

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 1 of 65

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Northern State announces 2026-27 Basketball Schedules](#)
- [5- Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information](#)
- [6- SD News Watch: 'A new canvas:' Freeman Academy enters transitional period](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor brings legislative and agricultural experience to race](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: Patients wary of government, companies pushing AI as a rural healthcare solution](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Trump administration urges Supreme Court to rule soon on limiting vote-by-mail in midterms](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Legal groups ask court to restore block on Trump order on birthright citizenship](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [18- Daily Devotional](#)
- [19- Subscription Form](#)
- [20- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [21- News from the Associated Press](#)

Community Calendar

Thursday, Aug. 13

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, au gratin potatoes, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.
First day of volleyball practice.

Friday, Aug. 14

Senior Menu: Grilled chicken sandwich, roasted sweet potatoes, California blend, fruit.
Girls Soccer at NSU vs. Dakota Valley, 3 p.m.
Boys Soccer at NSU vs. Hot Springs, 5 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 15

Girls Soccer hosts Sioux Falls Christian, 1 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

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Don't let the world turn you
into a cynic. A pure heart
is the most beautiful thing
you can possess.



Sunday, Aug. 16

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, Aug. 17

Senior Menu: Chef salad with deli ham, tomatoes and cucumbers, fruited Jell-o, fruit.

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

Groton Area Staff Development Day

Boys Golf at Sioux Valley Invitational, 10 a.m.

Back-to-School Open House, 4-6 p.m.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 2 of 65

1440

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

Black Hole Star

Scientists say they have identified a new type of cosmic object, a supermassive black hole surrounded by a dense gas cloud, resembling a star. The so-called "black hole star" could explain similar objects, red dots that have until now remained unidentified.

While searching for the oldest possible galaxies, researchers using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope noticed an extremely bright red spot—the reddest hue it has ever documented. They say the object—named "MoM-BH*-1"—formed about 660 million years after the Big Bang. They posited that a powerful star surrounded by a dense cloud of hydrogen could explain the red hue, among other phenomena. However, it was only when researchers incorporated a black hole into their simulation that it explained the object's brightness, radiating 100 billion times the energy of a star.

Red dots have appeared in nearly every image the telescope has taken, suggesting these cosmic objects may have been foundational in the early universe.

Lakers Change Hands

Former Disney CEO Bob Iger and venture capitalist Joshua Kushner, the younger brother of President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, are reportedly buying the Los Angeles Lakers in a deal that values the team at a record \$12.5B.

The sale would shatter the Lakers' own record for the highest-priced sale of a North American sports franchise. The previous record was set just 14 months ago, when current owner and Guggenheim Partners CEO Mark Walter agreed to buy the Lakers at a \$10B valuation. NBA team valuations surged 18% from 2025 to 2026, driven in part by multibillion-dollar media rights deals. The Lakers rank among the NBA's most popular teams, a status largely gained after Dr. Jerry Buss bought the team and drafted Magic Johnson in 1979. This rise inspired an HBO drama.

Iger joined Kushner's Thrive Capital in April. Last month, the firm was named as a potential investor in FIFA's now-abandoned plan to sell stakes in the World Cup and other competitions.

 **Humankind:** University students invent a solar-powered ambulance to deliver medical care to rural communities.

Antimicrobial Chickens

Reprogrammed immune cells in chickens may protect the animal from bacterial infections without the use of antibiotics, an in vitro study yesterday revealed. The finding could help reduce antimicrobial resistance and affect farming practices for the estimated 27 billion chickens or more alive at any given time.

Sodium butyrate is a fatty acid naturally produced by gut bacteria in chickens. When a team led by the University of Bristol exposed developing immune cells to the compound, it strengthened the animals' ability to fight a range of infections, including Salmonella and E. coli. While it is not the only form of immune cell training, this approach was distinct in helping chicken cells better clear pathogens without excessive inflammation.

Chickens are a common reservoir for bacterial infections, and E. coli is among the leading threats of antimicrobial-resistant pathogens. At least 23% of foodborne Salmonella cases in the US are linked to eating chicken or turkey.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 3 of 65

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Russell Westbrook to retire from the NBA after 18 seasons across seven teams

PGA Tour playoffs begin today in Memphis, with Scottie Scheffler entering as the No. 1 seed .

Alex Cooper's Unwell media company is valued at \$500M after its first outside investment from businessman Patrick Whitesell.

Sir Rod Stewart cancels remaining farewell tour dates, citing need to recover from a routine, successful heart procedure; the 81-year-old singer-songwriter has recently canceled or paused a handful of shows over his health.

Science & Technology

Google unveils upgraded Pixel phone, its first-ever competitor to Apple's AirTag, a new AI-powered voice feature designed to better understand how people talk, and more at annual "Made by Google" event.

Protective vest worn by a test dummy in NASA's 2022 uncrewed Artemis mission may dramatically reduce astronauts' exposure to potentially cancer-causing radiation during solar storms.

New telescope captures never-before-seen view of a dying star's debris being recycled so it can eventually become part of new clouds, stars, or planets (More, w/image) | View the dying star in question at different wavelengths.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.3%, Dow -0.0%, Nasdaq +0.5%) after tame inflation report.

Consumer price index fell 0.1% in July, putting annual inflation rate at 3.4% as expected.

US budget deficit rose to \$432B in July, the highest monthly level since March 2021, as spending outpaced revenue; 2026 deficit totals \$1.8T so far.

Wendy's shares close up nearly 15% on reports of activist investor Nelson Peltz preparing to take the fast-food chain private.

Politics & World Affairs

David Crowley narrowly defeats democratic socialist Francesca Hong in Democratic primary for Wisconsin's gubernatorial election, defying recent polls.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt will leave post by end of August to spend time with family, per President Donald Trump; decision comes weeks after Leavitt returned from maternity leave.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth accompanied President Donald Trump on military jet to leave Turkey last month; other Cabinet members remained on decoy plane.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 4 of 65

Northern State announces 2026-27 Basketball Schedules

Aberdeen, S.D. – The 2026-27 men's and women's basketball schedules are officially live on nsuwolves.com. The two teams will play 16 home dates from Wachs Arena with the men opening their home slate on November 9 and the women on November 20. Full schedules are outlined below.

The NSU men will host Chadron State and Sioux Falls in non-conference play, while the women will host Black Hills State, South Dakota Mines, Chadron State, and Sioux Falls in non-conference action. Northern opens the NSIC schedule on November 24 at Jamestown. For the entirety of the 2026-27 season the Wolves men will tip-off with the first game of all NSIC double headers, followed by the women.

In addition, fans should mark their calendars for the annual I Hate Winter weekend set for January 29 and 30 against St. Cloud State and Minnesota State. Full-season promotions and special events will be posted on nsuwolves.com/gameday in the coming weeks.

Heading into the 2026-27 season, the NSIC Network is powered by Midco Sports Plus, the conference's new streaming home for exclusive live and on-demand coverage of all 16 NSIC member institutions. Fans can stream every home regular season conference and non-conference home volleyball match, along with NSIC championship events, through a monthly (\$15) or annual subscription (less than \$7 per month). Subscriptions are available at MidcoSportsPlus.com or through the Midco Sports Plus app on iOS, Android, Apple TV, Fire TV and Roku.

Season ticket packages remain available for general admission and reserved seating for all ticketed home events including soccer, volleyball, football, wrestling, and men's and women's basketball, as well as basketball only options at nsuwolves.com/tickets. In addition, the 2026-27 Wolves Buddies program sponsored by Culver's Restaurants launched on June 30th for kids through the 12th grade.

