant lessening of the pain. He's been on oxycodone for at least a year. Nothing seems to be working on lessening his pain on a continuous basis.

What's your opinion on fentanyl patches? He's 88 and very weak, but he doesn't have any major physical problems. -- D.S.

ANSWER: Fentanyl is a very potent synthetic opiate, and the patch allows continuous absorption through the skin. It's useful for people who need strong opiates, such as those with cancer. Unfortunately, opiates aren't always a good choice for muscular or skeletal pain, which is likely the cause of your husband's neck pain. If oxycodone isn't working well, fentanyl probably won't either. The body can quickly get used to high doses of any opiate.

Without knowing a lot more about his neck pain, I can't make any definitive recommendations. Pain management experts will often try other types of injections (such as epidural steroids), along with different types of medications. Medicines that work on the nerve pain cells (such as gabapentin or duloxetine) can be of benefit in many people. A pain management expert is an essential consultant for your husband.

***

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have slowed gastric motility and would like to draw your attention to a potentially dangerous reply that you gave in a recent column. There was an 85-year-old with a sluggish gut who asked about fiber supplements. You said that it was good to take fiber supplements for diarrhea and constipation, as well as cholesterol reduction. This is usually sound advice; however, in people with gastric motility issues, fiber supplements can be dangerous.

For people with slowed gastric emptying, fiber can increase the risk of bezoars, which can be life-threatening. A person with slowed gastric motility is supposed to limit their fiber intake to no more than 2-3 grams per meal to prevent solid masses from forming in the gut. This may be what they were referring to when they said they heard that fiber supplements mess up your gut. -- A.Y.

ANSWER: I appreciate your writing. You're right that in the case of gastroparesis, too much fiber can lead to a bezoar -- a nondigestible stone-like mass that can block the gut. People with diagnosed transit problems of the gut should seek specific advice about treatment from their gastroenterologist prior to using fiber supplementation.

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

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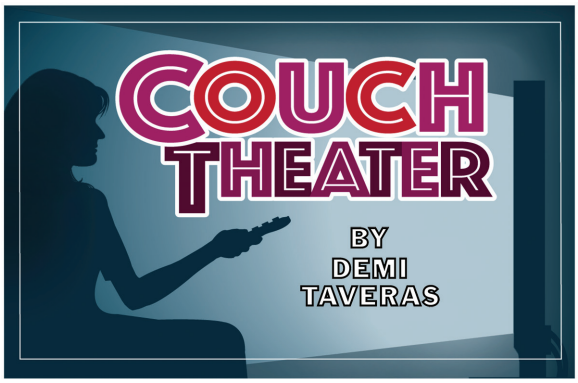

Sunny Sandler, left, and Melanie Lynskey star in "Don't Say Good Luck." (Courtesy of Netflix)

"Camp Rock 3" (TV-G) -- Almost 16 years after "Camp Rock 2: The Final Jam" premiered on The Disney Channel, the third film of the series is set to release on Aug. 14. The film was announced last fall, with news of the Jonas Brothers ("A Very Jonas Christmas Movie") and Maria Canals-Barrera ("Wizards Beyond Waverly Place") returning to reprise their roles. (Demi Lovato, who played lead Mitchie Torres in the previous films, serves only as an executive producer.) The film picks up as fictional band Connect 3 (Joe, Nick and Kevin Jonas) head back to their beloved camp to find a new opening act after the original opener cancels at the last minute. They plan to host a competition, and a few new campers, including Sage (Liamani Segura) and Fletch (Malachi Barton), have their sights set on taking it all. (Disney+)

"Don't Say Good Luck" (PG-13) -- Adam Sandler's youngest daughter, Sunny Sandler ("Happy Gilmore 2"), is slowly starting to make a name for herself! In this musical teen drama, she stars as 15-year-old Sophie, opposite Melanie Lynskey ("Yellowjackets") and Max Greenfield ("New Girl"). A theater kid with dreams of taking the stage as the lead in her high school musical, Sophie's preparing for the biggest audition of her life, just as jaw-dropping news hits her family. Her mom's (Lynskey) cancer has unfortunately returned, and even though Sophie's overjoyed to eventually get the part, the weight of her mom's illness overshadows her happiness. With no choice but to push through and continue to live her teenage life, Sophie must balance her grief against her aspirations and figure out how to find a silver lining in the situation. Premieres Aug. 14. (Netflix)

"Busboys" (R) -- This goofy buddy-comedy film was self-financed by comedians David Spade ("Outcome") and Theo Von ("Sweet Dreams"), who also decided to team up to star together in the film. Markie (Spade) and Steef (Von) are best friends in the septic cleaning sphere who are craving more cash and an easier life. After Markie's girlfriend gets seduced by a waiter while they're on a date, he convinces Steef that becoming waiters is the key to an upgrade in their life. So, the buds spot an opening for busboys, thinking it'll be a quick way to move up to being a waiter. Much to their dismay, they realize they weren't the only ones who had this idea, but viewers shouldn't underestimate how willing Markie and Steef are to cut corners to get what they want. Out on Aug. 14. (Hulu)

"The Gates" (R) -- Mason Gooding ("Scream 7"), Algee Smith ("Euphoria"), and Keith Powers ("Uglies") are the trio leading this thriller film that's out now to stream. "The Gates" follows three friends who are on their way to meet up with girls and decide to take a dodgy shortcut to outmaneuver the traffic. They are led into a wealthy gated community but get lost, deciding to pull over and ask one resident for help. However, before they can even utter a word, they witness the resident succumb to death at the hands of another. The killer, a pastor named Jacob (James Van Der Beek), is hot on their trail and employs the help of other residents in the community to hunt the boys down. This was Van Der Beek's final film role before he passed on Feb. 11 of this year. (Amazon Prime Video)

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1. Where were the werewolves of London sipping a pina colada?

2. Name the artist who wrote and released "I Wanna Be Your Lover."

3. Which group released "We Gotta Get Out of This Place"?

4. Where did Canned Heat get its name?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "We're caught in a trap, I can't walk out, Because I love you too much, baby."

Answers

1. At Trader Vic's. The 1978 song by Warren Zevon started as a joke suggested by Phil Everly (of the Everly Brothers) and was penned in 15 minutes. It was the recording that was difficult, taking nearly 60 attempts.

2. Prince, in 1979. The song went to No. 1 on the Hot Soul Singles chart and stayed there for two weeks.

3. The Animals, in 1965. It appeared on Rolling Stone's list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time.

4. From Sterno, the liquid fuel used under buffet chafing dishes.

5. "Suspicious Minds," by Elvis Presley, released in 1969. Written and first recorded by Mark James in 1968, the song failed to chart until Presley's version became a No. 1 hit. Presley's recording was later inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps

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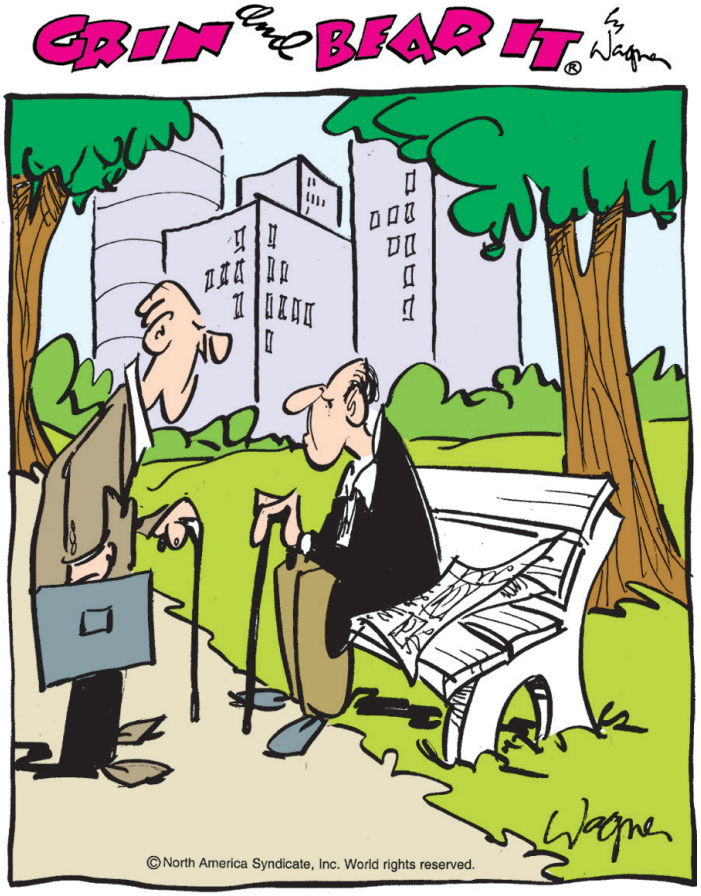

"Checkers? No, this is my grandson's Xbox."

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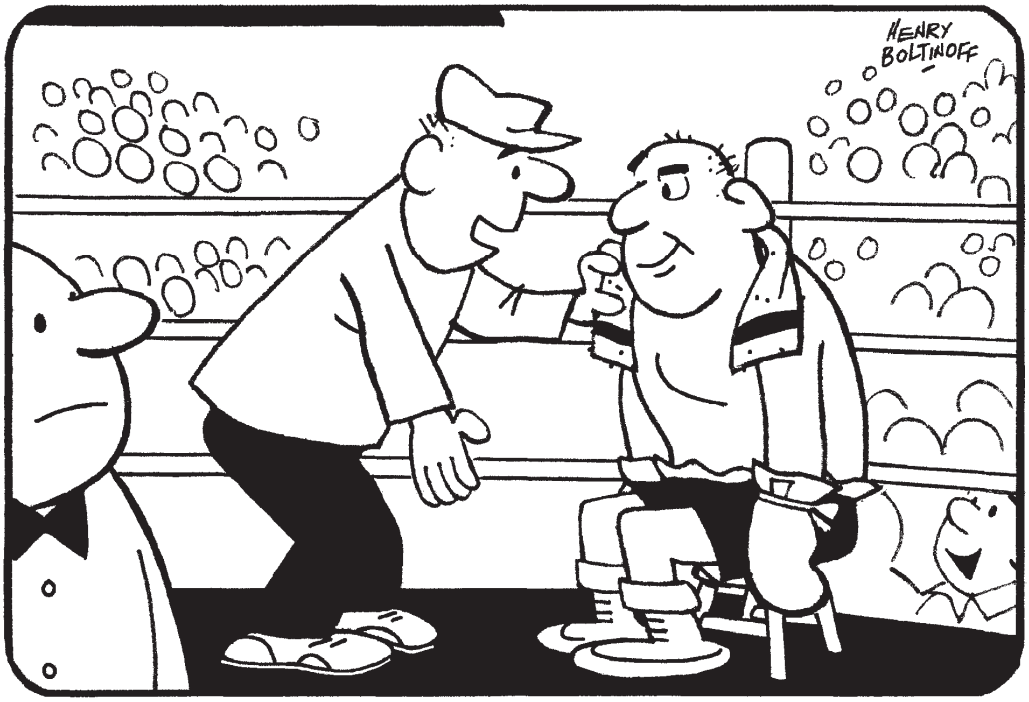
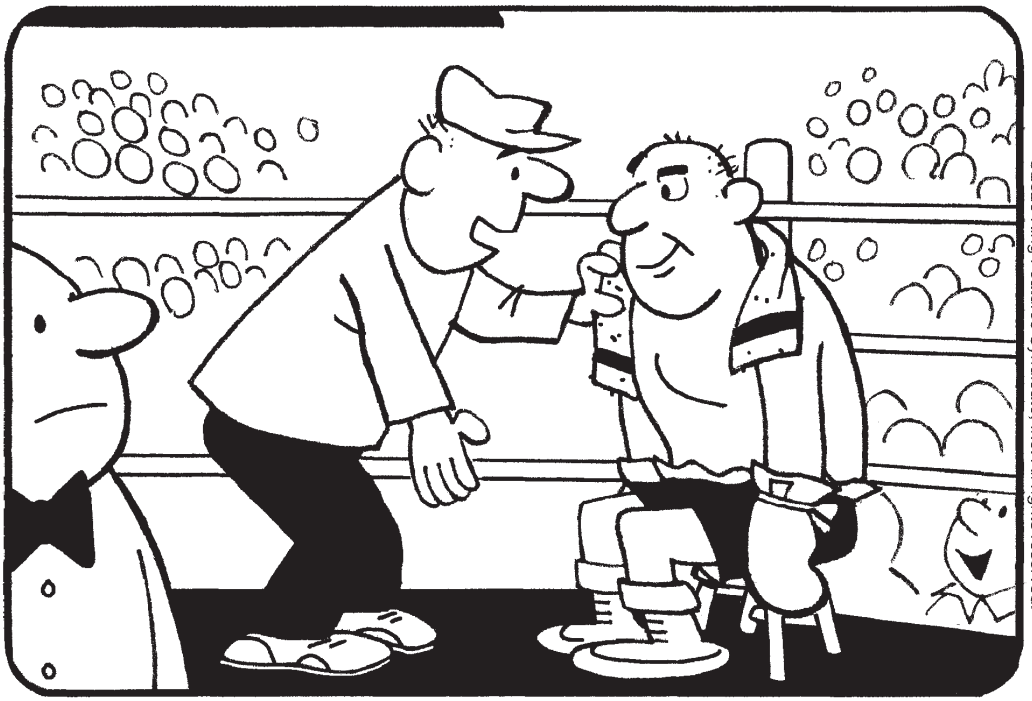
HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Towel is longer. 2. Tie is larger. 3. Rung on stool is missing. 4. Ear is different. 5. Rope is missing. 6. Man is moved.

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* Christmas lights are not just for Christmas these days. I see them hanging along the eaves of back porches and decorating the landscape to light up garden parties at dusk. Here's a great idea for a hanging lantern, using lights I picked up at my local thrift shop: I basically piled strings of lights in the sections of a three-tier wire hanging basket. I connected them together, and when they are plugged in, they look magical.

* When your bananas hit your desired level of ripeness, put them in the refrigerator. The skin will darken, but the inside will remain white, allowing you to wait a day or two to eat it.

* "Use pretty coffee mugs to plant some fresh herbs in your windowsill in the kitchen." -- E.L. in Montana

* One way to remove fuzz from between the keys of your keyboard is with a self-stick note. Peel off and run the sticky side of the note between the keys for a quick clean.

* Love books? Remember that bookshelves need to be dusted regularly in order to keep books in good shape. They also need air to circulate, so be sure your shelves are not too crowded.

* "Great gifts and goodies for nursing home resident: note cards with stamped envelopes, hand and face lotion, small blankets, news from home, large-print books, flowers in a pretty vase, a large clock with an easy-to-read face, magazine subscriptions, puzzle books, shampoos and conditioners, photo books and, perhaps most importantly, YOU." -- M.W. in Florida

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

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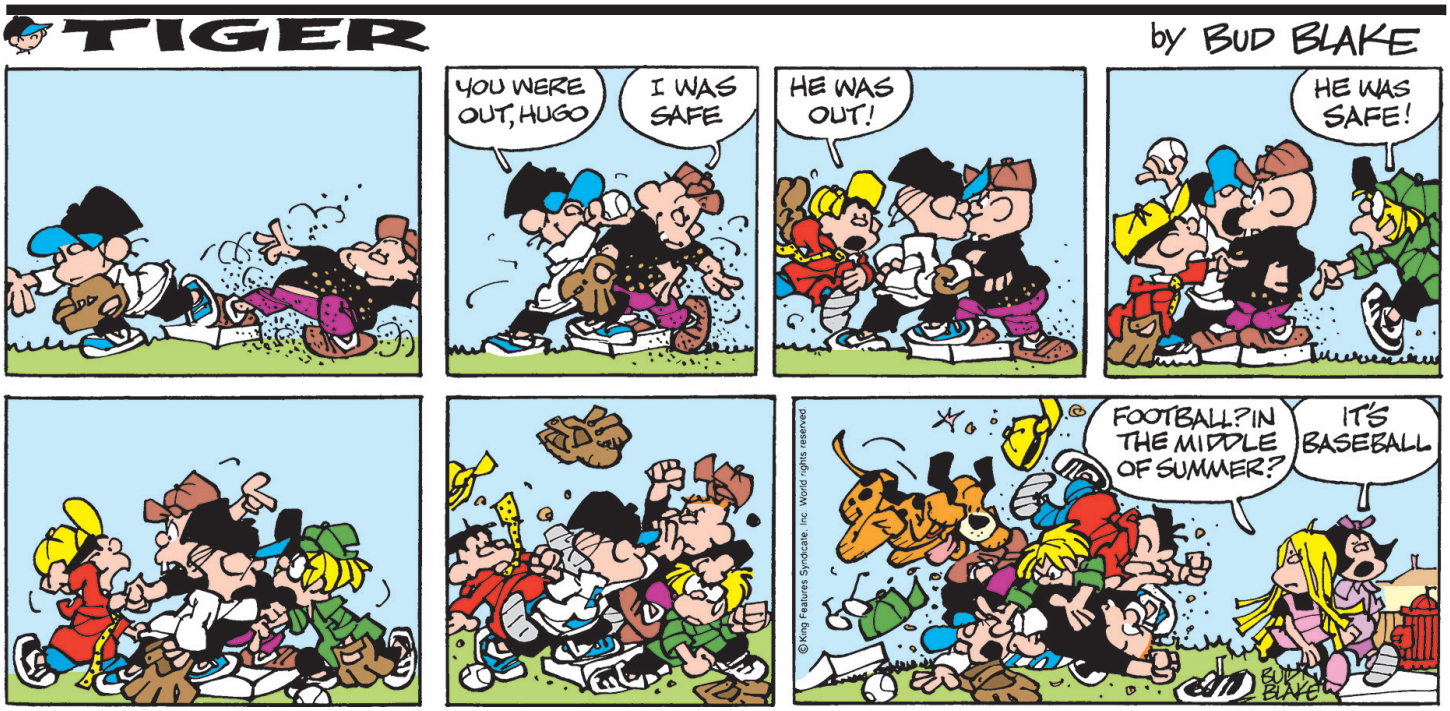