MEN'S BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

11/9	Chadron State	6 p.m.
11/13	Southeastern Oklahoma	3 p.m.
11/14	at Southern Nazarene	6 p.m.
11/24	at Jamestown	5:30 p.m.
11/28	Sioux Falls	2 p.m.
11/29	at Augustana	4 p.m.
12/3	Minot State	5:30 p.m.
12/5	at UMary	2 p.m.
12/10	at Minnesota Duluth	5:30 p.m.
12/12	at Bemidji State	1:30 p.m.
12/17	MSU Moorhead	5:30 p.m.
12/19	Minnesota Crookston	4 p.m.
1/2	Jamestown	4 p.m.
1/8	Augustana	5:30 p.m.
1/9	Wayne State	6 p.m.
1/15	at Concordia-St. Paul	5:30 p.m.
1/16	at Winona State	3:30 p.m.
1/22	at Southwest Minnesota State	5:30 p.m.
1/23	at Sioux Falls	3:30 p.m.
1/29	St. Cloud State [I Hate Winter]	5:30 p.m.
1/30	Minnesota State [I Hate Winter]	4 p.m.
2/4	at Minnesota Crookston	5:30 p.m.
2/6	at MSU Moorhead	2 p.m.
2/11	Bemidji State	5:30 p.m.
2/13	Minnesota Duluth	4 p.m.
2/18	at Minot State	5:30 p.m.
2/20	UMary	4 p.m.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

10/28	at Nebraska Omaha [exhibition]	6:30 p.m.
11/13	at Nebraska Kearney	TBD
11/14	Missouri Western	TBD
11/20	Black Hills State	12 p.m.
11/21	South Dakota Mines	4 p.m.
11/24	at Jamestown	7:30 p.m.
11/28	Sioux Falls	4 p.m.
12/3	Minot State	7:30 p.m.
12/5	at UMary	4 p.m.
12/10	at Minnesota Duluth	7:30 p.m.
12/12	at Bemidji State	3:30 p.m.
12/19	MSU Moorhead	6 p.m.
1/1	Minnesota Crookston	1 p.m.
1/2	Jamestown	6 p.m.
1/8	Augustana	7:30 p.m.
1/9	Wayne State	6 p.m.
1/15	at Concordia-St. Paul	7:30 p.m.
1/16	at Winona State	5:30 p.m.
1/22	at Southwest Minnesota State	7:30 p.m.
1/23	at Sioux Falls	5:30 p.m.
1/29	St. Cloud State [I Hate Winter]	7:30 p.m.
1/30	Minnesota State [I Hate Winter]	6 p.m.
2/4	at Minnesota Crookston	7:30 p.m.
2/6	at MSU Moorhead	4 p.m.
2/11	Bemidji State	7:30 p.m.
2/13	Minnesota Duluth	6 p.m.
2/18	at Minot State	7:30 p.m.
2/20	UMary	6 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 5 of 65

Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information

Compiled from 6 a.m. Saturday, August 8, 2026, to 6 a.m. Wednesday, August 12, 2026

Item	Sturgis	Rapid City District	District Total	Last Year to Date
DUI Arrests	54	15	69	70
Misd Drug Arrests	102	27	129	141
Felony Drug Arrests	49	8	57	61
Custodial Arrests	102	30	132	NA
Total Citations	474	471	945	873
Total Warnings	1699	921	2620	2,506
Cash Seized	0	0	0	0.00
Vehicles Seized	0	0	0	0
For Drug Poss.	0	0	0	0
For Serial No.	0	0	0	0
Non-Injury Accidents	7	13	20	14
Injury Accidents	10	13	23	41
Fatal Accidents	1	2	3	3
# of Fatalities	1	2	3	3

Fatal Crashes:

None

Injury Crashes:

At 6:46 p.m. Tuesday, South Dakota Highway 34, mile marker 13: A 2013 Harley-Davidson motorcycle, operated by a 29-year-old male, was traveling eastbound on SD 34 near mile marker 13. The driver slowed to turn left into a private drive and lost control. The driver was separated from the motorcycle and sustained non-life-threatening injuries. He was transported to Monument Health in Spearfish.

At 8:38 p.m. Tuesday, U.S. Highway 385, mile marker 121: A 2025 Harley-Davidson motorcycle, operated by a 75-year-old male, was southbound on U.S. 385 near mile marker 121. A deer entered the roadway and collided with the motorcycle. The driver sustained non-life-threatening injuries and was transported to Monument Health in Deadwood.

All information released so far is only preliminary.

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



'A new canvas:' Freeman Academy enters transitional period

By Elena Tittel

South Dakota News Watch

FREEMAN, S.D. – While the Freeman Academy announced formally in February 2026 that it won't enroll students for the fall academic term due to low enrollment and financial challenges, its story is not over yet.

Matthew Tschetter, a '88 Freeman Academy high school graduate, has been tasked with guiding future plans. As the academy's first executive director, he hopes to lead it in a new direction while still meeting constituents' desires.

"What can we do to make sure the use of the campus continues forward?" Tschetter said of his mission.

For over 120 years, Freeman Academy served the community. The academy was established in 1901 as South Dakota Mennonite College and aimed to provide a Christian education that embraced Anabaptist ideals. It opened its doors in 1903.

The campus has many different buildings still in good shape, even those that have been standing since its founding. Tschetter said he wants to keep the campus and buildings presentable because he does not want people to think they are letting the academy go.

"We're trying to make sure people don't lose their identity. We want a place for people to reminisce," Tschetter said.

For example, he may consider opening the library to the community so that Freeman Academy graduates can view their old yearbooks. Other archives related to the academy may be donated to the Heritage Hall Museum & Archives next door.

Connecting with the community

Tschetter said he views the transition as "a new canvas," and that the unknown provides him with an opportunity to re-imagine the academy's usage.

"I can sit with the possibility and the unknown together because they actually help each other," Tschetter said.

He said he wants the academy to frequently collaborate with community members and sees potential for it to become a community hub.

One idea in the works is using the gymnasium to host sports practices during the upcoming fall and winter terms. Conversations are currently in the works of using the gym for basketball practice.

Using empty spaces to host community events will both preserve the buildings while opening them up to the community.

"This space can now be for everybody," Tschetter said.

He thinks the cafeteria could be used for a handful of different events. In the past, it has been rented for wedding receptions. He hopes it can continue to be rented for other events.

Empty spaces could also be used to host seminars and symposiums for community members, especially farmers and agriculture businesses as they are a large part of the Freeman community.

Strengthening the Freeman community

Tschetter said those uses, which can create a deeper connection with the community, are vital, especially in a rural community.

The challenges Freeman Academy has faced as a private school in a small, rural town are not unique.

Data from the South Dakota Department of Education's 2025-26 Fall Enrollment Census Count reports 85 nonpublic (private) schools and 49 nonpublic (private) school districts in the state of South Dakota. Of these 49 districts, 11 – not counting Freeman Academy, which was included in the 2025 census count – are in towns with fewer than 5,000 people, displayed in the graphic below.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 7 of 65

Aside from challenges with enrollment and finances, incentivizing people to return to their rural community and be excited about it can be difficult.

"(People) don't come back to Freeman," Tschetter said. "That has an impact on a small private school. How do you maintain it when you don't have alumni returning?"

S. Roy Kaufman, a retired pastor who graduated from Freeman Academy in '62 and Freeman Junior College in '64, said rural communities need to find ways to better support people.

He said that although he was grieved, he also let out a sigh of release, for he sees the school's closing as an opportunity to strengthen the rural community of Freeman through increasing resources for agricultural and manufacturing workers, creating more creative opportunities and providing more adult education programs.

"I would hope that the Freeman Junior College Corp. and the community, Mennonite churches and the community that it supported, would become the agents of this community revitalization for the larger Freeman community," Kaufman said.

South Dakota News Watch is an independent nonprofit. Read, subscribe for free and donate at sdnewswatch.org. Elena Tittel's internship was funded with support from the Nonprofit Newsroom Internship Program created by The Scripps Howard Fund and the Institute for Nonprofit News. Contact: elena.tittel@sdnewswatch.org.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor brings legislative and agricultural experience to race

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

SIOUX FALLS — A farmer who formerly served in the Legislature emerged Wednesday as the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor of South Dakota.

Steven McCleerey, 73, of rural Sisseton, served six years in the state House of Representatives from 2015 to 2020. He said his approach as lieutenant governor would be focused on cooperation rather than partisan conflict.

"We're here to help solve problems, not cause problems," McCleerey said.

He will be the running mate of another former legislator, Dan Ahlers, of Dell Rapids, who is the Democratic nominee for governor.

Ahlers said McCleerey's legislative experience, including serving as assistant House minority leader, taught McCleerey how to earn support from Republicans, given that Democrats do not have the numbers in Pierre to pass a bill on their own.

McCleerey raises crops and cattle and said he has served about 20 years on his local hospital board, along with serving on a nursing home board. Ahlers said those experiences make McCleerey a useful adviser on agricultural, rural health and long-term care issues.

Ahlers is challenging Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden, who is seeking his own full term after being elevated from lieutenant governor when Gov. Kristi Noem resigned last year to accept a job in President Donald Trump's administration. Rhoden's running mate is Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen.

Ahlers and Rhoden have accepted invitations to participate in two September debates. Venhuizen preemptively challenged Ahlers' running mate to a debate, before Ahlers announced his pick.

McCleerey said he is open to facing Venhuizen, but would prefer a "roundtable discussion" or an open forum where the audience asks the questions.

The general election is Nov. 3.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Patients wary of government, companies pushing AI as a rural healthcare solution

BY ARIELLE ZIONTS, KFF HEALTH NEWS AND DARIUS TAHIR, KFF HEALTH NEWS

HOT SPRINGS — Two of the nation's most powerful health officials predict artificial intelligence will play a key role in solving rural America's health challenges.