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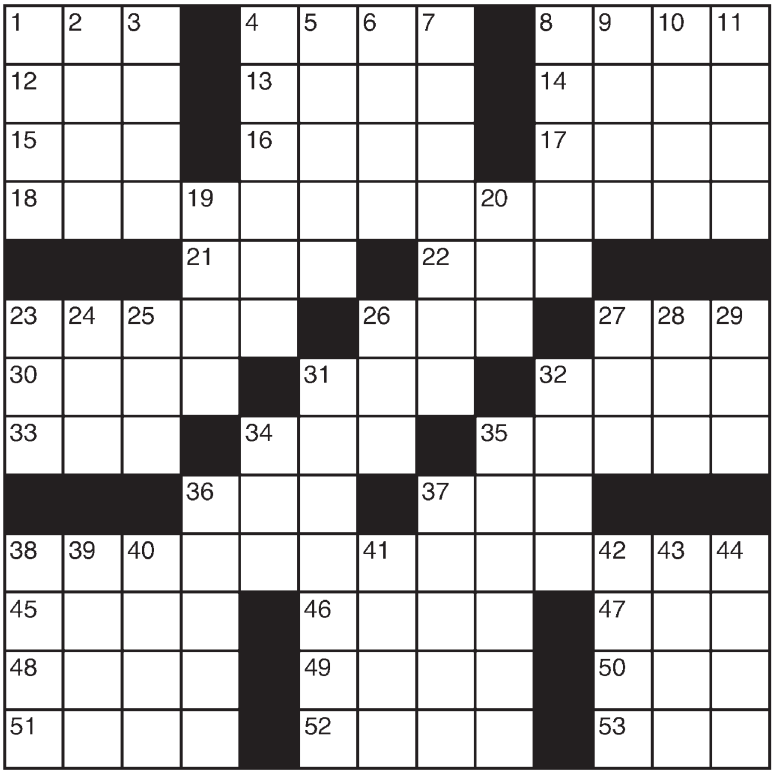
King Crossword



ACROSS
1 Sheepish "Hello!"
4 Out of control
8 Regretted
12 U.S. Navy vessel
13 — Crunch (breakfast cereal)
14 Singer Guthrie
15 Mel of baseball
16 Manitoba tribe
17 The same
18 Cold-hardy salad veggie
21 Whatever amount
22 Green shade
23 Kick out
26 Send electronically
27 Extinct bird
30 Sunrise direction
31 Future flower
32 Border on
33 Tipsy
34 A Bobbsey twin
35 Dish
36 Cat's coat
37 Three, in Rome
38 Young person, metaphorically
45 Mideast airline
46 Bern's river
47 Actress Longoria
48 Lighten
49 Wall St. debuts
50 Profit
51 Times Sq. force
52 Salamander
53 Hosp. areas

DOWN
1 Gust
2 Wine region
3 Envelope abbr.
4 Emphasize
5 Tie the knot
6 Autobahn auto
7 Skateboarder's protection
8 Indian yogurt dish
9 Language of Pakistan
10 Power co. supply
11 Stadium top
19 Diplomacy
20 — -Mex cuisine
23 Long, skinny fish
24 — alai
25 Proposal fig.
26 Gaiety
27 CEO's degree, often
28 Chic no more
29 Chowed down
31 Shopper's quest
32 Novelist Waugh
34 Mother Teresa, for one
35 Mass celebrant
36 Mailed a tax return
37 Toss
38 Beheld
39 Stage show
40 Grate
41 Superhero's garment
42 Vegas game
43 Always
44 D.C. baseball team

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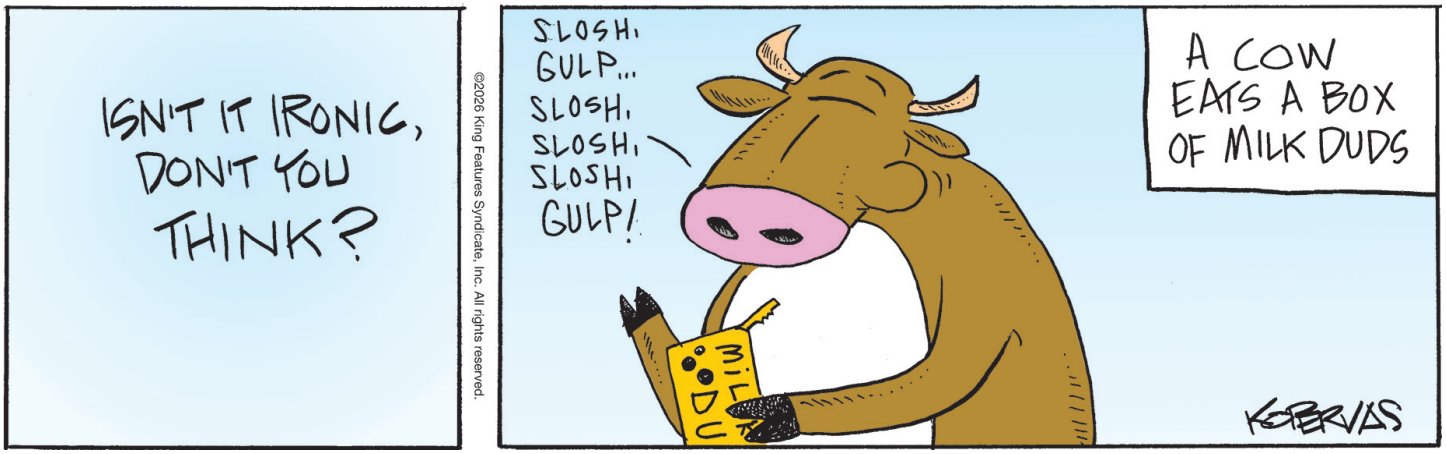
King Crossword
Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

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

Olive

Out on a Limb — by Gary Kopervas



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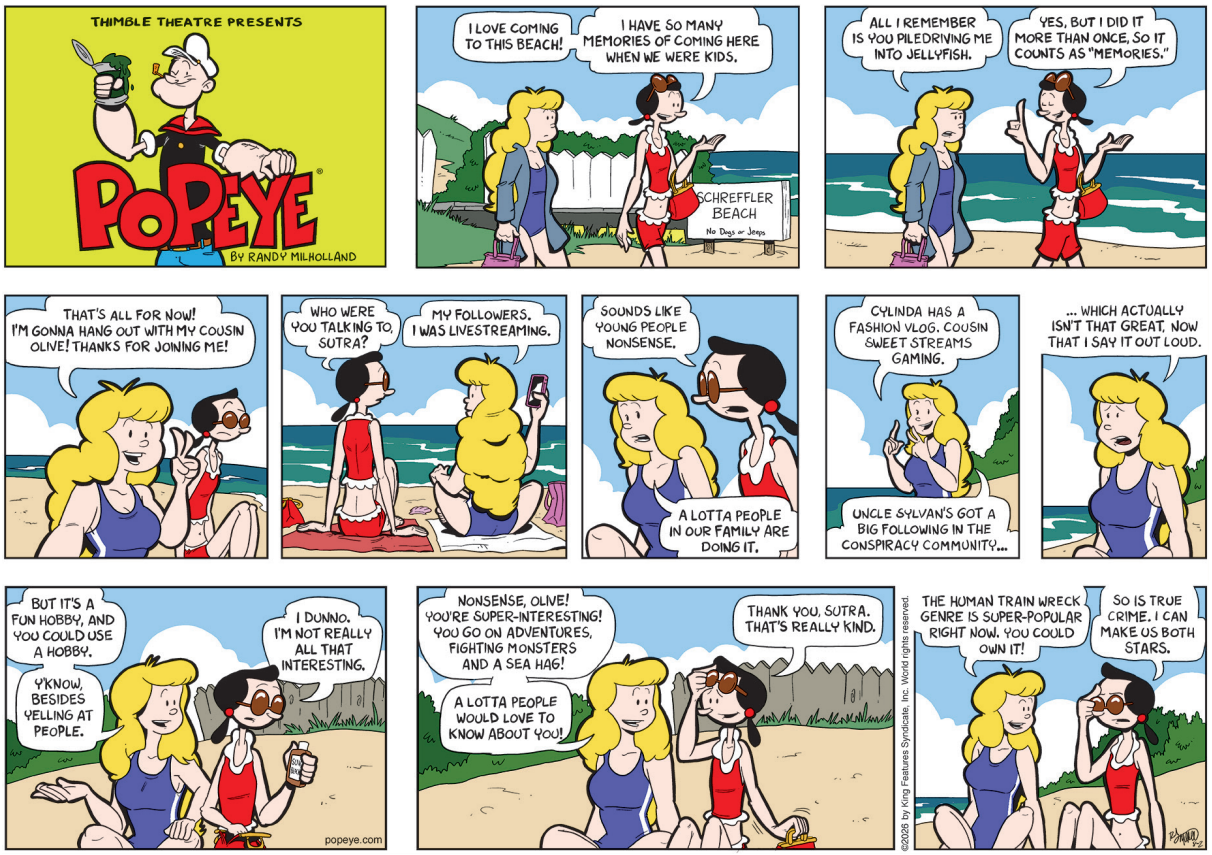

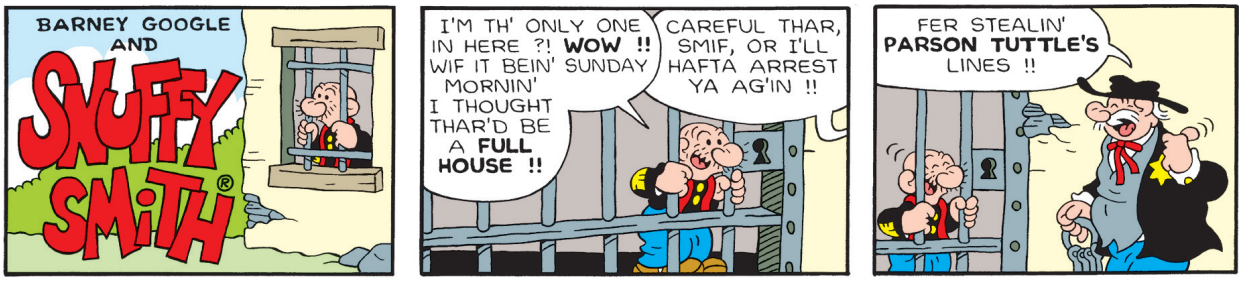

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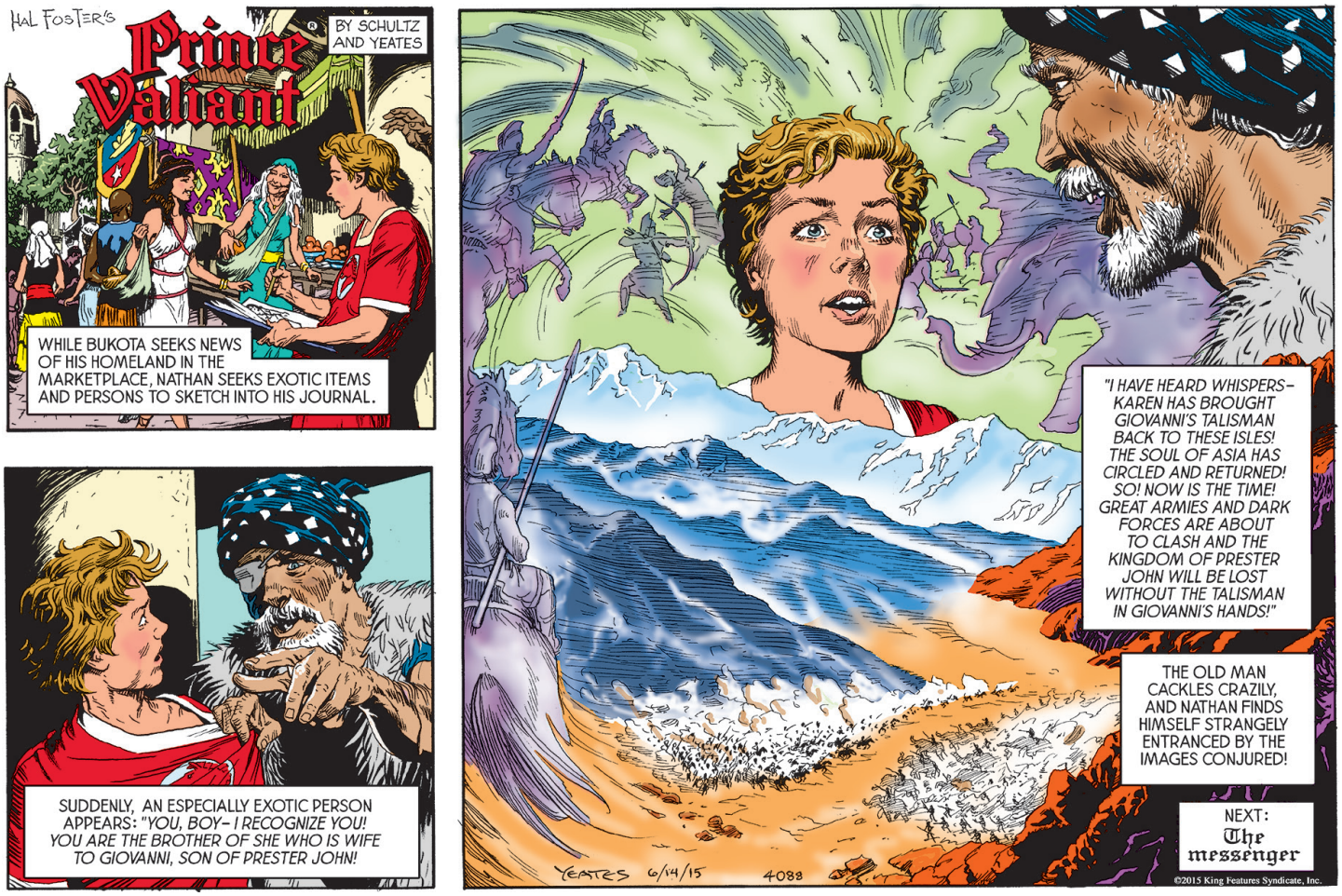

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

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SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Part D drug plan costs going up

Many of us avoid talking about politics, but now and then an issue comes along that needs to grab our attention.

The one we need to be concerned about now is the Medicare Part D subsidy that will expire at the end of the year and won't be offered in 2027.

It started as the Part D Premium Stabilization Demonstration and was intended for those with stand-alone Part D drug plans. The money, $3.6 billion this year alone, was given to the drug companies to protect consumers from price spikes in the premiums. It helped 25 million beneficiaries.

And now it's going away.

What does it mean for us? Likely it means higher monthly premiums for our Part D drug plans. The pundits who talk about these things think that our monthly drug plan premiums will only go up $10 per month. Others say it will be $20 per month, or maybe even lower than we're paying now. At this point they're only guessing.

Between now and the end of the year we need to learn how to study the various drug plans. Become familiar with the Medicare drug plan comparison tool at www.medicare.gov/plan-compare.

And, as much as I hate to even contemplate it, we need to figure out how to shave even more from our monthly expenditures. One place to start is with the cost of our drugs.

Look for lower costs for your prescriptions at WellRx (www.wellrx.com), GoodRx (www.goodrx.com), SingleCare (www.singlecare.com) and Community Cares (www.communitycaresrx.com).

Learn how to navigate Trump's drug website (trumprx.gov), although they don't have all drugs listed yet.

Talk to the pharmacist where you get your prescriptions. Many pharmacies use a generic plan to save customers money -- and the savings can be significant.

With a little preparation, we can be ready for whatever is coming.

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1. How many wins by knockout did LaMar Clark have on Dec. 1, 1958, in a boxing tournament in Bingham, Utah?

2. Name the ESPN college basketball announcer who exclaimed "Send it in, Jerome!" after the Pittsburgh Panthers' Jerome Lane shattered the backboard with a slam dunk in a 1988 game vs. Providence.

3. Pitcher Juan Marichal, the first foreign-born player inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, hailed from which country?

4. Johan Kriek won the 1981 Australian Open men's singles tennis title representing South Africa, then successfully defended his championship in December 1982 playing for which country?

5. Which longtime goaltender for the NHL's Washington Capitals, nicknamed "Olie the Goalie," won the Vezina Trophy in 2000?

6. In the 2003-04 NBA season, which team set the record for holding opponents to under 100 points for 38 consecutive games?

7. Who caught the famous "4th and 26" pass from Donovan McNabb in the fourth quarter of the Philadelphia Eagles' overtime win over the Green Bay Packers in a January 2004 NFC divisional playoff game?

Answers

1. Six.

2. Bill Raftery.

3. The Dominican Republic.

4. The United States.

5. Olaf Kolzig.

6. The Detroit Pistons.

7. Freddie Mitchell.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps

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Tracking the source of pet's food allergies

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My cat "Starlight" has terrible skin allergies, and I haven't been able to pinpoint the cause. She does not have fleas -- I give her a monthly topical treatment and keep the house clean. She's an indoor cat, so environmental allergies may not be a problem, according to my veterinarian. Could she have a food allergy? -- Blake W. in Syracuse, New York

DEAR BLAKE: A food allergy is a possibility, and you should loop in your veterinarian regarding your concerns. That way you can work together to try to eliminate potential problem foods.

Like humans, dogs and cats can have an allergy to many kinds of food. That includes carbohydrates, including wheat or soy, and proteins like beef, chicken, lamb, fish or dairy.

Ilana Halperin, DVM, of UC Davis Veterinary Medicine explains that in order to pinpoint the allergy, they have owners eliminate any protein or carbohydrate that their pet has eaten in the past. This often means feeding a specialized meal made with hydrolyzed protein, which the immune system is less likely to react to. Treats and flavored chews are also off the menu. This testing phase lasts about eight to 12 weeks.

It's very important to keep your pet on this strict diet for the entire period. Giving them a treat or table scraps could set off the immune response, and your pet's allergies will come roaring back.

The results of an elimination diet may be inconclusive. Pets, like humans, can be allergic to a combination of allergens -- food and dust mites (environmental), for example. Testing will take time as you and the vet work together to eliminate potential causes of your pet's allergies and zero in on the problem food or other allergen that is making them uncomfortable.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

* The Statue of Liberty's thumbnail is more than a foot long.

* During an attempt to use electrocution to kill the turkey meant for his Christmas dinner party, Benjamin Franklin accidentally shocked himself so badly that all of the blood temporarily drained out of one of his hands.

* Fred and Wilma Flintstone were the first married couple to be portrayed as sharing a bed on television.

* The Rainbow Group, a government-funded organization in Amsterdam, hires alcoholics to clean litter from city streets and includes beer as part of their payment.