Health secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. told a panel of U.S. senators that AI nurses can provide "concierge care" to rural patients. Mehmet Oz, who leads the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, has said "the best way to help some of these communities is going to be AI-based avatars" that connect rural patients to mental health services.

And many state health leaders agree. They are using some of their funding from the \$50 billion federal Rural Health Transformation Program to expand AI among rural health organizations.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 9 of 65

AI is computer technology that performs tasks that typically rely on human intelligence by finding patterns or generating words. It has the potential to improve the healthcare system by automating back-office work or identifying patients at risk, but several reports contend there's little evidence AI can improve access to care and patient health in rural areas. It's unclear how well states will track and share outcomes of the tech they invest in.

Meanwhile, some rural Americans are skeptical, according to interviews with people in Hot Springs, South Dakota, a city of about 3,400 residents at the southern end of the Black Hills.

"I get artificial intelligence for certain things, but for personal healthcare — no," Tara Haffner said while standing outside the American Legion.

Haffner said she's worried about AI making mistakes and wants healthcare to stay between her and her doctor.

But Phillip Mues, who oversees technology at Cherry County Hospital and Clinic in rural Valentine, Nebraska, said AI is already helping clinicians save time, reduce burnout, and focus more on patient care.

"I think it will help reduce burden on actual staffing," he said. "It won't replace people, but I think it will help in rural communities."

Still, Mues said, AI can't fix every challenge. Rural hospitals at risk of closing or ending certain services probably can't use AI to save enough money to prevent those consequences, he said.

Congressional Republicans created the five-year Rural Health Transformation Program last summer as a last-minute sweetener to President Donald Trump's signature One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The funding was intended to offset concerns about the outsize fallout anticipated in rural communities from the law, which is expected to reduce overall Medicaid spending by more than \$900 billion over a decade.

The word on the street

Hot Springs, which has a 25-bed independent hospital and a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital, is known for its sandstone buildings, veterans' services, and, yes, hot springs. Residents must drive at least an hour for more advanced care.

Six people interviewed there by KFF Health News said the biggest problem in rural healthcare is the cost or long wait times caused by staffing shortages.

Doug Nikkila, a heavy equipment operator, said AI and other technology come with benefits and risks. "If it's not utilized correctly, it becomes a burden," he said.

Nikkila, who's concerned about nursing home residents being neglected amid staffing shortages, said he thinks AI should send reminders to staff when their residents are due for diaper changes or other care. He also wondered whether AI-powered video monitors could send alerts when they detect falls or illness symptoms.

The healthcare industry is rapidly adopting AI despite the tools being "poorly evaluated," according to a recent report from ARISE, a Stanford- and Harvard-led group that evaluates health-related AI. The report says that while some AI has been successful in controlled settings, there's less evidence it can perform in the real world. It also said few studies track patient outcomes.

Evidence is especially lacking in rural areas. A recent academic paper found that only 26 peer-reviewed studies about AI in rural healthcare were published from 2010 through April 29, 2025. Few analyzed implementation or outcomes.

Despite the dearth of results, some states appear interested in bold experiments — such as using AI to suggest diagnoses or recommend treatments. Utah officials said in their application to the rural health program that they are interested in funding a controversial experiment in AI-powered prescription refill requests.

Even tools proven to work in urban settings may not work in rural ones, said Qian Huang, an assistant professor at the Center for Rural Health and Research at East Tennessee State University.

She said the technology is usually tested at large, academic hospitals and trained on data from urban patients, who may not have the same health issues and obstacles — such as a lack of transportation — as rural patients.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 10 of 65

A KFF Health News review of states' plans for the Rural Health Transformation Program shows they're interested in using AI to automate time-consuming, behind-the-scenes tasks, such as medical charting, coding, referrals, and prior authorization requests. Some states also mentioned ways AI can save money, such as Washington, which discussed tools that "identify and recover" money it's owed.

Mues said the Valentine clinic has been using AI scribes that record appointments and generate notes describing the visit. He said surveys of clinicians before and after they started using the technology show the scribes have helped reduce burnout by letting providers focus on patient care with "eye contact on the patient, not the computer."

States also mentioned funding AI that directly affects patient care, such as tools that recommend possible diagnoses and treatment options to clinicians. Mississippi wants to use predictive AI algorithms to "guide" emergency medics with "triage, routing, and treatment decisions."

Several states want to use AI to analyze patients' medical charts and remote monitoring devices to identify immediate or future health risks. North Dakota's plans mention AI to "detect early signs of chronic disease and behavioral health conditions," while New Hampshire's discusses AI that identifies patients "at high risk of adverse drug events."

Some states plan to give patients access to chatbots or wearable devices that transmit data to their clinicians. Utah is interested in funding AI-powered fetal-monitoring devices, while Kentucky will explore using AI chatbots to "deliver personalized nudges and education" through "health coaching, gamified incentives, and rewards."

Whether the technology appeals to consumers is another matter. Hot Springs resident Stephanie Keller wears a smartwatch to track her fitness but has no interest in an AI chatbot using her data to encourage her to reach her health goals.

"I don't have the time to chat with AI every day. I mean, are you kidding me? I don't want to spend my time on a cellphone," she said.

Rural health facilities also face challenges in implementing AI.

Huang, who has written about AI in rural healthcare, said rural hospitals and clinics may not have the hardware or IT staff needed to support the technology. She said clinicians and staff may already be doing three jobs at once and not have time to go through AI training.

Rural health facilities may not have fast-enough internet to use AI, while patients may have slow connections at home — if they have internet at all — or may not feel comfortable using AI, Huang said.

"In rural communities, trust and a personal relationship is essential," she said.

Roy Ehlers, a Hot Springs resident, said he doesn't trust AI in healthcare, or anywhere else.

"I'm old-fashioned. I don't believe in it. Technology is not my forte," Ehlers said.

Mues said that while some rural patients are "scared of AI," most have let their clinicians at the Valentine facility use the scribing technology to record patients' visits.

Will states share AI results?

Despite questions about implementation, the boom is on. Jordan Everson, an assistant professor at the Georgetown University Department of Family Medicine, said both urban and rural health facilities are rushing to use AI.

"The risk of signing contracts that rural healthcare organizations come to regret is pretty high," said Everson, who previously worked in the information technology office at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Several states are addressing that risk by using their rural health funding to create groups that will help rural health facilities vet, select, or monitor AI tools while offering training, ongoing assistance, or funding for upfront costs.

CMS spokesperson Timothy Foster said the agency doesn't have any AI-specific reporting requirements but is working on a form for states to report their overall progress and outcomes.

Abraham Pritzker, who works at Julota, a company that helps health organizations track data, said states should measure more than how often AI programs are used.

For example, states can measure whether the tech reduces falls, 911 calls, or hospital admissions, said Pritzker, a former paramedic. Huang said it's also important to ask clinicians and patients about their experiences using AI.

Yet many states' applications to the rural health program mention tracking only AI adoption metrics, not what happens after facilities deploy the tech. Some of these states may add further reporting requirements down the road.

Vermont spokespeople did not respond when asked why their state's funding opportunity for AI scribes requires organizations to report only how many clinicians and patients are served by the tech, not how much time they save.

States requiring recipients to report outcomes include Connecticut, which will track how often AI-powered patient monitoring devices trigger accurate alerts. Texas will require organizations to track cost savings, while Wisconsin lists "patient outcomes" and "productivity and efficiencies" as possible metrics.

Huang said that after collecting results, states need to share them so other states and healthcare organizations can learn from their experiences.

"We do not have a lot of resources to waste on tools that don't work in rural areas," she said.

KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF—an independent source of health policy research, polling, and journalism. Learn more about KFF.

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Arielle Zionts is the rural health care correspondent for KFF, primarily covering South Dakota, where she is based, and its neighboring states and tribal nations. Arielle previously worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, reporting on business and economic development. Before that, she was the criminal justice reporter at the Rapid City Journal and a general assignment reporter at Nogales International, on the Arizona-Mexico border. She graduated from Pitzer College in Claremont, California.

Trump administration urges Supreme Court to rule soon on limiting vote-by-mail in midterms

BY JACOB FISCHLER

The Trump administration on Wednesday renewed its request to the U.S. Supreme Court to quickly decide a case over an executive order restricting voting, a day after a Massachusetts federal judge expanded an injunction on the order nationwide.

The Tuesday order from U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani that blocked President Donald Trump's executive order from taking effect anywhere in the country makes the administration's request to the Supreme Court more urgent, U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote.