* NASA defines an astronaut as someone who has flown 50 miles above sea level.

* A rare condition known as "exploding head syndrome" can cause people to hear loud bangs, crashes or explosive noises while drifting to sleep. Researchers believe the phenomenon is generally harmless, if alarming.

* The sun and moon appear to be the same size because the moon is 400 times smaller but also 400 times closer.

* Some scorpions rub their legs together to "sing" like crickets. However, while crickets aim to attract mates, scorpions make the sound to warn away predators or rivals.

* The longest recorded pickleball rally, held on Oct. 10, 2021, consisted of 16,046 shots and was launched by players Angelo and Ettore Rossetti to help increase awareness of children under age 5 who die of preventable causes.

* Some of the earliest universities in the world were Sumerian scribal schools, which were created soon after 3,500 B.C. and called eduba, which possibly meant "house of tablets."

* The first known reference to the word baseball was in a 1744 publication "A Little Pretty Pocket-Book," by children's publisher John Newberry.

***

Thought for the Day: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." -- Winston Churchill

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The Garden Bug

Planting in early fall

When the earth is still warm but the air is getting cooler, leafy greens (such as spinach, kale, lettuce and arugula) and root vegetables (like carrots, radishes and beets) thrive. Later on, when the temperatures drop below freezing, the greens will have a noticeably sweeter taste, and the root crops will improve in flavor and tenderness. Early-fall planting of trees, shrubs and other perennials helps their roots anchor firmly, access nutrients, and prepare for winter dormancy. – *Brenda Weaver*

Source: www.epicgardening.com

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by Freddy Groves

The VA OIG catches more scammers

Once again, the VA Office of Inspector General has nailed fraudsters who are determined to steal benefits and cash from the VA.

A pair of scammers, one of them incarcerated, cooked up a scheme to defraud seriously ill veterans. Specifically, the jailbird would call VA medical centers and impersonate VA employees to get info on veterans, including names and phone numbers. Then, with his scammer pal, they would call a veteran to get banking and credit card info for the alleged purpose of depositing Covid stimulus checks. Armed with that info, the jailbird was able to pull funds into his commissary and phone accounts. The pair was nailed on 26 counts of fraud and had harmed 60 veterans. They managed to pull the scam on over 30 VA medical clinics. The conspiracy to commit wire fraud and wire fraud are both good for 20 years in prison, with identity theft adding two more years each.

Then there was the non-veteran who applied for benefits and claimed he had both the Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. While there is no central location with a list of all those who've received a Purple Heart for VA employees to check, once an application is made for benefits, the facts would show up on a DD-214. This scam is getting the fraudster four years in prison.

Then there was the Department of Homeland Security employee who faked an application to get a VA-backed mortgage. This was a veteran who should have known better. The fake documents said he had a 100% disability rating and received monthly disability benefits. Both lies. There was no disability rating and no monthly benefit. Not knowing the docs were faked, the lender issued a mortgage for $478,000 with the VA giving loan guarantee backing. This scheme could be good for 30 years in prison.

I hate to think of the money that would be lost and the number of veterans defrauded if we didn't have the VA OIG to investigate these things.

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Wishing Well®

8	3	4	5	2	4	2	7	8	7	3	4	3
S	N	Y	B	P	O	R	G	W	O	O	U	M
7	6	4	5	6	2	5	6	4	6	7	5	4
O	D	G	E	E	O	A	C	A	I	D	G	I
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G	O	N	R	J	E	S	E	A	I	S	R	P
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E	S	E	U	P	R	O	I	D	E	T	S	R
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A	O	B	N	L	T	A	C	V	R	D	R	E
5	4	6	8	6	4	6	8	6	8	6	8	3
E	A	E	T	M	L	A	O	D	R	E	Y	S

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

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1. U.S. STATES: Which two states do not observe Daylight Saving Time?
2. ANATOMY: How many valves does the human heart have?
3. MATH: What comes after a trillion?
4. GEOGRAPHY: What is the longest river in Europe?
5. TELEVISION: What is the name of the hospital in the sitcom "Scrubs"?
6. HISTORY: Which empire did Genghis Khan rule?
7. LITERATURE: Which children's book features a character called Augustus Gloop?
8. ART: Who painted the famous work titled "Guernica"?
9. MOVIES: In which film does Sidney Poitier's character say, "They call me Mr. Tibbs"?
10. ASTRONOMY: What is the smallest planet in our solar system?

Answers

1. Arizona and Hawaii.
2. Four.
3. Quadrillion.
4. The Volga River.
5. Sacred Heart Hospital.
6. The Mongol Empire.
7. "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory."
8. Pablo Picasso.
9. "In the Heat of the Night."
10. Mercury.

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South Dakota Governor

Larry Rhoden

South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

The Rumble of Freedom

Hear that rumble? It's been growing in pitch for a couple weeks now. Motorcycles are weaving their way across South Dakota from all directions, and they're all heading to the same place: Sturgis!

The 86th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is kicking off, and visitors are coming to South Dakota by literally the hundreds of thousands. On their way they'll stop in our small towns, eat in our restaurants, fill up at our gas stations, and they'll meet countless smiling South Dakotans thanking them for being here and encouraging them to come back next year.

That's what I love most about the Sturgis Rally. Not the bikes and the roaring engines – though those sure are cool. Not the leather – beef is my preferred cow byproduct. Not even the concerts and the celebrations – those are a little over the top for my rancher sensibilities. I appreciate how South Dakotans give their all to welcome these visitors and make them feel at home.

I've been going to the Sturgis Rally for years, and I always find myself bonding with folks over one thing: freedom. Bikers come to Sturgis to get away from their everyday lives, to escape the mundane, and to be free. And that's one way that bikers and ranchers are a lot alike – we both treasure our freedoms jealously.

In South Dakota, our people make our freedoms possible. South Dakotans are a cut above because they don't look to someone else to solve their problems – and they certainly don't look to the government. They get their hands dirty, get to work, and expect the government to defend their freedom to do so. And that's how I lead every day.

Our previous Governor used to say, "South Dakotans are happy. They're happy because they're free." And that happiness beams off their faces to welcome visitors, including bikers making their way to the Rally.

In South Dakota, the tourism industry is our second biggest economic engine, though I'll never miss an opportunity to brag that agriculture is seven times bigger! But tourism is no slouch. Last year, nearly 15 million visitors traveled to and within South Dakota. They spent over $5 billion, and that money goes to the pockets of South Dakota families and small businesses. In fact, because of those expenditures (and the taxes that they pay), the average South Dakota family saves over $1,100 a year in taxes!

And tourism isn't just keeping taxes lower for all South Dakotans – it's directly responsible for putting food on the table for many South Dakota families. Tourism supports 59,000 jobs across the state.

To keep South Dakota Open for Opportunity, we need to keep our tourism industry strong. And that means we must continue to be a state that is welcoming to our visitors. So, smile at the bikers when you pass them in the gas station parking lot. Wave at them when you pass them on some of our two-lane rural highways. Keep in mind that many visitors are not here for the first time – they're coming back to South Dakota because they've fallen in love with our state, just like you have.

People come to South Dakota for our landscapes, our history, and our way of life. But they also come here because they feel something different. They feel the freedom, the authenticity, and the pride we have in our state. And if we do our jobs well, they'll take that spirit of freedom home with them. Then they'll come back next year with more friends in tow, making the rumble of freedom just a little louder.

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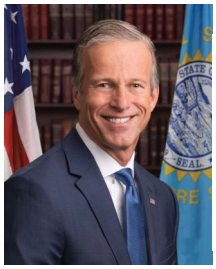

JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

Working for Small-Town South Dakota

I was recently back in Murdo for my high school reunion, which coincided with the town's 120th birthday. Visiting my hometown always brings back fond memories of growing up in Murdo and the sense of community, belonging, and responsibility that it instilled in me.

I'll always be the son of a small town in South Dakota, and the values I learned in Murdo help to guide my work in Washington. I think about what regulations and other mandates will do to businesses like the Star Family Restaurant, where I got my start. I think about people living paycheck-to-paycheck, or harvest-to-harvest, and work to make sure government doesn't stand in their way and take all the extra money in their budget.

It was small-town South Dakota that I had in mind last year when Republicans were working on the landmark Working Families Tax Cuts. Without action from Congress, a typical South Dakota family would have seen a $2,500 tax hike this year. Thanks to the Working Families Tax Cuts, that tax hike didn't come. More than that, Republicans delivered permanent tax relief, including raising the child tax credit and standard deduction, and we provided additional tax cuts on top of that. This landmark bill included no tax on tips and overtime and a new $6,000 senior deduction. All told, 97 percent of American taxpayers saw a tax cut this year, collectively saving $82 billion on their individual tax returns they would otherwise have sent to the IRS.

There was also good news in this bill for South Dakota's Main Street businesses as well as the farmers and ranchers who are the lifeblood of our state. The 199A small business deduction and immediate expensing for new equipment are now permanent features of the tax code. These pro-growth tax policies free up cash so that small businesses, farms, and ranches can invest in their operations, whether hiring another employee or purchasing a new piece of equipment.

The Working Families Tax Cuts also protects a lot more family farms, ranches, and businesses from the death tax. It's long been a priority of mine to lift this burden off of farmers, ranchers, and family businessowners, and I'm proud that these hardworking South Dakotans can breathe a sigh of relief because the Working Families Tax Cuts doubled the exemption threshold for the death tax. Now these folks can spend more time running their operation rather than worrying about the death tax and the estate planning that comes with it.

I'm a proud product of a small town, and I carry my Murdo values with me every day in the U.S. Senate. Whether it's tax policy, agriculture policy, regulations, or anything else, small-town South Dakota is on my mind every day as I represent our state.

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Weekly Round[s] Up
July 27 – August 2, 2026

Welcome back to the Weekly Round[s] Up. Big news from the Senate this past week: we confirmed Jay Clayton to serve as the next Director of National Intelligence. I first met Jay in my role on the Banking committee when he was going through his confirmation to serve as SEC chairman. He is well-qualified for this position, and I look forward to working with him in this new role. We also took a procedural vote on our fifth "en bloc" batch of 74 nominees. With the passage of this batch, the Senate will have confirmed 95% of civilian nominations reported out of committee. More on this and the rest of my week in the Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota Groups I Visited With: This past week I sat down with the DC summer interns from Representative Dusty Johnson's office and Senator John Thune's office. I enjoyed hearing about all of their unique experiences this summer working on Capitol Hill. They all have bright futures ahead of them and I thank them for all of their hard work serving the people of South Dakota.

Over the weekend, I visited Sturgis for the Annual Raising of the Flags ceremony. We placed 800 American flags in Freedom Field at the Buffalo Chip to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend our country. This event was an opportunity to pause and reflect on the lives and sacrifice of the men and women who never made it home. I attended 31 funerals for South Dakota servicemembers while I was serving as governor. I'll never forget how different the American flag looks when it's draped over a fallen hero. I appreciate everyone coming together this past weekend to remember freedom isn't free. A special thanks to Rod Woodruff and his team for putting this together.

Met with South Dakotans From: Aberdeen, Brookings, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Sturgis and Vermillion.

Other Meetings: Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian President; Wayne Allan, Chief Strategic Sourcing & Procurement Officer for Advanced Semiconductor Materials Lithography (ASML); David Pemberton, CISA's Region 8 Director; Bogdan Klich, Head of Mission in the Embassy of the Republic of Poland; Americans for Prosperity Leadership; Dr. Eric Green, Chief Medical Officer at Illumina; Neel Kashkari, President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis; and Hal Duncan, Nominee to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

On Wednesday morning, I joined my colleagues for our weekly Senate Prayer Breakfast where Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois shared his testimony. I also stayed for the National Prayer Breakfast Cabinet Council meeting.

Later that day, I had the opportunity to speak to interns from across Capitol Hill as part of our summer lecture series. They asked many thoughtful questions about a wide range of topics from my time working in insurance, to legislation I am currently working on. Appreciate all they do. We can't do our work without them!

I participated in two other speaking events this past week including one at the American Council for Capital Formation's Policy Forum and the other at the Milken Institute Business Dialogue Event.

Hearings: I attended one hearing this past week with the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, where I spoke with Scott Cameron, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Water and Science at the Department of the Interior about South Dakota water issues. Click here to watch.

Briefings: I attended a classified briefing hosted by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and other military leaders from the Department of War.

Votes Taken: I voted 8 times this past week. As I mentioned, we confirmed Jay Clayton to be Director of National Intelligence and voted to advance our fifth en bloc batch of 74 nominees.

I also voted in favor of the Supporting Early-childhood Educators' Deductions (SEED) Act, which passed the Senate 84 to 12. This bipartisan piece of legislation extends a tax break to early childhood educators.

Additionally, I voted against a resolution to remove United States Armed Forces from Iran and against overturning a rule designed to make child care more affordable and accessible for low-income families.

Steps Taken: 53,972 steps or 26.08 miles

My Staff in South Dakota Visited: Aberdeen, Alexandria, Box Elder, Flandreau, Mission, Rosebud and Plankinton.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries
PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483
1-352-216-3025

If I Were A Millionaire

I have never had an ambition to become a millionaire. I just never thought about it, and it never crossed my mind or my wallet.

I've got many calls from these "Fake Publishing Houses" telling me I won a hundred million dollars, and all I have to do is pay a $2500 processing fee, and it's all mine. I used to tell them to take the fee out of my winnings, and we'd both be winners. Of course, how can you take something out of something that doesn't exist?

There was a friend who won a million dollars. I lost track of him for a while, and then two years later I found out he was bankrupt. I don't know what his story was, but evidently he didn't know how to handle $1 million.

When my friend asked me what I would do if I had a million dollars, I really didn't know what to say. Later, I realized that dreaming about wealth is fun, but it's also hilarious how our minds invent these grand ideas that never quite match real life.

I certainly wouldn't buy a new truck, or get a new house, or buy any fancy clothing. None of that stuff matters to me, but I did have an idea that bounced around in my head.

If I were a millionaire, I would give The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage enough money every week to do her thrift store hopping. She hops from one thrift store to another and then to another. She can spend the whole day hopping from thrift store to thrift store, especially with her daughters. They make a wonderful team when it comes to thrift stores. There isn't a thrift store within a 100-mile radius that does not know The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage by name.

Now, while she is hopping from thrift store to thrift store, I would go and treat myself to a box of Apple Fritters. After all, if The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage isn't home, then she can't see me eating an Apple Fritter and I don't get into trouble. Oh, what a fun time that would be. And if I were a millionaire, that's one thing I would do.

As I was thinking about this on my lazy chair with a nice hot cup of coffee The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage happened to walk by. She noticed I was smiling a lot more than I usually smile.

"So," she said, "what's making you smile so much this afternoon?"

I didn't notice her come in, so I was a little surprised at this question. I just looked at her and said, "Oh, my dear, I was just thinking about a joke."

"Yeah, and what joke were you thinking about?"

Now I was backed into a corner. I thought for a moment and then replied, "I was thinking about the joke, why was six afraid of seven? Because seven eight nine."

Looking at me and shaking her head, she said, "Why do you tell yourself that joke 100 times a day and still laugh? We both know you weren't thinking of that joke."

I looked at her and finally said, "I just was thinking of what I would do if I was a millionaire."

She sat down on the couch, looking at me, and said, "And what would you do if you were a millionaire?"

Now I was again backed into a corner.

With some hesitation, I said, "Well, the first thing I would do is to give you a large weekly allowance so you and the daughters could go hopping all of the thrift stores in the county." Then I giggled.

"That sounds like a good idea," she said with a broad smile on her face. "But, what would you be doing while I'm out hopping the thrift stores?"

Oh boy. I didn't think this through far enough, I guess. If I tell her what really was on my mind, I could be in a little bit of trouble. To try to think up an alternative is very risky business.

Not able to say anything right away The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said, "You would not be thinking of getting Apple Fritters while I'm away?"

"I never thought of that," I said very thoughtfully, "but that sounds like a very good idea." And then I laughed at her.

"Let me understand this," she said, "if you were a millionaire you would spend a large portion of your money on me hopping thrift stores and then on you buying Apple Fritters?"

My smile quickly evaporated from my face.

Even if I were a millionaire, I could never get away with anything with The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

I have everything I want right now except for a box of Apple Fritters. So, if I were a millionaire, I would enjoy spending money in that direction. I don't understand why she can have what she wants, but I, on the other side of the marriage vow, can't have what I want?

In further thinking, I was reminded of what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 5:10, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity."

No matter how much money I might have I will never be satisfied. My satisfaction is rooted in my relationship with Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

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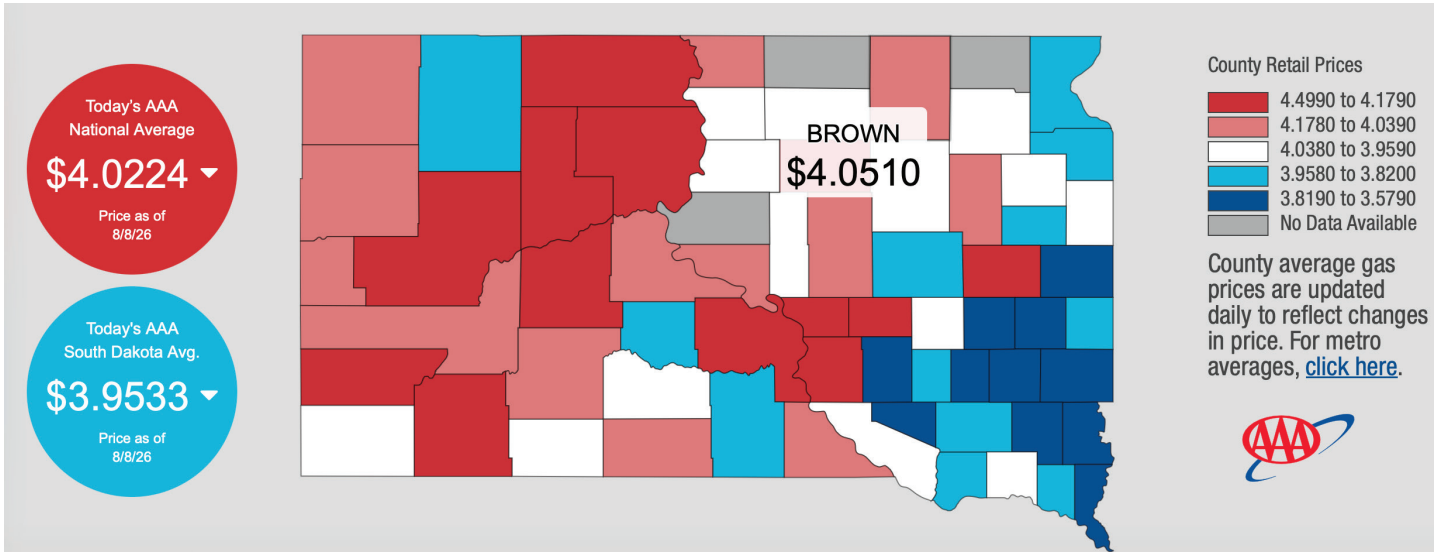
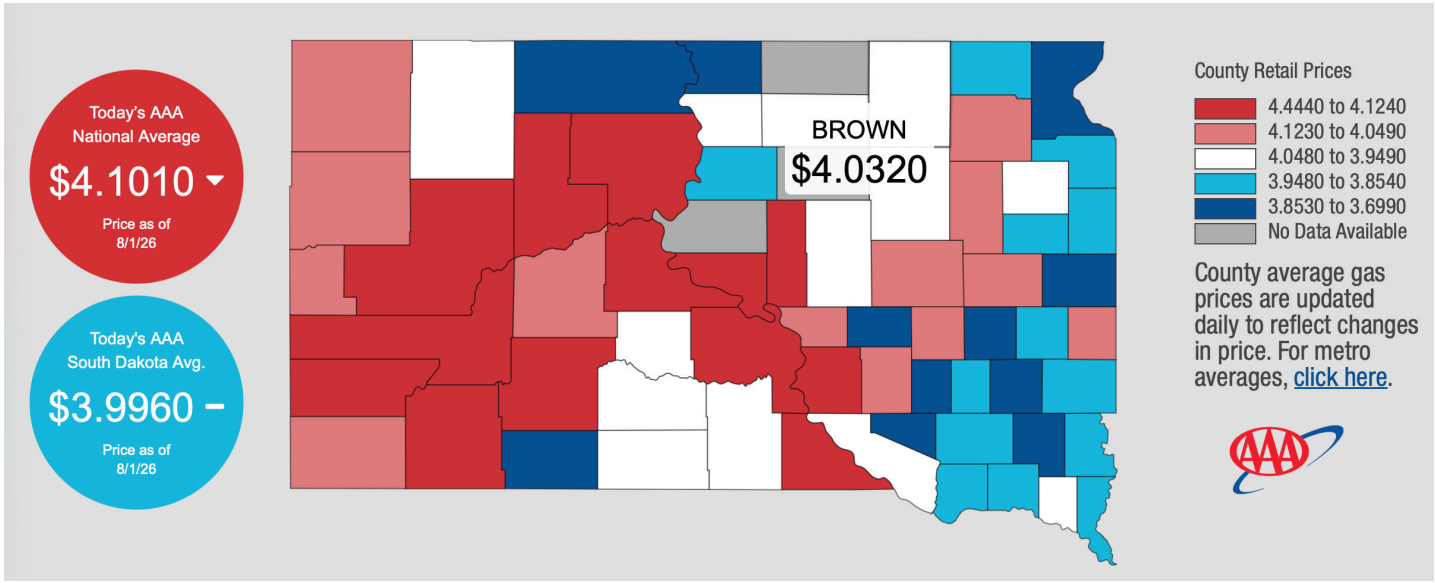
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	$3.9533	$4.1568	$4.6587	$4.8951
Yesterday Avg.	$3.9762	$4.1574	$4.6770	$4.9216
Week Ago Avg.	$3.9956	$4.2072	$4.7025	$4.8906
Month Ago Avg.	$3.6564	$3.8787	$4.3525	$4.1818
Year Ago Avg.	$3.0122	$3.1997	$3.6692	$3.3887

This Week



Last Week



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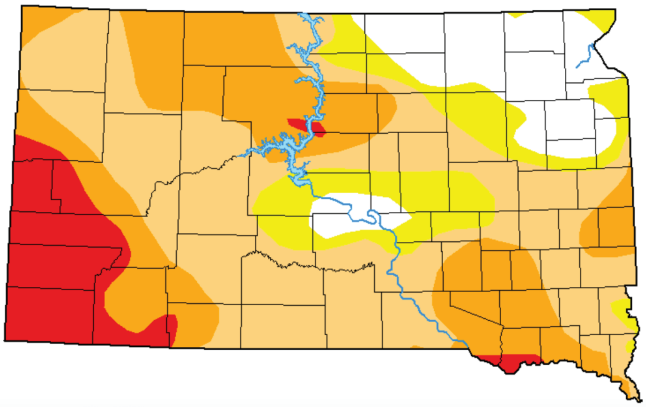
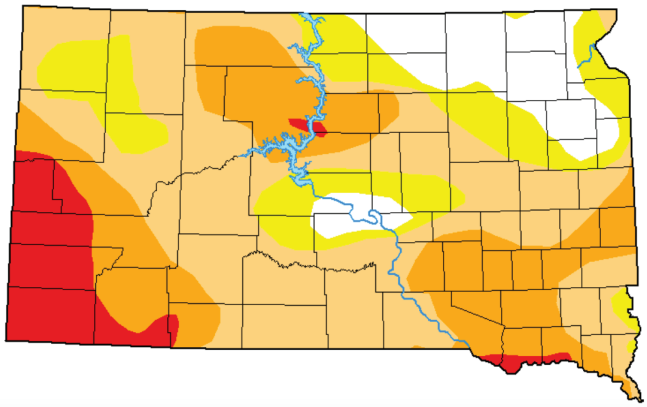
Drought Classification

None
D0 (Abnormally Dry)
D1 (Moderate Drought)
D2 (Severe Drought)
D3 (Extreme Drought)
D4 (Exceptional Drought)
No Data

Drought Monitor



August 4



July 28

Conditions varied significantly across the High Plains Region last week. Heavy rains of 2 to 5 inches with isolated higher amounts fell on northeastern South Dakota, a large part of northern and eastern Nebraska, and northeastern Kansas. Moderate to heavy amounts were observed elsewhere across the eastern and central sections of the Dakotas and Nebraska, southern and north-central and east-central Kansas, southeastern and the higher elevations farther west in Colorado, and patches of central and northern Wyoming and the western Dakotas. In the some of the drier parts of the region across North Dakota, central and western South Dakota, and western Nebraska, unusually hot weather accompanied the relatively low rainfall amounts. For the last 30 days, these locations generally averaged 4 to 8 deg F above normal, with a few spots in the western Dakotas and adjacent parts of Wyoming and Nebraska reporting 30-day average temperatures 8 to 10 deg F above normal. This included a few spells of extreme heat with high temperatures over 100 deg F. At the same time, relative humidity has been unusually low. Many areas across eastern Wyoming, western South Dakota, and adjacent Nebraska reported 4-week relative humidity averaging among the driest 10 percent of historic observations for the time period, and a few isolated spots were as dry as the lower 2 percent of historical observations. Less remarkable but still consistently below-normal relative humidity has prevailed over most of the region from the central Dakotas and Nebraska westward, along with most of Colorado. The dichotomy of conditions between eastern and western reaches of the Region is reflected in the changes introduced in the Drought Monitor this week. Most of North Dakota, the western half of South Dakota, and parts of northeastern Wyoming, western Nebraska, and northeastern Colorado saw conditions deteriorate, as did southern Kansas adjacent to Oklahoma. Meanwhile, eastern South Dakota, central through eastern Nebraska, southeastern Colorado, and western Wyoming notched sizeable areas of improvement. A new patch the worst drought classification (D4) was brought into northwestern Nebraska and another introduced in part of the Denver Metro Area. Existing areas of D4 remained intact in the Nebraska Panhandle, east-central Colorado, south-central and interior western Colorado. A majority of Wyoming and Colorado remain entrenched in D3, as do western reaches of Nebraska and South Dakota along with a few scattered locales farther south and east. In contrast, dryness has been entirely removed from sizeable parts of southeastern Nebraska, eastern Kansas, and the east-central Dakotas.

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EARTHTALK

Innovative new technologies in the way we make and maintain roads promise greener travel all around. Credit: Pexels.com.

Dear EarthTalk: What's new in terms of making the construction and maintenance of roads and highways more efficient and greener?

-- Wendy Streeter, Exeter, NH

Highways are changing as engineers look for ways to make roads last longer while reducing pollution. Instead of relying only on carbon-heavy paving methods and fixing potholes after they appear, many road agencies are using recycled materials, smarter technology, and artificial intelligence (AI). These new ideas help roads better handle extreme weather while cutting waste and lowering construction costs.

One of the biggest changes is the use of recycled materials. TechniSoil Industrial has developed its "Neo" paving system, which mixes recycled plastic into road construction. The company says the process can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 90% while using about 150,000 recycled plastic water bottles for every lane mile of roadway. Rather than sending plastic to landfills, it becomes part of a stronger road surface.

Old tires are also finding a new purpose. Along Interstate 85 in Georgia, The Ray serves as an 18-mile "living laboratory" where new transportation technologies are tested, including Rubber Modified Asphalt (RMA), which uses crumb rubber made from discarded tires. Texas Materials has also created its Super Sand Mix, replacing more than 42% of traditional asphalt binder with recycled tires and roofing shingles. These roads are more resistant to cracking, provide better traction, and even reduce traffic noise. As Allie Kelly, Executive Director of The Ray, explained in CNN's report on the project, "We see waste as a resource."

Scientists are also improving the pavement itself. Some new asphalt contains tiny capsules filled with bio-based oils that automatically seal small cracks before they grow. Other roads use embedded steel fibers that can be heated with magnetic induction to extend pavement life up to three times longer. Porous asphalt and permeable concrete allow as much as 80% of rainwater to pass through the surface, reducing flooding, preventing hydroplaning, and helping replenish groundwater.

Technology is making road maintenance smarter as well. Intelligent Compaction rollers use GPS and onboard sensors to ensure pavement reaches the correct density during construction. Embedded sensors continue monitoring concrete long after it is poured, while AI-powered cameras and automated repair machines can detect and fix small cracks before they become costly potholes. New temperature-sensitive paint and glow-in-the-dark lane markings can also improve driver safety during icy conditions.

Looking toward the future, government agencies are also beginning to integrate renewable energy directly into the transportation grid. Solar panels and piezoelectric energy harvesters are being installed along highway shoulders and beneath surfaces to capture clean electricity from passing vehicular traffic and sunlight. As Sean Weaver, founder and CEO of TechniSoil Industrial, noted when discussing modern eco-friendly paving methods, "I'm captivated by the idea that roads are one of the first downstream applications for recycled plastic that is bigger than the size of the plastic problem itself."

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT
https://southdakotasearchlight.com

COMMENTARY

Parties repeat mistakes as Republicans set elections back and Democrats fail to find a key candidate

by Dana Hess

Maybe politics in South Dakota is cyclical. Or maybe the state's political parties just keep making the same mistakes. Either way, both parties have taken actions, or inactions, that eerily resemble their past actions.

At their state convention in June, Republicans once again chose to jettison their incumbent secretary of state. This time, delegates at the convention were in favor of someone who would like us all to use polling booths as time machines so we can go back to an age when ballots were counted by hand.

At the 2022 convention, Monae Johnson, an election integrity candidate, upset incumbent Steve Barnett. She did this by claiming he was putting a dangerous emphasis on technology by pushing for online voting and online voter registration. This year, Johnson was cast aside as convention delegates selected Heather Baxter, a legislator, as their nominee.

This year Johnson told convention delegates: "I trust the county auditors and I fully support the use of secure, tested ballot tabulators." Big mistake.

Baxter's candidacy was based on a platform that calls for hand-counting ballots. She got 59% of the vote in the convention hall. Maybe she churns her own butter, too, and just likes to do things the old-fashioned way. Whatever the reason, she's promising to take South Dakota elections back in time for no good reason.

When she was running for office the first time, Johnson would never give a straight answer about whether Joe Biden won the presidency in 2020. However, she's right about the reliability of tabulating machines. They work fine and they're more accurate than hand counting.

Republicans may be back in the same position in four years after Baxter finds out what Johnson already knows: there's a difference between being an agitator for change and an elected official. Johnson's original backers are upset that she didn't do more to instill integrity in South Dakota elections. The lesson here is that our elections already have plenty of integrity and they certainly don't need to be slowed down to the pace of hand counting.

Democrats made some news at their convention, too. Only it's not who they nominated but who they didn't nominate. It seems that the always candidate-starved Democratic Party won't be running a candidate for attorney general. Again. They're leaving a blank spot on the ballot next to the words attorney general for the second election in a row and for the fifth time in the last eight elections.

The Republican candidate will be Lance Russell, a former legislator and the state's attorney for Fall River and Oglala Lakota counties. It took two ballots for Russell to defeat two other candidates seeking the nomination for attorney general.

Somehow Republicans could come up with three people who wanted to be attorney general. For Democrats, the cupboard was bare, even though there's no easier way to get on the general election ballot than running as a Democrat. Maybe there are no Democratic lawyers in the state with experience in law enforcement or as prosecutors. But a lack of experience didn't keep Republicans from nominating Jason Ravnsborg eight years ago.

Maybe there aren't any Democratic lawyers willing to take one for the team. It would seem to be worth the effort, though, as being in the office boosted Bill Janklow to the governor's office and will serve as a launching pad for Marty Jackley's likely election to the U.S. House of Representatives.

This is supposed to be a good year for Democrats in November. Some people are predicting a blue wave. In South Dakota, it's more likely to be a blue trickle.

Yet, it's hard to understand why there isn't a Democratic candidate for attorney general. It's true that the candidate would be running against odds that heavily favor the Republican candidate. But the payoff could be huge in the event of an upset.

A Democratic attorney general in heavily red South Dakota would stand out nationally. If the presidential pendulum swings back to Democrats in two years, a Democratic attorney general from South Dakota could be in line for a place on the federal bench or an appointment as U.S. attorney. Maybe Democratic lawyers in this state don't dream big enough.

Russell, the Republican candidate, may have all the qualifications to serve as attorney general. Qualified or not, the fact is that he'll slide into the attorney general's office not because voters of the state chose him but because he was the most popular candidate at a convention of 700 delegates.

Something needs to change. An office as important as attorney general shouldn't be left to the whims of a convention full of Luddites who prefer the prospect of hand-counting ballots. Democrats need to fulfill their obligation to find candidates up and down the ballot so that voters have a debate on the issues and a choice at the polls. If something doesn't change, this cycle of mistakes is bound to continue.

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

US Senate leaves town for recess after passing stopgap spending bill, blocking photo ID for voting

BY SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate adjourned for its summer recess early Saturday after approving a stopgap spending bill but declining to advance legislation that would require photo ID for voting.

In a rare overnight session that began on Friday, senators trudged through a slew of measures, confirmed President Donald Trump's nomination of Todd Blanche as attorney general and then departed the nation's capital for the coveted August recess. The chamber is not expected to return to regular session until after Labor Day.

The Senate passed, 86-11, a major effort first proposed by the late GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina that would impose sanctions on Russian President Vladimir Putin, along with the country's oligarchs and military leaders.

A bipartisan education bill — championed by GOP Sen. Susan Collins of Maine and Democratic Sen. Michael Bennet of Colorado — served as the vehicle for the Russia sanctions package.

Collins' and Bennet's bill would ensure that "early childhood educators can claim the same federal tax credit for out-of-pocket classroom supply purchases that is currently available to K-12 teachers," per a press release.

Averting a shutdown

The Senate also passed a bipartisan measure on a 90-6 vote that would keep the federal government funded through Dec. 11. The House has passed a different version so the two would have to be reconciled.

Earlier in the day, senators had advanced the legislation, known as a continuing resolution, toward a final vote on another strongly bipartisan vote of 91-6.

Senators did not vote on a proposed blueprint that would unlock the complex budget reconciliation process and allow Republicans to move ahead on their third party-line bill.

Attorney general vote

The upper chamber also confirmed Blanche, the acting attorney general, to be the next U.S. attorney general.

Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana marked the determinative vote amid GOP opposition from Collins and Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska over Blanche's bid, as well as the absence of Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell

of Kentucky, who's recovering from a health issue.

The Senate confirmed a batch of nominees earlier Friday, including Cameron Hamilton to serve as the next administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, 51-47.

Voting and photo ID

The Senate failed to advance on a 52-46 vote a bill that would require a photo ID to vote in an election to federal office.

Related to the separate SAVE America Act, it was sponsored by Republican Sen. Jon Husted of Ohio. Sixty votes were required to move ahead on the measure, which was opposed by all Democrats voting.

Democrats have said in the past such a requirement would make it more difficult for all Americans to vote.

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, a proponent of photo ID and the SAVE America Act who at one point had said he would hold up adjournment to obtain action, vowed afterward to continue pushing for it. "This fight's not over. We're just getting started," he said.

Trump is an intense proponent of the SAVE America Act and urged the Senate to stay in town to pass it though Republican leaders have said repeatedly there are not 60 votes to do so. The SAVE America Act would require voters to show proof of citizenship when they register and a photo ID when they vote. Noncitizens are already barred from voting in state, federal and almost all local elections.

College sports

The Senate did not take a procedural vote before leaving town on a sweeping bipartisan bill that would set national standards for college athletes' compensation.

GOP Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington state — the top members of the Senate Commerce panel, which has jurisdiction over the matter — introduced the bill, with GOP Sen. Eric Schmitt of Missouri and Democratic Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware as original co-sponsors.

The bill underwent several changes after it was passed by the Commerce panel in June, and was able to ultimately garner the support of the formidable Big Ten and Southeastern conferences.

But the Congressional Black Caucus opposed the legislation in a statement earlier this week, noting that "at the very moment that Black political representation is under attack across the country, we will not be complicit in efforts to further exclude the interests of Black people by advancing legislation that will determine the economic future of Black athletes, their families, and their communities without their meaningful participation and engagement."

President Donald Trump, who's thrown his support behind the measure, urged the Senate earlier Friday evening to stay in town until the bill passes.

"Stop grandstanding, and try getting this done," he wrote in a social media post.