"The district court's new order confirms the urgent need for this Court to grant the stay of the permanent injunction and to explain its rationale for doing so," Sauer wrote.

Election Day is Nov. 3, less than three months away.

Decisions in two cases at district and circuit courts have reached different conclusions about whether the rulemaking could continue in the lead-up to this fall's elections.

That means the Supreme Court's decision, now on its emergency docket, will likely determine whether the executive order can move forward. A decision could come any day.

The Trump executive order would limit vote-by-mail, the primary method of voting in several states, especially in the West.

It would require states to send the federal government lists of voters who intend to vote by mail ahead of the election and restrict the U.S. Postal Service from delivering ballots to or from people not on the list, among other things.

The administration has sought to focus arguments on the narrow legal question of whether an execu-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 12 of 65

tive order can be challenged before an agency, in this case the U.S. Postal Service and the Department of Homeland Security, issues a final rule. The government argues that the executive order only instructs the agencies to issue rules, and those rules are not yet final, and therefore cannot be challenged.

Trial court order

Talwani's memorandum and order on Tuesday rejected that argument, and she expanded a previous injunction from just the 23 states and the District of Columbia that brought the suit to be effective nationwide.

Talwani said — in her order published just 12 weeks before Election Day — she was only blocking the order with respect to the "fast-approaching" midterms. Further arguments over the merits of federal voting regulations could still happen, but federal law requires the status quo to be preserved this close to an election, she said.

Because of the tight timeline and the assumption that a final rule will be similar to a June 2 notice of proposed rulemaking, Talwani said she could rule simply on the constitutionality of the executive order. It was an easy call, she said.

"The executive branch has no authority to regulate elections," she wrote, citing the Constitution.

The administration has not shown how blocking the executive order would harm the public, as it has not documented any "illegal or fraudulent absentee voting," while the voting rights organizations challenging the order have shown that voters with disabilities, in rural areas, who need translation help, attend college outside their home states and in other circumstances would be harmed, she said.

In fact, the organizations showed their members in states across the country are already being harmed by the uncertainty around what rules will govern the midterm elections, said Talwani.

"Where the (executive order) is presently causing confusion and threatening both increasing chaos and an erosion of trust in our democracy, the court finds that enfranchisement heavily outweighs the executive's attempt to unconstitutionally insert itself into the domain of election regulation," Talwani wrote. The proximity to Election Day "underscores the critical need for an injunction to prevent Defendants from changing election rules on the eve of the election."

The Federal Voter Registration Act also prohibits states from purging voter rolls within 90 days of an election, Talwani wrote.

DOJ's double bind

The nature of the argument puts Sauer and the U.S. Department of Justice in a seemingly difficult legal position, arguing both that the executive order cannot be challenged because it is not enforceable and that the administration must be allowed to put an enforceable rule in place before Election Day.

Sauer asked the court Wednesday to rule for the government and "make clear" that it was doing so "based on the uncertainty concerning the government's future actions."

But in the next paragraph, he said implementing the executive order was crucial to the public interest.

"In all events, it is critical that the Court act promptly on the pending stay," Sauer said. "Otherwise, the district court's erroneous orders will effectively run out the clock on the government's ability to implement Section 3 of the Executive Order for the federal elections in November, thereby causing irreparable harm to the federal government, the public, and election integrity."

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.

Legal groups ask court to restore block on Trump order on birthright citizenship

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — The American Civil Liberties Union has petitioned a federal court in New Hampshire to reaffirm a ruling that found President Donald Trump's birthright citizenship executive order unconstitutional, after the president renewed his attempts to redefine American citizenship despite his loss at the Supreme Court.

"This case has always been, and remains, about the President's effort to fashion new exceptions to birthright citizenship," according to the ACLU's Tuesday filing.

Trump last week signed two executive orders. One seeks to expand the narrow exemptions to birthright citizenship for babies born on U.S. soil. Another aims to end birth tourism, which is a term for the practice of foreign nationals traveling to the United States only for the purpose of giving birth in order to obtain citizenship for the baby.

The ACLU filing noted the Supreme Court's ruling has settled the matter of birthright citizenship, after the justices found the president's order violated the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

"This new Order violates the Court's existing preliminary injunction, as it purports to strip birthright citizenship from members of the provisionally certified class despite the Supreme Court's recent decision," according to the ACLU brief.

"To avoid any doubt in this regard, the Court should underscore that the government may not strip away class members' citizenship through any executive orders or other similarly flawed assertions of Executive power over birthright citizenship."

The White House did not respond to States Newsroom's request for comment.

The ACLU is asking federal Judge Joseph N. Laplante to either "clarify the preliminary injunction or, in the alternative, modify or issue a new preliminary injunction."

Laplante was nominated by former President George W. Bush.

The groups who sued the Trump administration include: the ACLU, ACLU of New Hampshire, ACLU of Maine, ACLU of Massachusetts, Legal Defense Fund, Asian Law Caucus and Democracy Defenders Fund.

"President Trump may not like the fact that birthright citizenship is a constitutional right, and he may not like that he lost in the Supreme Court, but that is really beside the point," Cody Wofsy, deputy director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project and lead counsel, said in a statement. "It's well past time for these illegal and cruel attacks on children's citizenship to end."

Wofsy led the ACLU's legal team in the birthright citizenship argument, from the federal courts to the Supreme Court.

The recent executive order that Trump signed aims to deny citizenship to children born to parents who belong to groups that have been designated as terrorist organizations; children born to foreign diplomatic staff; and children born in U.S. territories where Congress has not passed a law granting citizenship, which is only American Samoa.

The children of diplomats are already exempt from birthright citizenship — one of the few carve-outs — but the executive order aims to expand that exemption to include the children of noncitizen staff who work on behalf of a foreign government, such as an embassy.

Birthright citizenship has been a longstanding core principle in the United States, in which nearly any child — regardless of their parents' immigration status — born on U.S. soil is automatically granted citizenship.

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside," according to the clause in the 14th Amendment.

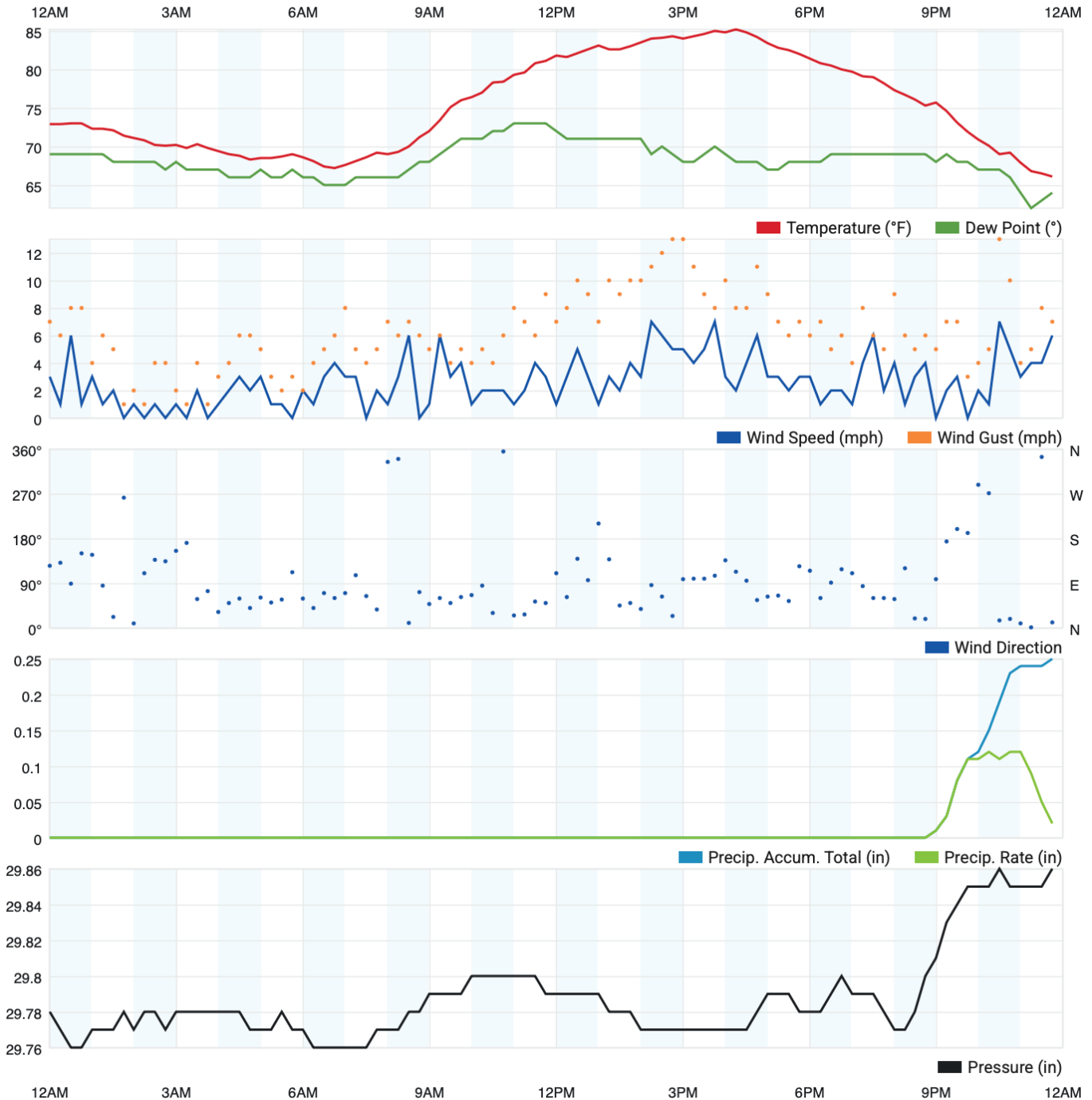
Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 14 of 65

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 12, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 15 of 65

Thursday



High: 79 °F

Chance
Showers then
Partly Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 60 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Friday



High: 79 °F

Chance
Showers

Friday Night



Low: 63 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms

Saturday



High: 81 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance
Showers

Mostly Dry Conditions Heading Into The Weekend, Cooler Over The Next Few Days

Thursday



High: 74-80°

Friday



High: 74-80°

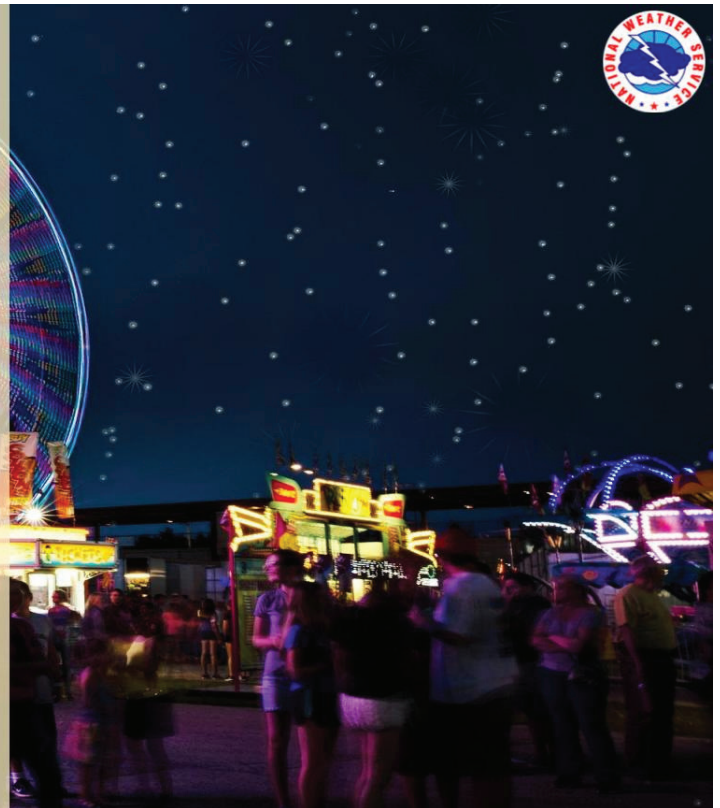
Saturday



High: 75-81°

- Rain ends this morning. Highs in the mid 70s to around 80F degrees today.
- Temperatures remaining near to below normal Friday into Saturday.
- The forecast dries out for much of today and Friday but the high humidity is expected to stick around.

August 13, 2026 2:48 AM



Ongoing rain showers with embedded thunder ends this morning. Dry conditions are forecast for much of the next couple of days. Near to slightly below normal temperatures across the region are also expected through the weekend. Unfortunately, the high humidity is expected to stay, too.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 16 of 65

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 4:07 PM

Low Temp: 66 °F at 11:29 PM

Wind: 14 mph at 2:46 PM

Precip: 0.33

Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1933

Record Low: 40 in 1898

Average High: 84

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in Aug.: 0.87

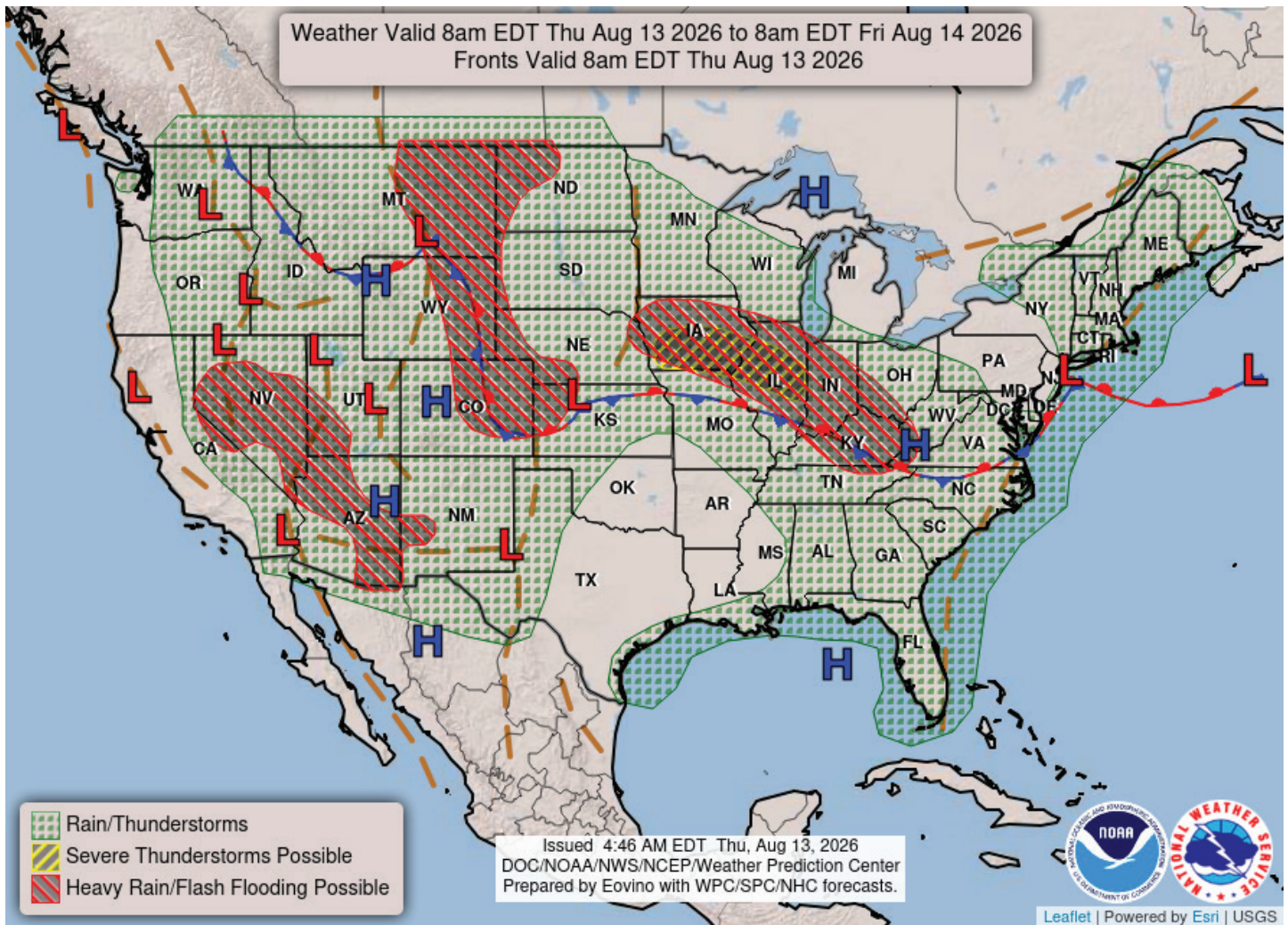
Precip to date in Aug.: 10.14

Average Precip to date: 14.97

Precip Year to Date: 19.61

Sunset Tonight: 8:45 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:30 am



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 17 of 65

Today in Weather History

August 13, 2000: A thunderstorm set numerous prairie fires in Harding County. Over a thousand acres burned by the end of the day.