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

Todd Blanche confirmed by the US Senate as attorney general; Collins, Murkowski vote no

BY JACOB FISCHLER

WASHINGTON — After a lengthy battle over the status of President Donald Trump's nearly $1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" fund, Todd Blanche was confirmed as attorney general by the U.S. Senate early Saturday.

Blanche, the acting attorney general, won approval to take the role permanently after GOP Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana said he would back him, a turning point for Blanche's nomination push. The vote at about 4:30 a.m. Eastern was 50-49, with Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., absent due to health issues.

Republican Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine joined all Democrats in opposing the confirmation of Blanche, Trump's personal defense attorney before joining the government at the start of Trump's second term.

"I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence President Trump has placed in me to lead the Depart-

ment of Justice as our great nation's 88th Attorney General. I am grateful to the Senate for staying late to complete this process. To the dedicated public servants of the Department of Justice, thank you for your work each day to uphold the law and keep our country safe," Blanche said in a statement on social media following the vote. "God bless America."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., blasted Blanche's confirmation.

"Senate Republicans have handed Trump an excuse on a silver platter to keep up his pervasive, breath-taking corruption," he said in a statement. "If you want to wipe out corruption, you can't have the president's personal attorney as the Attorney General. You don't need a PhD in political science to know that.

"Todd Blanche has no intention of stopping Trump's corruption. He advanced his career enabling it. Every senator who voted to confirm him has now branded themselves as an enabler, too."

The Senate adjourned for its summer recess about an hour after the vote and will not return to regular session until Sept. 14.

Cassidy explanation

Cassidy, who has long clashed with Trump, said in a Friday floor speech his vote was not a reflection of that relationship, but about the importance of having a Senate-confirmed attorney general who had the backing of U.S. attorneys in Louisiana and former Attorney General Bill Barr.

"Mr. Blanche is not perfect, and he will tell you this, but the choice is not between perfection and Mr. Blanche," he said. "It is between Mr. Blanche and another acting attorney general who may not run the department effectively under President Trump… All considered, I will vote for Mr. Blanche."

Cassidy held the determinative vote on Blanche following Murkowski's announcement earlier Friday she would oppose his confirmation. Collins had said earlier in the week she would vote against confirmation.

Trump announced Blanche in June as his pick for the top role at the Justice Department, replacing Pam Bondi.

Cassidy alluded to his strained relationship with Trump. He voted to convict in Trump's second impeachment trial that covered Trump's conduct leading to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. Cassidy lost his primary race to a Trump-backed challenger this year.

"I have a history with Mr. Trump," he said. "But that history does not matter one bit."

Murkowski opposition

In a social media post, Murkowski — another Republican at whom Trump has leveled strong criticism, including as recently as a podcast interview published early Friday morning — said the country needed an attorney general able to "check the worst impulses of this administration," and that she lacked confidence in Blanche to do that.

Cassidy seemed to hold a similar objective, but reached a different conclusion about Blanche's ability.

Trump is often unwilling to take advice, Cassidy said, but a competent, Senate-confirmed attorney general with whom Trump has a close relationship might be better equipped than whoever else Trump would choose to run the department.

Cassidy said that in a recent conversation with Barr, who had his own clashes with the president during and after his time as attorney general in Trump's first term, the former attorney general endorsed Blanche as someone who could "run the department as effectively as anyone can under President Trump."

"Some have called that faint praise," Cassidy said. "I don't think that it is. I think it is a reality."

Trump has expanded presidential decision-making at the Department of Justice, which, at least since the Watergate scandal of the 1970s, has been viewed as operating independently from the White House.

Ultimately, the attorney general answers to the president, Cassidy said.

'Slush fund' concerns

Cassidy criticized Blanche's role in creating a fund for "victims of lawfare," including those convicted of Jan. 6-related charges, and in approving a settlement with the IRS that gave Trump and his family broad immunity from tax prosecution.

"Mr. Blanche showed poor judgment in approving the anti-weaponization slush fund and exempting the president from IRS audits," Cassidy said.

Blanche acknowledged those "mistakes" and "made efforts to kill the slush fund," Cassidy said.

Blanche wrote a memo this week that said the fund would not move forward and that the IRS agreement only applied retroactively, not to future prosecutions. That move was enough to win over Republican holdouts on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina and John Cornyn of Texas.

Murkowski on Friday raised doubts that the fund would be dissolved if the Senate voted to confirm Blanche and loses leverage with the administration, but again, Cassidy appeared to reach a different conclusion.

Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, an Iowa Republican, praised the confirmation vote and spoke in favor of Blanche's nomination on the Senate floor.

"Beyond his obvious qualifications and successful track record, Blanche has demonstrated extraordinary patience, compassion and tenacity as he's made his way through the gauntlet of the Senate's advice and consent process," Grassley said in a statement. "He's been forthcoming and responsive to my colleagues and has proven himself to be a steadfast advocate for the rule of law. Today, the United States Senate voted to confirm Todd Blanche's nomination and advance the safety and security of Americans nationwide."

Confirmation bestows legitimacy

Cassidy noted that Blanche did not need Senate approval, and that he could continue doing the job in an acting capacity.

But a major factor in voting to confirm Blanche was that people within the department viewed Senate confirmation as crucial to an attorney general's influence.

"I am told that Senate confirmation is important in interactions with the president, with others in the Cabinet and is important to DOJ employees in general," Cassidy said. "Being Senate-confirmed gives him greater leverage to push for things that should be pushed for."

Cassidy also said he spoke to Louisiana U.S. Attorneys David Courcelle and Kurt Wall, who told him having a Senate-confirmed attorney general was important and that Blanche was more than capable.

They praised Blanche for quickly providing resources when they asked, Cassidy said.

"I cannot overstate Mr. Walls' and Mr. Courcelle's support for Mr. Blanche," he said.

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

As Trump pushes for a massive $1.5T in defense spending, a few states brace for a windfall

BY SAM GAUNTT

WASHINGTON — Congress is considering a hike of hundreds of billions in dollars in defense spending, which would represent a surge in military funding not seen since World War II.

Whatever the exact level of spending ultimately flows to military installations and defense contractors, some states will likely benefit far more than others, a States Newsroom analysis of federal defense data shows. Just a handful of states makes up a core of military production, topping the lists of federal defense spending, the data shows.

President Donald Trump has requested a total Pentagon budget of $1.5 trillion, an unprecedented increase of 42% over the previous year. While that full sum is unlikely to pass Congress, it lays out his vision for defense.

The House and Senate are considering their own versions of the National Defense Authorization Act, which sets national defense policy. Both chambers propose boosting total base spending to $1.15 trillion, with Trump's even bigger increases potentially targeted to come through the budget reconciliation process.

Here's where in the country a new round of defense funding may end up, and where it won't, given historic spending patterns.

Where is defense spending typically concentrated?

According to Defense Department data from fiscal years 2020 through 2024, three states have consis-

tently reaped the most federal funding: Texas, California and Virginia.

Each has received nearly $50 billion or more annually since the 2020 fiscal year. While other states such as Florida, Maryland and Connecticut rank in the top states by funding, none has cracked more than 10% of total Pentagon spending — which Texas, California and Virginia regularly reach.

Matt Borron, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities, said that many communities with military installations will stand to benefit from a spending increase. But he said that funding often doesn't prioritize infrastructure or maintenance issues, which he described as "low on the totem pole."

"A lot of times our communities are worried about the infrastructure that supports the mission, and even the installation itself," he said. "The facilities on base, are they up to speed? Are they being maintained? Is the housing still adequate?"

He said that, with the defense bill's focus on building up the military's industrial capabilities and workforce, many communities will likely see benefits from the funding.

Borron, whose organization lobbies for communities with defense installations, said that it is important to invest in the right places. More money doesn't necessarily mean a better product or faster product, he said.

"National security starts at home," he said. "You need these communities to be this innovation hub. You need it to have great quality of life, so servicemembers and their families want to live there."

Virginia, Connecticut lead per capita

When accounting for population, a handful of states receive a bigger share than others.

Virginia, which neighbors the nation's capital and is home to the Pentagon, and Connecticut, which houses several large shipbuilding and Navy facilities, received the most defense spending per resident in both 2020 and 2024, along with sitting near the top of the pile when it comes to overall DOD funding.

Maryland, which also neighbors the capital, Alaska and Hawaii also ranked highly in per capita spending.

Even within states, spending is often concentrated in specific counties that contain major installations.

In Texas, Tarrant County — home to Fort Worth — alone received more than $120 billion in defense spending from fiscal years 2020 through 2024, nearly 50% higher than the next highest amount.

Some states often don't come out on top, however.

Many Pacific Northwest and Northern states, including Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Minnesota, routinely rank toward the bottom of both per capita and total military spending.

In the 2024 fiscal year, defense spending made up just a half percent of total GDP in both Oregon and Minnesota.

The economic impact

For many communities with military installations or manufacturing facilities, national defense is their primary industry.

Military installations can spur hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars to flow to local economies. According to a recent report from the Texas state comptroller, defense installations in 2025 added almost $150 billion to the Texas economy and supported about 628,000 jobs.

Many states have embraced their identity as centers of military activity.

In a 2023 op-ed in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, U.S. Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., wrote that a strong defense industry and reliable state economy "come as a package deal."

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said on July 10 that military installations each provide "tremendous value" to communities across his state.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., despite voting against the defense policy bill in committee due to its overall size, said provisions of the bill that would support the state's defense manufacturers and installations enhance "Connecticut's vital role as an arsenal of democracy."

But some experts say the economic benefits can often be overstated.

Julia Gledhill, an analyst at the Stimson Center, a nonprofit think tank that studies global peace and international security issues, said federal defense spending should not be used as a tool for economic development.

In fiscal year 2024, according to DOD data, defense spending made up less than 2% of gross domestic

product in a majority of states. Just eight states relied on defense spending for more than 5% of their GDP.

While defense spending has a significant impact for many communities, she said, if an economic boost is the goal, there's better places to put the money. Sectors like education or healthcare both have higher returns on investment, she added.

"The purpose of the military is not job creation," she said. "The purpose of military spending is not economic development."

Instead, Gledhill said the defense budget should reflect only what is needed.

Military readiness

Speaking to reporters during a cabinet meeting at Camp David in July, Trump described the increasing spending as an "unprecedented investment in the United States armed forces."

Buying more for the sake of buying more is not necessarily going to improve the military's overall operational readiness, Gledhill added.

"We're spending more and more, and we're buying more and more, and it's actually hurting military readiness rates, in direct contrast to what we're hearing from the likes of Secretary Hegseth," she said, referring to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

She pointed to a recent report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office, a federal agency watchdog, that found that the F-35 fighter jet, the Defense Department's most expensive weapons system, has increased in sustainment costs while declining in performance.

That report found that the F-35's mission capable rate — which is the percentage of the time it is able to carry out an assigned mission — decreased from 67% to 44% from fiscal years 2021 to 2025. The percentage of time that it is capable of completing all assigned missions, or the full mission capable rate, similarly decreased from 38% to just 25%, according to the GAO.

In the president's 2027 defense budget request, the number of desired F-35s increased from 47 purchased in 2026 to 85 — a total spending increase of more than $8 billion.

And increasing military spending at such a significant rate, without a clear reason, Gledhill said, will have an impact on the rest of the federal government, citing cuts in Republicans' 2025 tax and spending cut law to Medicaid and nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

She added that, despite continually rising defense spending, veterans and military families continue to struggle and face high food insecurity.

"I think that we can take care of people if we were a bit more judicious about the weapons that we procured," she said. "That would actually strengthen the military."

Reporting for this project was supported by the Dow Jones News Fund.

Sam Gauntt is an intern at States Newsroom's Washington bureau through the Dow Jones News Fund internship program. He is a senior journalism major at the University of Maryland and editor in chief of The Diamondback, the university's independent student newspaper. He previously interned with Maryland Matters, an affiliate of States Newsroom.

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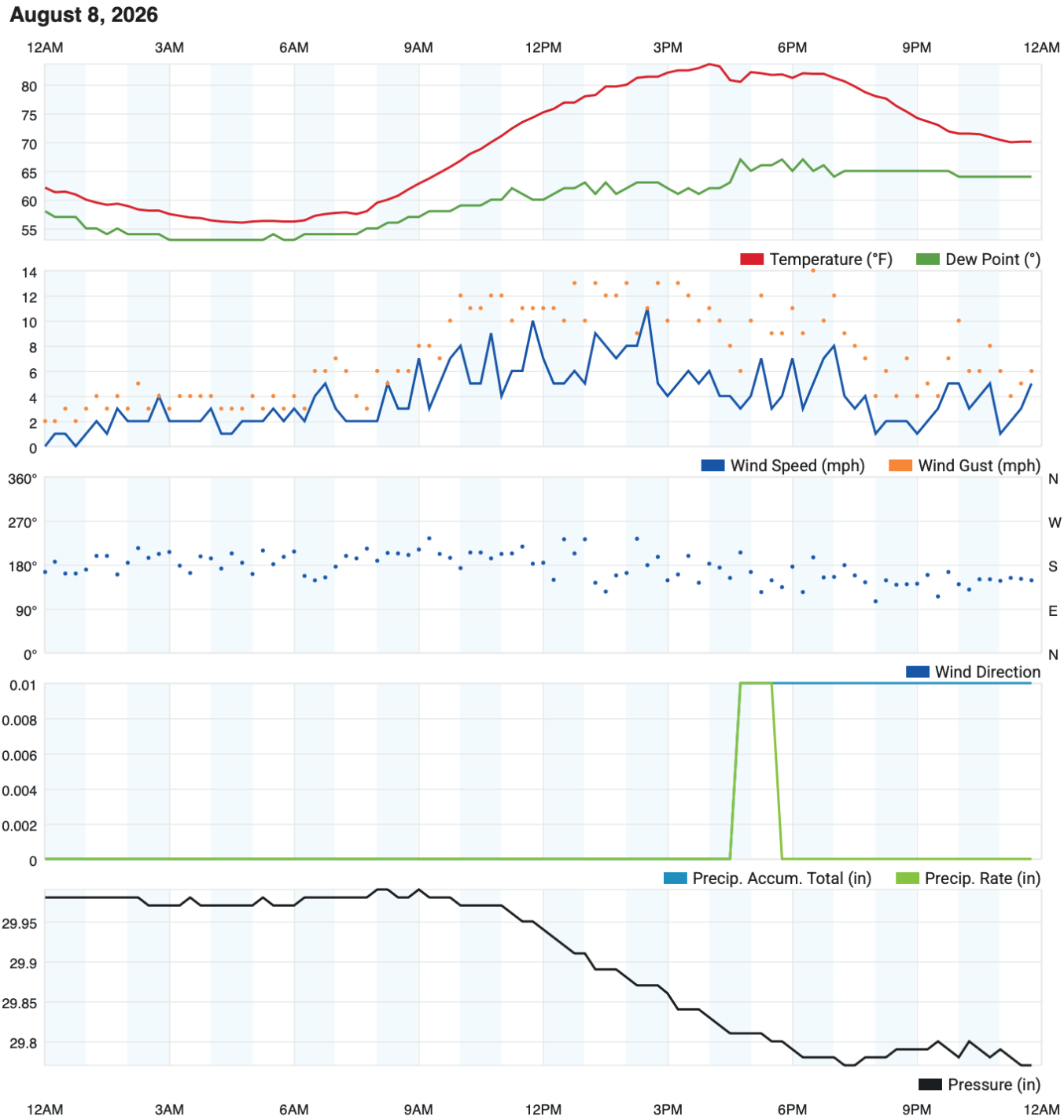
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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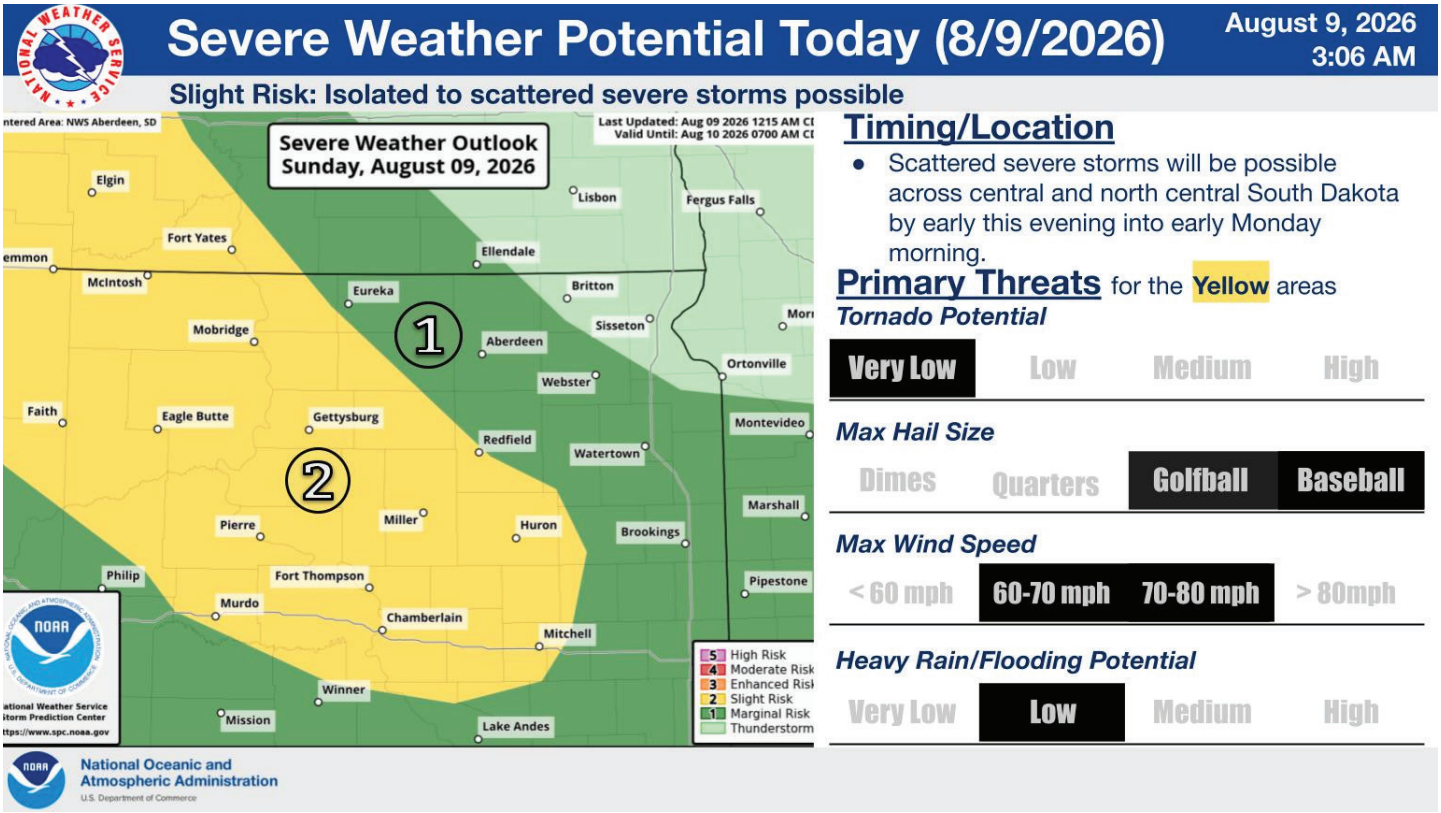
Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
High: 82 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 83 °F
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny	Chance Showers	Mostly Sunny



A Slight Risk (level 2 of 5) for severe weather is in effect over portions of central and north central South Dakota. Large to very large hail (1 to 2+ inches) and damaging wind gusts (65 to 80+ mph) will be the main threats.