1831: The Great Barbados Hurricane was an intense Category 4 hurricane that left cataclysmic damage across the Caribbean and Louisiana in 1831. From August 11 through the 13, Bermudians were amazed to see the sun with a decidedly blue appearance, giving off an eerie blue light when it shone into rooms and other enclosed places. Ships at sea as far west as Cape Hatteras reported that "their white sails appeared a light blue colour." A month later it was learned that the astounding blue sunlight had coincided with a terrible hurricane that caused 1,477 people to lose their lives. It was assumed that the hurricane was intensive enough to cause an unusual disturbance in the higher atmospheric strata, and refraction, diffraction or absorption of light rays, to produce the blue reflection. Because the sun appeared bluish-green, Nat Turner took this as the final signal and began a slave rebellion a week later on August 21.

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1919 — High winds and heavy rain struck the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. In New Jersey, winds gusted to 60 mph at Atlantic City, and nine inches of rain fell at Tuckerton. The wind and rain leveled crops and stripped trees of fruit causing several million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1980 — The afternoon high at New York City was just 89 degrees. But there were fifteen days of 90 degree heat during the month, their hottest August of record. (The Weather Channel)

1985 — Hail larger than golf balls, driven by 70 mph winds, moved down crops, stripped trees, and broke windows, near Logan KS. Road graders cleared three foot drifts of hail on Kansas Highway 9 east of Logan. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorms deluged the Central Gulf Coast States with torrential rains. Thunderstorms in Mississippi drenched Marion County with up to 15 inches of rain during the morning hours, with 12.2 inches reported at Columbia. Floodwaters swept cars away in the Lakeview subdivision of Columbia when the the Lakeview Dam broke. Flash flooding caused more than three million dollars damage in Marion County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A dozen cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Lansing MI reported a record 35 days of 90 degree weather for the year, Detroit MI reported a record 37 days of 90 degree heat for the year, and Williamsport PA reported a record 38 days of 90 degree weather for the year. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thunderstorms developing in a tropical airmass over the northeastern U.S. soaked Connecticut and Massachusetts with four to eight inches of rain over the weekend, between the 11th and 13th of the month. Hartford CT received 7.70 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1991 — Stockton, California received 0.05 inch of rainfall on this day. Since 1949, this is the only measured rainfall in Stockton on August 13th.

2003: A string of days in Paris France with temperatures from the 4th to the 12th above 95°F ends when the day's high drops to 90°F. During the long, hot summer which began 25 July and has registered several days above 100°F, an estimated 14,800 have died from heat-related causes, the French government admits.

2014 — An official, New York State 24 hour precipitation record was set at Islip, NY on August 12-13 when 13.57" of rain fell.

An Example of Humility

Humility means responding to God with gratitude and living in light of His greatness.

John 13:5-17: 5 Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

6 So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"

7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."

8 Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

10 Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"

13 "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.

14 "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

16 "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

17 "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Sometimes we need a wake-up call that opens our eyes so we can see who we truly are. When Jesus started washing the disciples' feet, they must have felt uneasy, especially after their recent discussions about which of them was the greatest (Mark 9:34-35).

As we noted a couple of days ago, foot washing was the task of the lowest slave in the household. But there was probably no servant posted at the door of the Last Supper, since Jesus and His disciples were eating in a borrowed room. All the disciples considered this job beneath them, so everyone's feet remained filthy until Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, humbled Himself to serve those who should have served Him. After three years of teaching and modeling humility to His disciples, Jesus drove the point home with a towel and a bowl.

If we want to follow Jesus' example of servanthood, a good place to begin is with prayer asking for help to see any sinful attitudes hiding in our heart. Then we can respond with gratitude rather than shame, as He is inviting us to grow. When we confess what He reveals and ask Him to help us change, we'll discover that humility isn't about thinking less of ourselves—it's about thinking of ourselves less. In other words, it's about seeing who God is and living in light of His greatness rather than our own.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 19 of 65

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.12.26

8 22 23 28 35 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 49 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.11.26

1 20 30 46 68 17

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$90,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 34 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.12.26

1 9 27 32 36 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,550,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 49 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.12.26

1 5 6 27 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$28,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 4 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.12.26

3 4 19 21 58 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 33 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.12.26

4 26 66 67 69 9

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 33 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Mission Improbable: A onetime Republican is trying to prove Democrats can win in Florida

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

LEESBURG, Fla. (AP) — Cyn Doyle is a self-described political cynic. So when David Jolly, the Republican-turned-independent who is now running for Florida governor as a Democrat, swung through this town dotted by lakes and Spanish moss, she had doubts.

"How can you assure us," the 71-year-old pressed, "that you won't become another John Fetterman?"

As the crowd in the clubhouse of a manufactured home community for seniors jeered the mention of the contrarian Pennsylvania Democratic senator, Jolly, who once critiqued politicians as an MSNBC pundit, made the case for himself.

"Change is part of my journey," he responded. "What I can tell you is that the values I speak of — that the economy should work, that government can do a little bit to improve our lives and that everyone should have the right to be protected — those are the guideposts for how I'll serve as governor."

Doyle, an independent who said she's a registered Democrat mostly to participate in primaries, left impressed.

"I believe him," she said. "I don't believe many."

Florida spent a generation as America's prized political battleground, where the interests of big cities, agricultural towns, freshly arrived retirees and diverse Latino communities collided in elections often decided by fractions of a percentage point.

Jolly is bent on proving those days aren't over.

In the course of a single day last weekend, he rallied a chandeliered ballroom in The Villages, a wealthy Republican-leaning retirement community. Then it was off to the fluorescent lights of the Leesburg clubhouse before ending with a rousing speech to Democrats in Hillsborough County, home to Tampa, which backed a Republican presidential candidate for the first time in 20 years in 2024.

Democrats have collapsed in Florida

President Donald Trump's rise has coincided with a Democratic collapse in Florida. He won here three times, with ever-expanding margins. The 19-percentage-point win by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2022 cemented a GOP supermajority in the legislature.

Jolly's path to victory could be blocked by both math and money in his likely race against Rep. Byron Donalds, the Trump-backed candidate in Tuesday's Republican primary. Donalds, who would be Florida's first Black governor, has raised more than \$100 million compared to Jolly's \$10 million.

Donalds has cast Jolly as an out-of-touch liberal, blanketing the state this week with an ad featuring Jolly referring to "gender-affirming care" and backing communities painting rainbow crosswalks to show support for LGBTQ people. Jolly countered that Donalds is ignoring pressing economic issues.

In an interview over an Outback Steakhouse lunch while his wife and two young children busied themselves with coloring, Jolly acknowledged "there's not going to be the political will" to reverse the state's ban on transgender girls and women participating on female teams at public schools and universities.

He said he didn't think governors should decide who plays in what sports even as he described himself as a "girl dad" and noted "I don't think we should have biologically born men playing in competitive sports."

"But look," he added, "if a 10- or 12-year-old soccer league in the community has a coed team, I don't think the governor should be throwing a flag on the field."

Republicans face tests of their own

For all the headwinds confronting Jolly, Republicans may encounter their own turbulence.

The culture wars that have raged under DeSantis, including a feud with Disney and fights over gender and sexual orientation, have left some exhausted. Karen Kuhn, a 72-year-old resident at The Villages, described herself as in "despair."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 22 of 65

Democrats have won a string of special elections from Miami to Palm Beach and Tampa, adding to their optimism. Former GOP Rep. Carlos Curbelo said Latinos who voted for Trump in 2024 might not support Republicans again, in part because of the administration's immigration enforcement tactics.

"I definitely can see a scenario where it's a closer race, where it's a competitive race," said Curbelo, who narrowly lost his reelection bid in 2018, the last wave election year for Democrats.

A race with implications for 2028

Jolly is telling that to any Democrat who will listen, including those with potential presidential ambitions such as Govs. JB Pritzker of Illinois, Gavin Newsom of California, Andy Beshear of Kentucky and former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. If Florida can change, he argues, the national political landscape would change with it.

"All of a sudden the road to the White House looks dramatically different," Jolly said. "It reshapes the House of Representatives. The structural change from winning Florida is a generational opportunity for Democrats."

It's a point echoed by other Democrats, including state Rep. Emily Gregory, who flipped the Palm Beach district home to Trump's Mar-a-Lago.

"To abandon Florida was deeply, deeply unwise," she said. "I hope that investment is coming back because it is a purple state and I feel very confident going into November."

Nikki Fried, the Florida Democratic Party chair, acknowledged "the bottom fell out" for Democrats. She has spent the past several years rebuilding the operation. Democrats charged with winning back state legislative and congressional seats are prioritizing some Florida races this year.

But Beshear, who chairs the Democratic Governors Association, isn't making a financial commitment yet. "David's working really hard," he said in an interview. "He's a good candidate, and we're watching it closely."

Donalds' campaign remains confident. His communications director, Gates McGavick, said: "Florida voters will reject radical liberal David Jolly because he will make life more expensive."

A 'Bush 41' Republican's path to becoming a Democrat

Jolly is an unlikely figure cajoling Democrats to think about their future.

He first gained national attention in 2014 as the GOP winner of a Tampa Bay congressional seat that was seen as a bellwether. In a Democratic Party that emphasizes diversity, Jolly regularly refers to himself as a "53-year-old white former Republican with salt-and-pepper hair." His time in Congress runs counter to voters elevating fresher voices this year.

During stump speeches, he says he was a "Bush 41" Republican. He left the GOP in 2018, spending several years as an independent before registering as a Democrat in 2025.

Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings, who challenged Jolly until suspending his campaign in June and announcing he had prostate cancer, acknowledged Florida Democrats have to appeal to independents. But he also said "people don't want a chameleon."

"That's the big challenge that he's had, is convincing people that he has stepped away from the Republican policies," Demings said.

Others were more forgiving.

Sylvia Rieger, a 70-year-old resident at The Villages, said Jolly's evolution showed "moxie."

Steven Slyter, an 81-year-old retired handwriting expert, said it was "courageous" for Jolly to leave his party. "He made a decision about what he stands for," Slyter said. "I like that."

Florida's last Democratic candidate for governor, Charlie Crist, was also a former Republican. After his drubbing by DeSantis, several Democrats said Jolly was campaigning more effectively.

Facing minimal primary competition, Jolly has largely avoided debates over the party's ideological future. He's won support from progressives including Rep. Maxwell Frost while shoring up his centrist credentials by picking former Rep. Gwen Graham, the daughter of longtime Sen. Bob Graham, as his running mate.

Some Jolly supporters are hoping that his poly-party background will be an asset.

Jeff Adelman is running for a nonpartisan seat on the Coral Springs City Commission in Broward County. As he left a recent meeting of the Coral Springs Parkland Democratic Club, he described Jolly as a potentially unique fit for the state.

"We live in Florida," he said. "I don't think you're going to get somebody like Bernie Sanders to run for governor in the state of Florida."

Settler siege of Palestinian homes in West Bank a 'horrific act of terror,' US ambassador says

By SAM METZ Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The U.S. Ambassador to Israel condemned the actions of Jewish settlers who are besieging the home of an American Palestinian family in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee called the siege a "horrific act of terror."

Since Sunday, according to local officials and family members, settlers have gathered near the home in the village of Qusra and harassed those inside, defying efforts by the Israeli military to defuse the situation.

A group that has included up to dozens of men has thrown stones, attempted to bring down a stone wall nearby, and prevented the occupants from leaving despite dwindling supplies.

Speaking to The Associated Press by phone from his home in Ohio, the home's owner Lou Ridi said his 48-year-old brother and nephew, who have been holed up in the home to defend it, had been unable to leave the house and did not have access to food or water for several days.

On Thursday morning, the owner's brother Qusai Abu Rida said that he and his teenage son had been evacuated by Israel's military. It was unclear what would happen to the property and at least one other that has been targeted.

Israeli troops intervened in recent days to try to restore order. The military said that overnight Thursday its troops had dismantled "two illegal outposts" on the outskirts of Qusra and a nearby village, and detained one Israeli. It added that additional soldiers had surged to the area, which is about 16 kilometers (10 miles) of the Palestinian city of Nablus, to "carry out defensive missions and patrols."

Journalists on the outskirts of Qusra said roads into the village were closed. Israeli police did not immediately respond to questions about whether any Israeli civilians had been arrested.

Palestinians and the Israeli opposition accuse Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hardline government of turning a blind eye to attacks by settlers against Palestinians as clashes have surged in the last few years.

Huckabee's post on X was an unusually sharp rebuke from a U.S. official, even as he defended the Israeli military's response. Huckabee is a longtime ally of Israel's settler movement and in the past has expressed support for Israeli control over the occupied West Bank while condemning settler violence.

Home security footage from Thursday morning appeared to show a few settlers still hiding by a damaged stone wall near the house.

Ridi said that settlers have been harassing his home for months before the situation escalated in recent days, saying they had cut off the water and electricity to his house and thrown stones, causing damage to the property as well as at least one more house in the area.

"We are prisoners in our own house, hostages in our own house," he said.

Last month, a mosque in Qusra was set on fire in another apparent settler attack. That followed the killing of an Israeli settler, which triggered violence that left two Israeli soldiers and four Palestinian villagers dead.

Settlers have been building more outposts in an effort condemned by many in the international community as aimed at dismantling any remaining hopes of establishing a Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank.

The Palestinians seek the West Bank, captured by Israel in the 1967 war, as part of a future state. Many settlers and their supporters say the entire area should belong to Israel for historical, religious and security reasons.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 24 of 65

Britain poised for a record hot summer as western Europe swelters under another heat wave

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Large parts of western Europe will be sweltering once again on Thursday, with Britain poised for its fifth heat wave of an exceptional summer that is expected to be the hottest on record.

Forecasters are predicting the mercury to rise as high as 38 Celsius (100 Fahrenheit) in central and southeast England, falling just short of the August record of 38.5 C, set in 2003.

The Met Office said earlier this week that only average conditions were needed for the rest of August to beat last year's record for the hottest year.

For a country that's largely not equipped to deal with these levels of heat, it's been a particularly uncomfortable few weeks. Air conditioning is a rarity outside of shops and offices.

Working has been particularly difficult in hospitals, where nurses have been known to collapse from heat exhaustion, according to the Royal College of Nursing.

"When nursing staff are collapsing, feeling dizzy, sick or even being admitted to the very hospitals they work in because their workplaces cannot handle the heat, it shows just how badly they are being failed," said RCN chief executive and general secretary Professor Nicola Ranger.

The bulk of the country is now officially in drought, heaping pressure on water resources for households, agriculture and the environment to mitigate, all of whom have to look for mitigations both in the short-term and in the long-term in the face of human-caused climate change.

Southern Water, which oversees supplies in the south of England, has applied for a rare drought order which would ban businesses from nonessential water use, including cleaning cars and filling nondomestic swimming pools, saying an "exceptional" lack of rain has threatened supplies in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Environment Secretary Angela Eagle will decide on the application, which would be the first such ban since May 2006.

Meanwhile, wildfires have been blazing uncontrollably, most notably this week in the New Forest in southern England. Some 1,017 wildfires have been recorded in England and Wales this year, according to data from the National Fire Chiefs Council, the same as last year's record-breaking total.

Though not on the level as those witnessed in France, Greece and Spain, they provide ample evidence of the need for the U.K. to adjust to a new reality.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham has said he will consider imposing a ban on disposable barbecues amid the risk of further wildfires as extreme heat continues to grip parts of the U.K.

"I do believe we need to get the message out loud and clear," he said. "People should not be using those barbecues outside at this moment in time."

Millions crowd Spanish cities to see country's first total solar eclipse in over a century

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

MEDINACELI, Spain (AP) — Millions of people crowded cloudless cities and towns in Spain on Wednesday in search of the best views of a total solar eclipse, when the alignment of the sun, moon and Earth briefly plunged parts of the planet into darkness.

The crowds brought lawn chairs and umbrellas as they eagerly awaited the celestial spectacle, which began early in the evening. As the sky darkened, gradually at first and then quickly, people broke into applause and cheered. It was the country's first total solar eclipse in more than a century.

"It's simply impossible to imagine," Rosa Celiberti, a language teacher who watched from Medinaceli, a Roman-era hilltop town in northeast Spain, said with tears in her eyes. "No matter how many photos or videos you've seen, nothing comes even close to what it actually feels like."

Across a wide band of northern and central Spain and Portugal, millions of people enjoyed some of mainland Europe's best views of the eclipse. It also passed over slivers of Greenland and Iceland.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 25 of 65

Totality — when the moon completely covers the sun's light — was expected to last less than 2½ minutes, reaching its maximum duration off Iceland's west coast. By the time it got to a small patch of Portugal and then to Spain, just before sunset, totality dwindled to a minute or so. The total eclipse then ended over the Mediterranean.

The eclipse was expected to draw at least a half-million additional visitors, Spanish authorities said. Demand for hotel rooms along the path of totality, including in the northern cities of A Coruña, Bilbao and Santiago de Compostela, soared.

Rural areas prepared for an influx of visitors

The event unfolded against the backdrop of scorching summer temperatures and wildfires, and Spanish officials rolled out a large public safety campaign.

Temperatures across much of Spain climbed above 35 degrees Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) in many areas where the eclipse was observed. Some 350 official viewing sites were set up across the sparsely populated interior, and more than 33,500 law enforcement officers were deployed to observation areas and access points, the Interior Ministry said.