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Severe Weather Threat - High Winds

August 9, 2026
3:11 AM

Wind Threat Highlights:

Damaging winds of 65-80 mph in the hatched area.

Cities At Greatest Risk

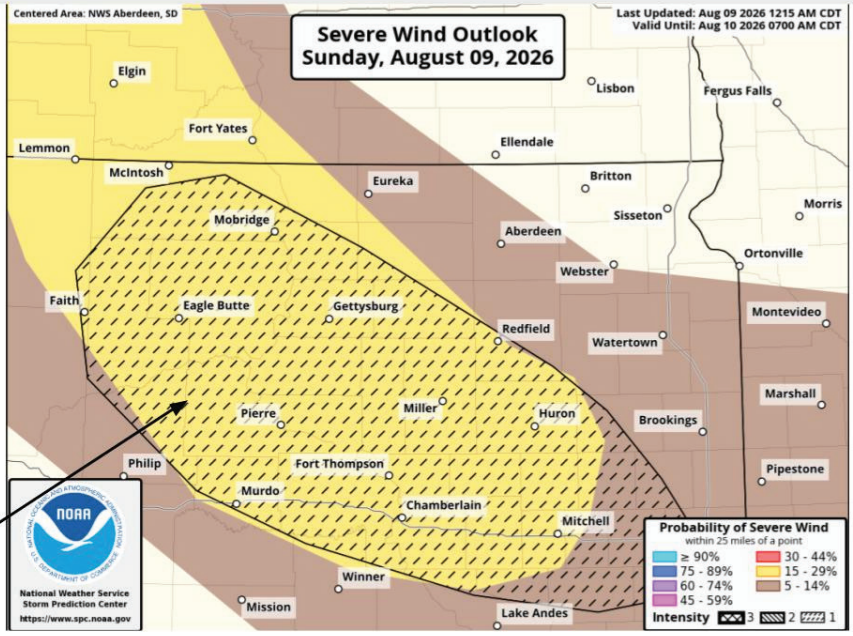
Mobridge, Eagle Butte, Pierre, Gettysburg, Murdo, Fort Thompson, Miller, Redfield

Probability of Severe Wind
within 25 miles of a point

≥ 90%	30 - 44%
75 - 89%	15 - 29%
60 - 74%	5 - 14%
45 - 59%	

Intensity Levels:

- 3 — High-end ongoing derecho
- 2 — Bow echo/derecho possible
- 1 — Peak gusts 74 mph+



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Severe Weather Threat - Large Hail

August 9, 2026
3:18 AM

Hail Threat Highlights:

Large hail of 1-2+ inches in the hatched area.

Cities At Greatest Risk

Eagle Butte, Timber Lake, Mobridge, McIntosh

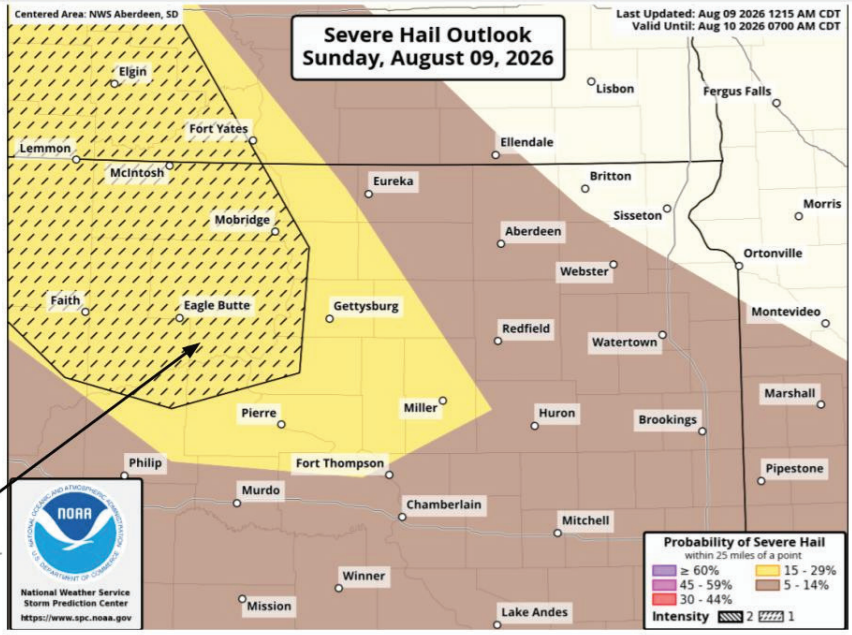
Probability of Severe Hail
within 25 miles of a point

≥ 60%	15 - 29%
45 - 59%	5 - 14%
30 - 44%	

Intensity 2 1

Intensity Levels:

- 2 — Long-Track Supercells - largest hail >3.5”
- 1 — Supercell env. with hail >2”



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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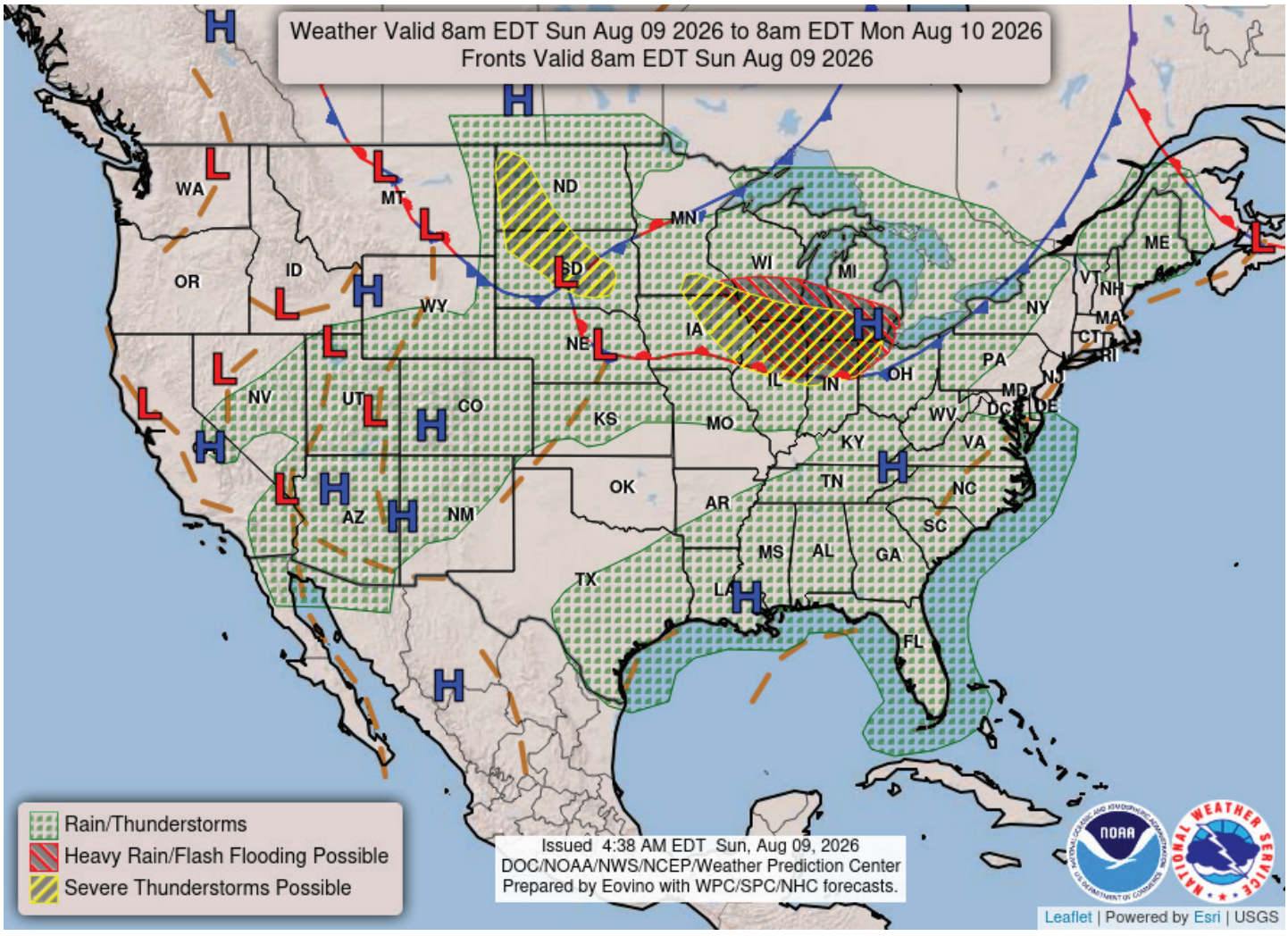
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84 °F at 4:07 PM
Low Temp: 56 °F at 4:38 AM
Wind: 15 mph at 2:35 PM
Precip: 0.01

Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1947
Record Low: 41 in 1927
Average High: 84
Average Low: 58
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.66
Precip to date in Aug.: 9.80
Average Precip to date: 14.76
Precip Year to Date: 19.27
Sunset Tonight: 8:49 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:27 am



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Today in Weather History

August 9, 1918: An estimated F2 tornado touched down east of Bristol, South Dakota, and moved NNE. The tornado was said to look like a long snake in a spiral, smashing barns into kindling.

August 9, 1992: A tornado packing winds estimated between 113 and 157 mph caused significant damage to the town of Chester, in Lake County. Shortly after 7 pm CDT a tornado tore right through the heart of Chester causing considerable damage. Four businesses were destroyed, three others had significant damage, and five had minor damage. An elevator and new grain bin were leveled, and another bin was heavily damaged. Most of the building housing the fire department was demolished. Also, many houses and vehicles sustained damage, and large trees were uprooted or broken off. In one instance a steel beam was thrust through a garage and into the car inside. One mile north of Chester, an entire house was moved off the foundation. The town had to be evacuated for 19 hours after the tornado because the tornado damaged a 12,000-gallon ammonia tank releasing 4,000 gallons of the liquid gas into the air. The ammonia was a health hazard forcing residents out. To the south of Chester, the storm destroyed a new convenience store and blew two fuel tanks over 100 yards.

1878 — The second most deadly tornado in New England history struck Wallingford CT killing 34 persons, injuring 100 others, and completely destroying thirty homes. The tornado started as a waterspout over a dam on the Quinnipiac River. It was 400 to 600 feet wide, and had a short path length of two miles. (The Weather Channel)

1969 — A tornado hit Cincinnati OH killing four persons and causing fifteen million dollars property damage. The tornado moved in a southeasterly direction at 40 to 50 mph. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Florida baked in the summer heat. Nine cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Jacksonville with a reading of 101 degrees. Miami FL reported a record high of 98 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Tropical Storm Beryl deluged Biloxi with 6.32 inches of rain in 24 hours, and in three days drenched Pascagoula MS with 15.85 inches of rain. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Southern Plains Region and over the Central High Plains Region. Thunderstorms in Oklahoma producedwind gusts to 92 mph at Harrah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Evening thunderstorms in Arizona deluged Yuma with record torrential rains for the second time in two weeks. The rainfall total of 5.25 inches at the Yuma Quartermaster Depot established a state 24 hour record, and was nearly double the normal annual rainfall. Some of the homes were left with four feet of water in them. Seventy-six cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Lake Charles LA equalled their record for August with a low of 61 degrees. Canaan Valley WV was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 32 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992 — A tornado packing winds estimated between 113 and 157 mph caused significant damage to the town of Chester, South Dakota. Shortly after 7 pm CDT a tornado tore right through the heart of Chester causing considerable damage. Four businesses were destroyed, three others had significant damage, and five had minor damage. An elevator and new grain bin were leveled, and another bin was heavily damaged. Most of the building housing the fire department was demolished. Also, many houses and vehicles sustained damage, and large trees were uprooted or broken off. In one instance a steel beam was thrust through a garage and into the car inside. One mile north of Chester, an entire house was moved off the foundation. The town had to be evacuated for 19 hours after the tornado because the tornado damaged a 12,000-gallon ammonia tank releasing 4,000 gallons of the liquid gas into the air. The ammonia was a health hazard forcing residents out. To the south of Chester, the storm destroyed a new convenience store and blew two fuel tanks over 100 yards.

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InTouch Ministries

Daily Devotion

Prayer on Behalf of the Church

Intercession is a powerful way to bring God's light to others even when darkness surrounds us.

Colossians 1:1-12: 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.
3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,
4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;
5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel
6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;
7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf,
8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.
9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;
11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously
12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

Today we meet Epaphras, a man who had a heart for the church. Likely a convert under Paul's teaching, Epaphras evangelized his hometown of Colossae and founded a church there—and possibly the churches in Hierapolis and Laodicea as well.

Although there is very little is written about Epaphras in the New Testament, the letter to the Colossians emphasizes his deep love and concern for Christ's church (Colossians 4:12-13). At the close of the letter, Paul points out that Epaphras is "always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (v. 12).

At that point in time, Epaphras was in prison with Paul (Philemon 1:23), and he couldn't refute the false teachers who'd infiltrated the church at Colossae. But that didn't mean he was helpless. Intercession is a powerful ministry. It can alter circumstances, change thinking, and bring God's truth to light. Epaphras went to his knees to plead for the church, and Paul joined him, which we see in his prayer in Colossians 1:9-14.

May we all follow Epaphras and Paul's example: Pray to the One who knows exactly what to do and has the power to accomplish whatever is required. Then rest in Him and let His peace guard your heart and mind.

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:
08.08.26

2 5 10 49 52 **3**

TOP PRIZE:
$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 41 Mins 46 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:
08.08.26

3 30 31 34 50 **3**

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
$2,450,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.08.26

2 3 26 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
$24,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.08.26

14 29 46 55 59 **16**

TOP PRIZE:
$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.08.26

5 9 35 54 63 **7**

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
$905,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

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News from the AP Associated Press

Yemen's Houthis claim attack on Aramco oil facility in Saudi Arabia, and other Middle East news

By The Associated Press undefined

Yemen's Houthis said they attacked an oil facility Sunday in southwestern Saudi Arabia, the latest attack by the Iranian-backed rebels on the kingdom. Meanwhile, Iran has made new demands about the restart of negotiations and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and the Pentagon is pressing the U.S. defense industry to accelerate production of weapons.

Here's a look at developments across the Middle East on Sunday. Full coverage can be found here.

Houthis target Aramco refinery

Yahya Saree, a military spokesperson for the Houthis, said they targeted an Aramco refinery in the city of Jazan with a drone. The attack was in response to Saudi drones' breaching Yemen's airspace over the provinces of Hajjah and Saada, he said.

Early on Sunday, the Saudi Energy Ministry reported a fire at a facility belonging to the Aramco refinery without casualties. The ministry said the fire was extinguished but it didn't describe its cause.

Sunday's Houthi attack is the latest in a series of missile and drone attacks that targeted Saudi Arabia and its shipping in the Red Sea.

A Yemeni government official said Sunday that the Houthis also attacked a crucial port on the Red Sea.

Fayed al-Noman, assistant undersecretary of the information ministry, said the Houthis fired missiles and drones on the Mocha port. It's one of the main ports under Yemen's internationally recognized government, renovated in recent years to handle shipping that avoids the Houthi-held ports in Hodeida.

There was no immediate comment from the Houthis.

The escalation threatens to reignite Yemen's civil war more than four years after a 2022 truce stopped major fighting in the impoverished Arab country.

— by Samy Magdy in Cairo.

Iran: Negotiations with US "cannot resume" until conditions met

Speaking to reporters in Tehran on Sunday, Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said an "exchange of messages through intermediaries" is continuing with the United States, but that doesn't constitute negotiations.

"From our perspective, negotiations cannot resume until the violations of the memorandum of understanding have ended and the United States has remedied the provisions of the memorandum that it violated," he said.

He added that negotiations with Oman about "new maritime routes" through the Strait of Hormuz were "in the final stages."

"This, however, does not mean that the Strait of Hormuz will reopen," Araghchi said. "An agreement on the routes may be reached, but reopening the strait is subject to a number of other conditions, which have been conveyed through intermediaries."

Iran says the strait won't open until the US 'corrects' its behavior

Similarly, Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council has said the Strait of Hormuz will not open until the United States "corrects its behavior," issuing new demands that could shake up talks on a deal to manage the waterway.

Iran's state broadcaster published the statement by the council's secretary, Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr, who is also a commander in the powerful Revolutionary Guard.

The United States must never threaten Iran again, the statement said, and must permanently end the war with Iran and its armed allies in the region. The U.S. must lift the naval blockade of Iranian ports and withdraw its military from the area. It must "completely compensate" Iran for war damage, lift sanctions and "unconditionally" release frozen assets.

The U.S., which has wanted an acceptable deal first on the strait before ending the blockade, had no immediate comment. According to the interim deal signed in June, a schedule to end sanctions and plan on compensation would be part of the final deal, and negotiations would address frozen assets.

According to the U.S. Central Command, the blockade has redirected 53 commercial vessels, disabled two, and boarded two through Saturday.

Pentagon pushes boost in weapons production

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement Saturday that the department was actively focused on boosting munitions acquisitions to provide "the weapons our warfighters need at the pace the threat demands."

The war with Iran has used up more of the U.S. military's already diminished stockpiles of advanced missile interceptors, says a new analysis from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

Parnell said the push for speedier delivery was part of a broader modernization effort that predated the five-month-old conflict.

Details emerge about potential Iran-Oman deal

The Strait of Hormuz, crucial to global supplies of oil and natural gas, was considered an international waterway before the war.

But Iran and Oman are working to finalize a temporary deal that would reopen the strait with ships entering the strait through a route close to Iran and exiting through a route close to Oman, according to two people familiar with the talks who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Ships would cross the strait without paying fees or tolls during the interim period.

The agreement is designed to restore an earlier, separate agreement between the U.S. and Iran and restart a 60-day clock for the two countries to negotiate over Iran's nuclear program.

According to the two people who spoke about the talks, the deal is endorsed by members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and expected when finalized to be jointly announced by Iran, Oman, the U.S., and the International Maritime Organization of the United Nations. But the people stressed the terms could still change before the deal is final.

As the world rediscovers 'The Odyssey,' disabled actors in Greece explore the pain of war

By PETROS GIANNAKOURIS and DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

EPIDAURUS, Greece (AP) — As Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey" renews global fascination with Homer, a cast of disabled and non-disabled performers in Greece is staging the war's other story.

It's not about the triumph of returning heroes, but the suffering they left behind.

"The Trojan Women," with a cast of 22, was staged at Epidaurus, the ancient open-air stone arena in southern Greece. It marked what organizers called the first fully accessible performance in the ancient theater's 2,300-year history.

While Homer followed warriors sailing home from Troy, the playwright Euripides — writing some three centuries later — turned to the city's ruins and its women, forced into exile and enslavement.

The ancient theater offered a full range of accessibility services for the Aug. 2 performance. Blind audience members received Braille programs, tactile models and live audio description, while deaf spectators followed overhead titles. Physical adaptations also improved access throughout the site.

"It's the first time a performance at Ancient Epidaurus has been made accessible to everyone," said Greg Polychronidis, a Paralympic gold medalist who attended the event. "Today was a celebration of equality and it should serve as an example for everyone, forever."

For many of the performers, standing on the ancient stage was itself part of the message: a voice for those often overlooked. Eirini Kourouvani, a 58-year-old cast member who uses a wheelchair, had never set foot inside the theater before.

"It is just grand," she said. "I feel my heart opening up as wide as this theater is."

Ioanna-Maria Gertsou, a blind psychologist, attended with Babu, her guide dog.

"We too have the right to attend performances on an equal footing," she said, relieved that her dog remained quiet during the play.

The National Theater of Greece produced the performance, and accessibility services were designed by the nonprofit Liminal with financial support from Greece's Alpha Bank.

Argyro Chioti, the National Theater's artistic director, said the production should become the norm rather than the exception.

"This was complex, not simple. It required months of planning. It cost money. And it required very specific organizational expertise," she said. "But that's the standard and venues we need to reach — the major stages and the major theaters."

Shanghai cancels 1,300 flights as China prepares for Typhoon Dolphin

BEIJING (AP) — Shanghai's two airports canceled more than 1,300 flights and authorities relocated some 300,000 people in surrounding regions as China prepared for Typhoon Dolphin, after the storm brought heavy rains to northern Taiwan.

The outer bands of the storm on Saturday hit northern Taiwan, including the capital Taipei, bringing rain. Some Taiwanese airlines also canceled their flights to China Sunday.

The storm's maximum sustained winds were estimated at about 162 kilometers per hour (101 mph) as of Sunday morning. It is bringing 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.

Forecasters in China predicted that areas could see 200-400 mm (7.9–15.7 inches) of rainfall over the next few days. Authorities are warning of severe landslide risks in Zhejiang.

Shanghai's Hongqiao and Pudong airports respectively also canceled about 60% of Sunday's expected flights, according to the Paper, Shanghai's state media.

On Saturday evening, authorities in Zhejiang evacuated some 390,000 people in the city of Taizhou. Authorities in Shanghai evacuated some 30,000 plus from riskier areas.

Zhejiang authorities also suspended all water-based activities, including ferries and cruises.

A Tibetan cooperative keeps a centuries-old weaving tradition alive

SHANNAN, Tibet (AP) — More than a dozen men and women sit at wooden looms, sliding shuttles through rows of wool yarn before pulling each thread tight. They repeat it again and again as they weave Pulu, the traditional woolen fabric that has clothed people on the Tibetan plateau for centuries.

They work at the Ethnic Huaji Handwoven Cooperative in Shannan, where artisans are trying to preserve one of Tibet's oldest weaving traditions while creating jobs for local residents.

Founded in 2008 by Tibetan artisan Pasang, the cooperative employs more than 100 local residents, including some people with disabilities, while teaching younger Tibetans a craft that he feared was disappearing.

The cooperative specializes in Zeter, a finer variety of Pulu made from especially soft wool from the necks and backs of sheep. He said the finer wool makes the yarn more difficult to spin than that used for ordinary Pulu.

Pasang said that because Zeter is lighter, softer and more delicate than ordinary Pulu, it was presented as a tribute from Tibet to the Chinese imperial court during the Ming dynasty.

Pasang said he learned the craft from his parents at a time when fewer than 10 people still knew how to weave Zeter.

He added that the craft has been recognized as part of China's national intangible cultural heritage, and

that he hopes younger generations will continue practicing it.

The wool comes from sheep raised around Shannan, about 3,700 meters (12,100 feet) above sea level.

Statues of Tibet's 7th century King Songtsen Gampo and his Chinese bride, Princess Wencheng, stand at the center of the workshop, surrounded by wooden looms. According to local tradition, the weaving craft dates to when Princess Wencheng introduced weaving techniques to Tibet after marrying the king.

In Chinese official history, their marriage symbolizes the historical ties between Tibet and China. "It integrated Tibetan and Chinese cultures," Pasang said about the fabric's history.

The Associated Press joined a government-organized trip to Lhasa and Shannan last month, which included visits to the cooperative, palaces, Buddhist temples, tourist sites, an eldercare center and local businesses.

Next to the workshop, a small showroom displays scarves, shawls, jackets, bags and other products made from Pulu and Zeter. Pasang said most sales are in Tibet, although customers also come from elsewhere in China.

Tsering Yangchen has been working for seven years in the cooperative. The 80-year-old woman moved from another county and said she struggled to find work before joining the workshop, where instructors taught her and others how to weave.

She said Pulu is more than just a product she weaves.

"We usually wear them," she added. "They are made from pure wool."

Iran makes new strait demands, the UAE says a ship was targeted and other Middle East news

By The Associated Press undefined

Iran issued dramatic new demands around the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and the United Arab Emirates said one of its ships was targeted by an Iranian missile. Yemen's military attacked the country's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. And Turkey's Kurdish peace bill won approval in parliament.

Here's a look at developments across the Middle East on Saturday. Full coverage can be found here.

Iran says the strait won't open until the US 'corrects' its behavior

Iran's politburo-like body known as the Supreme National Security Council said the Strait of Hormuz will not open until the United States "corrects its behavior," issuing new demands that could shake up talks on a deal to manage the waterway.

Iran's state broadcaster published the statement by the council's secretary, Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr, who is also a commander in the powerful Revolutionary Guard.

The United States must never threaten Iran again, the statement said, and must permanently end the war with Iran and its armed allies in the region. The U.S. must lift the naval blockade of Iranian ports and withdraw its military from the area. It must "completely compensate" Iran for war damage, lift sanctions and "unconditionally" release frozen assets.

The U.S., which has wanted an acceptable deal first on the strait before ending the blockade, had no immediate comment. According to the interim deal signed in June, a schedule to end sanctions and plan on compensation would be part of the final deal, and negotiations would address frozen assets.

Iran has said it was close to reaching a separate deal with Oman to manage the strait, which runs between the two countries.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi earlier Saturday said they were close to reaching an agreement on navigation. But the waterway's reopening is contingent on other conditions, he said in remarks shared on social media, and blamed the situation on what he called the U.S. violation of the interim deal.

Oman, a mediator Gulf Arab country which has said relatively little on the talks, said in a statement discussions were ongoing "in a positive and constructive atmosphere," and condemned attacks on ships on the strait.

Details emerge about potential Iran-Oman deal

The strait, crucial to global supplies of oil and natural gas, was considered an international waterway before the war.

The deal Iran and Oman are working to finalize would be temporary, but it would reopen the strait with ships entering the strait through a route close to Iran and exiting through a route close to Oman, according to two people familiar with the talks who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Ships would cross the strait without paying fees or tolls during the interim period.

The agreement is designed to restore an earlier, separate agreement between the U.S. and Iran and restart a 60-day clock for the two countries to negotiate over Iran's nuclear program.

During that time, Iran is expected to be able to sell oil. The current 60-day deadline to negotiate a final deal is due to end in just over a week.

According to the two people who spoke about the talks, the deal is endorsed by members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and expected when finalized to be jointly announced by Iran, Oman, the U.S., and the International Maritime Organization of the United Nations. But the people stressed the terms could still change before the deal is final.

— by Michelle Price in Washington and Aamer Madhani in New York.

Iran attacks a vessel in the Strait of Hormuz, the UAE says

A vessel owned by Abu Dhabi's state-owned ADNOC oil and gas company was attacked while transiting the strait, Emirati authorities said. The Foreign Ministry said Iran fired the missile as part of attacks on commercial shipping.

ADNOC in a statement said there were no casualties following the early Saturday attack. The company said over a dozen of its vessels have been attacked by missiles and drones while transiting the strait since the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Iran in February. One crew member has been killed and 20 others wounded, it said.

ADNOC didn't elaborate on the attack's location or any damage.

Later, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Center said a vessel east of the town of Khasab, Oman, had been struck by a projectile that caused a fire that was put out, with the vessel and crew safe. It was not clear whether this was the ADNOC incident.

A defense deal is not aimed at any third country, Turkey says

A defense agreement that Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey signed Friday is not aimed against any third country, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said. It says an attack on one would be considered an attack on all three.

Fidan told Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency on Saturday the countries do not view any state as an adversary unless it takes hostile action against them: "We don't have anything written down — nothing we've signed — that defines a common threat."

Asked how the mutual defense mechanism would work, Fidan said a member would formally request help and the two countries' assistance could range from intelligence-sharing to logistics support or the deployment of military units. The mechanism would establish a secretariat to be based in Saudi Arabia, Fidan said.

He said other nations, which he did not identify, have expressed interest in joining the agreement, adding that he expects Egypt, which he described as a "natural partner," to participate "at the next stage."

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.

The escalation between the Houthis and Yemen's internationally recognized government and its backer, a Saudi-supported coalition, threatens to reignite Yemen's civil war following a 2022 truce.

Turkey's Kurdish peace bill wins approval in parliament

A Turkish draft law aimed at advancing a peace effort with the country's Kurdish insurgents passed its first hurdle in parliament on Saturday. A committee approved the measure. It is expected to be approved in the general assembly next week.

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 defines the procedures for the group's disarmament and rehabilitation of some PKK members. 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. Turkey and its Western allies consider the group a terrorist organization.

Darline Graham tests value of a famous name vs. lack of experience in South Carolina primary

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

FLORENCE, S.C. (AP) — Few people have anything bad to say about Darline Graham, who was catapulted from obscurity last month when she was appointed to replace her late brother Lindsey Graham in the U.S. Senate.

"I think Darline's wonderful," said Kathy Bustos of Mount Pleasant, after attending a Republican forum last week.

But that doesn't mean Bustos wants to vote for her in the state's special primary on Tuesday.

"I think it's a very nice gesture for her to have the rest of his term to complete, but I'm not sure that she's really qualified or ready to be elected to the Senate," she said.

It's a common sentiment among Republican voters pondering an unexpected decision about replacing Lindsey Graham, who was nominated for a fifth term before he died from a tear in his aorta. Darline Graham was often by his side throughout his career, but she remains largely unknown in South Carolina's clubby political circles.

President Donald Trump has endorsed her, and she's backed by the National Republican Senatorial Committee, which is running television advertising to support her candidacy.

However, Graham has been largely absent from the campaign trail, spending most of her time in Washington as an interim senator. Her appointment to the role, instead of giving her a leg up over the competition, may ultimately hold her back by preventing her from getting to know voters during a weeks-long sprint to Tuesday.

A crowded field of contenders

She is up against several well-known Republicans, including Representatives Russell Fry and Ralph Norman, as well as former Gov. Mark Sanford. The crowded field makes a runoff more likely, and it would be held on Aug. 25.

All of them spoke at a Friday meeting of the Fourth District Republican Club in Greenville, but Graham sent a video message, saying she was "in Washington working hard for you." She promised to be "a great friend and ally" to Trump and that she wanted to "earn your vote."

And at a candidate event in Florence on Saturday, where Graham spoke, some of her supporters said they backed the interim senator's decision to stay in Washington, even if it meant not campaigning.

"She committed to not missing votes or not being there to push forward with those bills," said Teresa Castrinos, who made the hours-long drive from Bluffton to see Graham. "I feel like she's putting South Carolina first. She's wanting to fulfill her time as a senator right now, so I really admire her for that."

A low profile in Washington — and on the trail

While Lindsey Graham was single and well-known around the world, his sister lived a relatively quiet life with her husband and daughters in Lexington, South Carolina. She spent years in state government, working with people with disabilities and as an agency head of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind.

Before participating in a candidate forum Saturday in Florence, her only public campaign event had been a candidate forum in Lexington. Charles Brentnell of Greenville County, who was still considering his options, said he liked her decision to stay in Washington when the Senate was in session.

"Let's keep the Senate at the Senate instead of taking a month off for no good reason," he said.

Appearing alongside other contenders Saturday, Graham apologized for reading from notes from a lectern, pointing to the Senate votes that kept her in Washington until just hours before she headed to meet voters in South Carolina.

"Yes, I have some notes. You know why? Because I haven't slept in two days, so I'm going to keep my thoughts straight," Graham said, adding that she opposed Senate recess but lost out to others who wanted to end votes and go home. "I wanted to stay there, and I wanted to get things done."

Graham also participated in one of two televised debates, where she backed Trump's plan to change filibuster rules to make it easier to pass strict proof-of-citizenship voting legislation.

While other candidates came to speak to the media gathered afterward, Graham skipped the session and merely gave a thumbs-up outside when asked how she felt the debate had gone.

In contrast to her loquacious late brother, Graham has not spoken with reporters in Capitol Hill hallways or fielded questions on the stump.

She's spoken at length to Fox News personalities Sean Hannity and Trey Gowdy, both of whom eulogized Lindsey Graham at memorial services last month, and granted two interviews to local news outlets.

On Saturday, in her first gaggle with reporters, Graham addressed some of voters' concerns, reiterating her commitment to do Senate work when the chamber is in session.

"I feel like my job is to be in D.C. working for everyone right now. I hate that I can't be here. I want to be here," she said. "That's why I left and didn't sleep at all last night, so I could attend today's event."

As to the skepticism in sending Graham to Washington for six years, Graham cited her state government experience, plus the past several weeks she's had serving as interim.

"Trust me, I have learned a lot already, so I think I have experience," she said.

A second debate took place while Graham was in Washington on Tuesday, a date her campaign pointed out had been scheduled despite the senator's conflict.

Gigi Bray of Charleston said the idea of Darline Graham serving in the interim makes sense, but electing her to a full term does not.

"I think it's a great honor for her to hold her brother's spot till November, but it's time for a change," said Bray, who backs Sanford. "I don't think she has a lot of government experience, and I think right now, with the state of our country, I think it's very important that somebody has experience."

Lake Mead hits historic low water level as Colorado River struggles

By TY ONEIL and DORANY PINEDA Associated Press

BOULDER CITY, Nev. (AP) — Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the United States, has plummeted to its lowest water level since it was filled some 90 years ago, another sign of the crisis plaguing the Colorado River system.

Water levels at the reservoir, which straddles the Arizona-Nevada border outside Las Vegas, hit 1,040.4 feet (317.1 meters) above sea level on Friday, according to federal data. That's just below the record set on July 28, 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

"It's extremely significant and extremely concerning. You have three-quarters of the population of the Colorado River Basin, some 30 million people, who are directly impacted by risks to Lake Mead," said J.B. Hamby, chairman of the Colorado River Board of California and a board member of the Imperial Irrigation District, the largest user of the river's water.

Hamby said it is vital for states that use Colorado River water to reduce water use.

Drought and dry conditions have stretched along the length of the Colorado and are particularly intense at its source in the Rocky Mountains.

Melting snow provides important water for the river. This past winter, however, saw the worst snowpack on record for the Colorado River Basin, adding more stress on farmers, industry, wildlife and hydropower producers, as well as the 40 million people across seven U.S. states, tribal nations and Mexico who rely on the waterway.

Years of overuse combined with drought and rising temperatures have been depleting Lake Mead and

Lake Powell, the country's second-largest reservoir. Both are the lowest they have been in nearly seven decades.

To protect the strained system's ability to produce hydropower, federal officials said Thursday that they will not release cool Lake Powell water from Glen Canyon Dam in northern Arizona to protect a threatened native fish, the humpback chub, whose habitat is between the reservoirs.

Federal officials recently announced a short-term proposal to stave off a crisis in the beleaguered waterway, after states that rely on it — California, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Wyoming and Utah — failed to reach an agreement on how to share the dwindling resource in the long term.

The federal proposal called for the Lower Basin states of Arizona, California and Nevada to take less water. The Bureau of Reclamation, which released the plan, said it was flexible: Deeper cuts could happen in drier times, while states would have more time to collectively agree on how to manage the scarce resources.

Severe drought in 2022 on Lake Mead, which is held back by Hoover Dam, exposed human remains and forced water officials in Las Vegas to pump water from deeper within the reservoir to continue to supply water to millions of people.

Levels at Lake Powell have dropped so much that it has become difficult to descend far enough to reach the water. Boat ramps have had to move, shut down or be built anew.

Lake Mead and Lake Powell are not alone. Of the 54 Western reservoirs tracked by the Bureau of Reclamation, nine recently recorded their lowest levels in the last three decades.

Federal officials do not believe the record will stay where it is. According to modeling done in July, Lake Mead is forecast to continue dropping through much of the rest of the year.

ICE says it expects to equip every field officer with body cameras by the end of August

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said Saturday it expects every officer and agent in the field to be equipped with a body camera by the end of August, a rapid expansion that could provide an unprecedented visual record of the federal government's immigration enforcement operations.

But whether the public will get to see that footage remains largely up to ICE.

The agency defended its body-worn camera policy amid questions about provisions allowing ICE leadership to withhold or indefinitely delay footage after serious injuries or deaths in custody. Acting Director David J. Venturella said the restrictions are intended to protect investigations and privacy and are consistent with federal law and policies at other federal law enforcement agencies.

Venturella's statement came in response to an Associated Press report on ICE policy, including a provision calling for the expedited release of footage after a serious injury or death in custody when doing so is determined to be in the "best interests of the agency."

Venturella said the AP "mischaracterized" the policy by conflating that provision with ICE's broader authority to release body-camera footage. He said the policy clarifies that footage should not be released when doing so could compromise investigations or privacy.

The AP report did not say the provision governs every release of body-camera footage. It focused on ICE's policy for releasing footage after some of the most consequential encounters with the public: those involving serious injury or death.

The AP sought comment from ICE before its initial story on Friday. The agency provided partial responses, without addressing the provision that footage would be released when in its "best interests."

ICE has been under heightened scrutiny since the fatal shooting in July of a 25-year-old motorist in Maine by an ICE officer with a history of violent behavior. Days earlier, another ICE officer shot and killed a Houston homebuilder driving to work. Neither shooting was recorded with body cameras.

Venturella said ICE was "committed to transparency and accountability" and was "on track to equip every officer and agent in the field with body-worn cameras by the end of August."

The AP quoted Christopher Schneider, a sociology professor at Brandon University in Canada, who said

that selective releases are routine in some law enforcement agencies but usually not so clearly contemplated in policy. "In some ways, ICE is saying the quiet part out loud," he said.

The story noted that ICE's sister agency, Customs and Border Protection, has not released footage of the fatal shooting of Alex Pretti in Minneapolis in January. CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott told lawmakers that it was part of an investigation and would be made public "when it's appropriate."

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 countries. But on Saturday, Tehran said the strait will not open until the U.S. "corrects its behavior," saying it must permanently end the war, lift its naval blockade of Iranian ports and withdraw its military from the area. It also must "completely compensate" Iran for war damage, lift sanctions and "unconditionally" release frozen assets.

There was no White House comment.

A deal with Oman would formalize Tehran's 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.

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.

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.

Hunter Biden says his father's prostate cancer is causing him pain even as he continues to speak out

LONDON (AP) — Former U.S. President Joe Biden 's prostate cancer has spread to other parts of his body and is causing him pain, even as he continues to speak out on public issues, his son Hunter said in an interview.

In a wide-ranging interview with the BBC broadcast late on Friday, Hunter Biden grew emotional as he discussed his father's condition, describing it as very sad to watch.

"The cancer has spread, metastasized into his bones and further," he said. "It's very painful and it's very debilitating in many respects."

Joe Biden, 83, was the oldest man to serve as U.S. president and his age was a source of concern for much of his four years in office. He and his White House advisers have faced intense criticism for allegedly concealing the extent of his problems, especially after he was forced to abandon his bid for re-election after a disastrous debate with his eventual successor, Donald Trump.

The former president revealed his cancer diagnosis in May of last year, less than four months after he left the White House.

Hunter Biden said the diagnosis had been tough on the family.

"It's really sad to watch," Biden said. "The only thing that I'd say about my dad, about his health right now, is I wish he would complain more, because it's not good."

But Biden said his father remains "out there," speaking publicly about the issues that are important to him.

"He's still doing his thing," he said. "He so believes in this country."

The former president will publish a memoir, "Promise Me, America," after the mid-term elections.

Zelenskyy visits Moscow-friendly Serbia as Russian attacks on Kyiv region kill 4

By JOVANA GEC and VOLODYMYR YURCHUK Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denounced Russia's latest deadly attacks on Kyiv on Saturday as he visited Serbia, one of the few European countries that has maintained friendly relations with Moscow throughout its invasion of Ukraine.

Four people, including a child, were killed in the overnight strikes on Kyiv and the surrounding region. Ukrainian forces hit Russian oil facilities.

Zelenskyy arrived in Belgrade on Friday for his first official visit to Serbia.

Speaking at a news conference in Belgrade with Zelenskyy, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic described Ukraine as a "friendly nation" and said he was honored to welcome the Ukrainian leader — the first visit by a Ukrainian president in eight years.

The two leaders discussed their countries' efforts toward joining the European Union, bilateral ties and ways to expand cooperation.

Kyiv's residents face regular drone and missile barrages that Ukraine'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.

Paperwork holds up missile production licenses

Vucic, who has maintained close ties with Moscow and refused to sanction Russia over the invasion — drawing pressure from the EU to change course — reiterated that Serbia respects Ukraine's territorial integrity and said that position would not change.

"The situation in Ukraine is difficult," Zelenskyy said at the press conference. "There was another missile strike last night — ballistic missiles targeting our infrastructure. There were also attack drones."

Zelenskyy said that deliveries of Patriot air defense interceptors — the sole air defense weapon in Ukraine's arsenal able to shoot down ballistic missiles — have slowed compared with a year ago.

"There are fewer of these missiles in 2026. In 2025 there were more, I'll tell you honestly, in terms of monthly supplies," he said.

Zelenskyy said Washington has agreed to let Ukraine manufacture its own Patriot air defense interceptors, but that they are "stuck dealing with paperwork."

"The process for some of these licenses is also taking a long time," he said.

Boy killed with grandparents in Kyiv region

The talks in Belgrade came after multiple Russian drones destroyed the home of a family in the Brovary district, northeast of Kyiv, killing a 3-year-old child and his grandparents, local officials said.

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.

Zelenskyy said at least one other person died in a "strike involving six ballistic missiles against civilian infrastructure" in the capital.

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.

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

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.

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 strikes Russian oil facilities

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.

Vyacheslav Fedorishchev, governor of Russia's Samara region, 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.

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A 12-year-old girl dies after Thailand school shooting, bringing the death toll to at least 8

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A schoolgirl died from critical wounds on Saturday after a student opened fire at a high school and his home outside Bangkok the day before, bringing the death toll from the attack to at least eight people.

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

The girl, 12, died after hospitalization, the Health Ministry said. The school had posted a message on Facebook Friday seeking blood donations for two students, including the girl, who was in seventh grade.

Fourteen people remain hospitalized, of whom seven remain in critical condition Saturday, according to Thailand's Health Ministry. Most of those wounded were between 12 and 14 years old.

Relatives claimed the bodies of eight people from Bangkok's Institute of Forensic Medicine: five school staff, the accused shooter, and his grandparents. Emergency workers brought out a coffin and loaded it onto an ambulance, which will transport the bodies to their hometowns for funeral rites.

The young girl's body is still to be released.

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.

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 co-educational state school, which has about 3,000 students enrolled aged 12 to 18, said all classes would be suspended between Aug. 10-14 and school staff were instructed to work from home during that time.

A few mourners laid flowers Saturday morning at the school's gate, where a few police officers could be seen.

Charin Sirianancha 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.

Todd Blanche is narrowly confirmed as Trump's attorney general in an overnight Senate 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, cementing the command of President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer at a Department of Justice that Trump 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 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 IRS.

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 on 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 Republican 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 settlement fund and the tax audit immunity.

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."

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 Judiciary Committee chairman, 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," said Grassley, R-Iowa.

It is 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.

Trump goes unmentioned but not ignored as Clinton, Bush and Obama step up as essayists on presidents

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When George W. Bush wrote an essay this year about another president named George, he avoided mentioning the one named Donald.

So did Barack Obama and Bill Clinton. The three ex-presidents joined a roster of historians and authors in contributing to the In Pursuit project, a 250th-anniversary series that had each writer produce an essay about a president or first lady.

Though the project was explicitly designed to transcend today's politics, some of its essays nevertheless reflect anxieties that are flaring in the era of President Donald Trump over the use of power, the health of the democracy and the integrity of the presidency.

The project is being curated by Colleen Shogan, the U.S. archivist who was fired without explanation by Trump last year. She instructed contributors not to be partisan or ideological. "Everybody took those

instructions and that guidance very seriously," she told The Associated Press. The goal was for all Americans to "feel welcome to be able to read these lessons and essays and learn something from them."

The mission, Shogan said, "is to surface the lessons from the past 250 years of American history, so that we can learn from those lessons, from both our successes and our failures, so we can plan for the present and the future. It's what has been described as debriefing the American story."

The essays cover 43 presidents — all but Democrat Joe Biden and Republican Trump — and 30 first ladies. They are being published chronologically and weekly into December.

Trump and Biden were judged too fresh to be appraised by history, a call that may have also set aside passions of the moment.

Without naming Trump, Bush's essay is difficult to read without thinking of Trump's reluctance to cede power after his 2020 election defeat and his musings about a third term in defiance of the Constitution's two-term limit.

Bush hails the heroism of humility

Bush's essay celebrates George Washington, the original "No Kings" guy. Bush, a Republican, hails a man whose legacy only grew larger because he modeled the limits of the presidency for centuries to come.

"Our first president could have remained all-powerful," Bush writes, "but twice he chose not to. In so doing, he set a standard for all presidents to live up to." First, Washington resigned as commander in chief of the Continental Army, then set the precedent of serving only two presidential terms before that limit was enshrined in the Constitution.

Bush went on: "George Washington's humility in giving up power willingly remains among the most consequential decisions and important examples in American politics." Bush's essay, released Presidents Day as the first in the series on Substack, drove heavy engagement.

Retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who led U.S. and international forces in the Afghanistan War, sized up a fellow general, Ulysses S. Grant, in another essay that drew much attention for its parallels with today.

History offers lessons on 'law over loyalty'

McChrystal presents the Union general and post-Civil War president as a leader who displayed "an absolute commitment to principles larger than personal ambition" and who, before his presidency, resisted pressure on military leaders to "align with political factions and be loyal to a person rather than the Constitution."

The emphasis on personal loyalty resonates in a time when Trump has repeatedly demanded fealty from officials in his administration.

The "temptation to bend institutions toward personal power is not unique to Grant's era," McChrystal writes. "Our future still depends on whether our leaders choose law over loyalty."

This month, in the latest In Pursuit installment, Democrat Clinton writes about Theodore Roosevelt, focusing on that president's drive to expand the universe of "we the people" at the expense of powerful corporate interests, while also emphasizing Roosevelt's exclusionary views on Black and Indigenous people.

The essays frequently address presidents' failures alongside their accomplishments, a contrast with Trump's calls for federal cultural institutions to stick to patriotic interpretations of American history.

Presidents, the chief justice and first ladies contribute

Among the In Pursuit contributors are Chief Justice John Roberts (writing about William Howard Taft, the only president who also served on the Supreme Court); Hillary Clinton (Eleanor Roosevelt); Michelle Obama (Jacqueline Kennedy); GOP operative Karl Rove (William McKinley); documentarian Ken Burns (Franklin D. Roosevelt); and historian Michael Beschloss (Lyndon Johnson). Democrat Barack Obama presents Abraham Lincoln.

The project is being staged by More Perfect, a nonpartisan alliance of dozens of presidential centers along with academics and organizations dedicated to advancing democracy. It is where Shogan now practices her archivist craft that Trump shut down by firing her in February 2025.

She still has not been told why. Nor has Congress apparently been notified of the reason. The law requires Congress to be told but does not specify a deadline. The National Archives is the central repository of federal documents both precious and routine, and its leader has discretion over which records to preserve and display, and how.

"That is a position that used to be a nonpartisan position, much like the Librarian of Congress, the secretary of the Smithsonian," she said. "And I took that very seriously and acted the entire time when I was archivist in a nonpartisan way."

The White House did not respond when asked why Trump fired the archivist and whether the administration will tell Congress the reason.

Trump has long begrudged the archives for notifying the Department of Justice of his alleged mishandling of classified documents after he left office following his first term, though Shogan was not working for the agency then.

Shogan sees hunger for history without a slant

Shogan said she has been overwhelmed with the public response to the series so far and figures that speaks to a hunger for history shorn of partisanship. The essays have received more than 1 million cumulative views on Substack and her podcast of the same name registered 160,000 audio downloads and nearly 64,000 YouTube views at last count. A documentary about the series is scheduled to air on PBS in October.

In the essays, readers learn something new not just about the giants, but about presidents such as Millard Fillmore — "a historic punchline — best remembered, ironically, for being so forgotten," in the words of his essayist, former New York congressman Steve Israel.

Then there was Franklin Pierce, presented by his essayist as a pro-slavery president and "permanent victim" of Washington's alcohol-soaked culture.

Yale history professor David W. Blight recounts how Pierce won the presidency for the Democrats in 1852 despite vicious trolling by the Whigs. Fielding Mexican War veteran Gen. Winfield Scott in that election, they labeled Pierce, who also served in the war, the "hero of many a well-fought bottle."

Berkshire Hathaway's new CEO Greg Abel spends a chunk of the company's massive cashpile

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Berkshire Hathaway's new CEO Greg Abel spent a significant chunk of the company's massive pile of cash as it invested $10 billion in Google's parent company and repurchased about $4.5 billion of its shares.

The conglomerate that legendary investor Warren Buffett built reported its second-quarter earnings Saturday morning and disclosed that its cash holdings had shrunk to $365.5 billion from nearly $400 billion at the end of March.

Berkshire's report suggested that it had added more than $21 billion worth of commercial, industrial and other stocks to its portfolio, but the earnings report doesn't name the stocks it bought. That won't be revealed until a separate filing later this month.

Abel took over as CEO in January when Buffett retired after six decades leading the company. But Buffett remains chairman.

CFRA Research analyst Cathy Seifert said investors should be encouraged by the amount of shares Berkshire's repurchased although Geico's performance was a concern because its underwriting profits fell 45% and lagged far behind other big auto insurers.

"I think there are two key takeaways that should encourage investors: The fact that they bought back shares after not having done things of this magnitude for several years now. And the other positive thing is the ability to produce the 10% operating revenue growth in the quarter," Seifert said.

Abel announced in March that Berkshire had resumed buying back its own shares for the first time in more than two years, but investors were underwhelmed when the company only repurchased about $234 million worth of Berkshire stock in the first quarter.

The purchases in the second quarter that were disclosed Saturday demonstrate that Berkshire is serious about buybacks, but it is on the low end of the range that investors were expecting. Buffett watchers had been predicting repurchases somewhere between $5 billion and $11 billion based on a filing Buffett made when he announced his annual charitably donations in July.

The company's standard is that it only repurchases shares when Abel and Buffett believes they are selling for less than they are worth. They do not plan to spend a specific amount like many companies do. Most of Berkshire's repurchases were made in June. They may not be buying much now as the stock just hit a new 52-week high on Thursday.

Berkshire previously repurchased $78 billion worth of its own stock between 2018 and 2024.

In addition to the Google stock Berkshire bought this spring, the Omaha, Nebraska-based company also completed a $6.8 billion acquisition of homebuilder Taylor Morrison but that didn't close until July so it's not reflected in these quarterly figures.

Berkshire's bottom line profit more than doubled to $25.667 billion, or $17,868.44 per Class A share, on a big paper gain in the value of its investments as the company lapped last year's $3.8 billion writedown in the value of its Kraft Foods stake. A year ago Berkshire reported earning $12.37 billion, or $8,600.89 per Class A share,

But Buffett has long urged investors to pay more attention to Berkshire's operating earnings to get a better sense of how its dozens of companies are performing because those numbers exclude investments. By that measure, Berkshire's operating profit grew to $12.983 billion, or $9,038.30 per A share, from $11.16 billion, or $7,759.58 per Class A share.

Berkshire owns several major insurers, including Geico, a collection of big utilities, BNSF railroad and a varied assortment of manufacturing and retail companies, including Precision Castparts and See's Candy.

Today in History: August 9, U.S. bombs Nagasaki

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Aug. 9, the 221st day of 2026. There are 144 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 9, 1945, three days after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, a U.S. B-29 Superfortress dropped an atomic device over Nagasaki; the bombing and subsequent radiation poisoning killed an estimated 74,000 people.

Also on this date:

In 1173, construction began on the campanile of Pisa Cathedral — better known as the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

In 1854, Henry David Thoreau's "Walden," which described Thoreau's experiences while living near Walden Pond in Massachusetts, was first published.

In 1936, Jesse Owens won his fourth gold medal at the Berlin Olympics as the United States took first place in the 400-meter relay.

In 1969, actor Sharon Tate and four other people were found killed at Tate's Los Angeles home; cult leader Charles Manson and a group of his followers were later convicted of the crime.

In 1974, Gerald Ford took the oath of office to become U.S. president after Richard Nixon's resignation; in a speech afterward, Ford declared that "our long national nightmare is over."

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan nominated Lauro Cavazos to be secretary of education; Cavazos became the first Hispanic to serve in the Cabinet.

In 2014, Michael Brown Jr., a Black 18-year-old, was shot to death by a police officer following an altercation in Ferguson, Missouri; Brown's death led to sometimes-violent protests in Ferguson and other U.S. cities, helping fuel a national "Black Lives Matter" movement.

In 2024, a passenger plane crashed in a gated residential community in Brazil's Sao Paulo state, killing all 61 people aboard. The twin-engine plane operated by Voepass was en route to Sao Paulo's international airport at the time.

In 2025, Jen Pawol broke Major League Baseball's gender barrier as the first female umpire to work a regular-season game; Pawol worked both games of a doubleheader between the Atlanta Braves and Miami Marlins.

Today's Birthdays: Basketball Hall of Famer Bob Cousy is 98. Tennis Hall of Famer Rod Laver is 88. Actor Sam Elliott is 82. Singer Barbara Mason is 79. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Doug

Williams is 71. Actor Melanie Griffith is 69. Actor Amanda Bearse is 68. Rapper Kurtis Blow is 67. Hockey Hall of Famer Brett Hull is 62. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Deion Sanders is 59. Actor Gillian Anderson is 58. Actor Eric Bana is 58. Producer-director McG (aka Joseph McGinty Nichol) is 58. NHL player-turned-coach Rod Brind'Amour is 56. Actor Thomas Lennon is 55. Actor Nikki Schieler Ziering is 55. Latin rock singer Juanes is 54. Actor Liz Vassey is 54. Actor Kevin McKidd is 53. Actor Jessica Capshaw is 50. Actor Ashley Johnson is 43. Actor Anna Kendrick is 41. Singer-rapper Kazuha is 23.