Only weeks ago, the most destructive wildfire in Spanish history devoured 500 square kilometers (193 square miles) and forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people in Ávila, in central Spain. Several smaller wildfires remain active elsewhere in southern and central parts of the country.

Despite clouds, sky watchers in Iceland witnessed darkness

In Reykjavik, clouds did not prevent hundreds of people from gathering in bright raincoats in front of the landmark Hallgrímskirkja church as the skies darkened.

With rain falling, the disk of the sun was barely perceptible and then, suddenly, the lights went out. Only the glow of phones held aloft could be seen.

The crowd cheered the darkness as it rained harder and roared even louder when the first light returned. They did not wait to watch the remainder of the partial eclipse and quickly cleared out of the square.

Eclipse glasses sold fast

Special eclipse glasses were essential for safe viewing, even if only a sliver of the sun remained visible. The glasses are made with special filters that block solar radiation that can damage the eyes.

For months, supermarkets, department stores, museums and planetariums across Spain had sold or distributed the glasses, with many pharmacies running out of stock ahead of Wednesday.

On Tuesday evening in downtown Madrid, a long line formed outside a photo shop where a sign read, "We carry eclipse glasses."

One woman emerged triumphantly and reassured those waiting: "He has boxes and boxes of them!"

A ship circles waters near Greenland hoping to catch a glimpse

Sverre Rud, captain of the MS Spitsbergen, was circling the waters of Rypefjord in eastern Greenland trying to make sure he was perfectly positioned for his 126 passengers to view the spectacle. All day, people came up to Rud to ask if he had nailed the right spot, with no clouds.

"I will do my best," Rud said. "I will pull out my superman powers."

The eclipse may have been startling for the passengers, who had been experiencing 24 hours of daylight on a 17-day cruise in locations mostly north of the Arctic Circle.

Suddenly, for two minutes it was dark.

Even so, the mood on the polar ship had been pure anticipation.

"Everyone is very enthusiastic," Rud said. "When we were down for breakfast earlier, it was almost like a little bit of a Christmas Eve feeling here."

Hotel costs skyrocketed in Spain and Iceland

Rooms in Reykjavík, Iceland's capital, averaged more than \$1,000 for Wednesday night as Icelanders prepared for their first total solar eclipse since 1954 and the first visible from the capital since 1433.

Prices were roughly double 2025 rates, according to data group Lighthouse Intelligence. Many tourists made bookings years in advance. But cloudy skies prevailed across much of the island.

Authorities expected up to 20,000 additional overseas visitors during an already busy peak tourist period.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 26 of 65

Iceland is home to fewer than 400,000 people.

The 70-room Hotel Keflavík in the Reykjanesbaer municipality was fully booked, with guests hoping to see around one minute and 45 seconds of totality.

"Eclipse time, of course, has been very demanding, and many people came to us early, like last year," said Steinþór Jónsson, the hotel's owner and manager.

Jónsson said he had seen nothing like it since 1986, the year the hotel opened, when U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev held a summit in Reykjavík.

"When I opened the hotel, we had Reagan and Gorbachev meeting. It was very hectic here," he said with a smile. "Besides Reagan and Gorbachev, the eclipse is the biggest."

Sun mostly obscured in Britain

Across Britain, where the sun was more than 90% obscured, people flocked to hilltop parks and anywhere with an open view of the sky to see the best eclipse since 1999.

In Greenwich Park, with views of the River Thames and central London, the sky turned an eerie gray as a sliver of light sat atop the moon like a hat.

Veronica Orozco popped open a bottle of champagne to share with neighbors as she witnessed the second eclipse of her life.

"I was in Venezuela and I was young and I thought that the sun would not come back. My dad said, 'It is science, of course it will come back,'" she recalled. "Now sitting here at the age of 41, it is still magical."

Aja Lilit, who turned 24 on Tuesday, said the eclipse was like a "birthday present from the universe."

She said the rare event made her think of how small she was at a "cosmic level."

Colombia's earthquake is déjà vu for Venezuelans. The government response is anything but

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — For the second time in two months, the ground was shaking in South America. Once again, families flooded social media with pleas for help finding missing loved ones under flattened buildings. Once again, governments across political divides and continents pledged aid.

But in many ways, the contrast between Colombia's 7.4-magnitude earthquake on Monday and Venezuela's back-to-back temblors on June 24 could not have been more stark.

In Venezuela, acting President Delcy Rodríguez waited nearly four hours before addressing the nation. In Colombia, newly inaugurated President Abelardo de la Espriella announced an emergency command post to oversee rescue efforts barely an hour after the earthquake struck. For weeks, Venezuelan civilians were clawing through rubble by hand. Hours after the earthquake in Colombia, rescue teams were searching for survivors with cranes and excavators.

In Venezuela, Rodríguez relied on rescuers from around the world to fill critical gaps in the state's response. Colombia has so far declined foreign crews except for those from the United States, saying it has enough personnel and has requested humanitarian supplies instead.

The contrast is a reminder of the differences between the neighboring nations — their political systems, resources and the strength of their institutions — and a demonstration of how those can take on life-or-death importance in catastrophes.

"The differences between an authoritarian regime and a democratic system can be seen clearly in the institutions and in their capacity to respond to an emergency," said Ronal Rodríguez, a Venezuela specialist at Colombia's Rosario University. "Crises are also political opportunities."

In Colombia, a political newcomer takes charge

De la Espriella, a conservative former criminal defense lawyer with no previous political experience, was sworn in as president in Colombia's third-largest city, Cali, less than 72 hours before the earthquake toppled buildings there and across the country's far-flung provinces — the very regions he'd pledged to prioritize on the campaign trail.

Even before the earthquake, the political novice was navigating a fraught transition from predecessor

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 27 of 65

Gustavo Petro, Colombia's first leftist president, who at first refused to recognize de la Espriella's narrow victory and alleged electoral fraud.

Their feud derailed Colombia's formal handover process, leaving key agencies — including the national disaster management agency — in the hands of officials de la Espriella attacked as a candidate.

But humanitarian workers say the government's earthquake response has transcended those tensions, reflecting the resilience of Colombia's democracy.

"All the institutions have worked," said María José Torres Macho, the United Nations' top official in Colombia. "Our ability to be working with them has not been affected by the change of government."

Just an hour after the quake, de la Espriella posted a video saying he would "personally assume leadership" of the disaster response. "You're not alone," he told Colombians in the country's hard-hit coffee-growing region.

Hours later, he was in Bogota, coordinating with government officials and relief agencies. Within 36 hours, he had toured disaster zones in the western cities of Quibdo, Cali and Pereira and dispatched ministers further afield.

"There is an entire system that means that even when you change the person at the top, the institution keeps functioning," said Ana Karina García, director of Fundación Juntos Se Puede, a Venezuelan migrant aid group based in Colombia.

Still, Colombia's response has not been without controversy. De la Espriella's rejection of rescue teams from around the world has raised questions about his handling of foreign aid, with China's ambassador complaining on social media that he did not even know which Colombian official was responsible for coordinating international assistance.

Rugged terrain, poor infrastructure and communication disruptions have slowed casualty reports from the hardest-hit areas. The government's national toll of at least 265 dead and 500 missing lags far behind counts from local authorities, while an independent database lists over 4,100 as unaccounted for.

In Venezuela, a political veteran comes under fire

Despite Rodríguez's nearly two decades at the highest levels of Venezuela's government, she struggled to project authority over the disaster response.

Hours before Rodríguez took to the airwaves to declare a national emergency, her interior minister, Diosdado Cabello, called state television with damage reports — a sign of their competing claims to power within the ruling party.

Later, when Rodríguez gave the government's initial casualty toll, she reported just 32 dead, a count that didn't include the epicenter of La Guaira, site of the worst destruction. Many of La Guaira's victims lived in government-built housing complexes thrown up cheaply during the oil boom of the early 2000s, part of the self-declared socialist party's vast subsidized housing program that became a pillar of its political patronage system.

Rodríguez remained ensconced in Caracas for a full day before visiting La Guaira and assessing the damage. The government updated the death toll daily in the week that followed without offering a figure for missing people, fueling concerns of a vast undercount as civilians struggled to recover the dead without heavy machinery.

Now, more than six weeks after the quakes, a widely cited opposition-run database lists 29,000 people as unaccounted for. Government officials update the death toll once a week; as of Monday it stood at 6,301.

Years of political repression deepened Venezuelans' distrust of the official earthquake response.

"It was very difficult for citizens to access important information about the emergency, get themselves to safety and know where to seek help," said Gabriel Bastidas, a Venezuelan journalist based in Argentina who runs Monitoreamos.com, an independent news website critical of Venezuela's governing political movement that's among dozens of media outlets blocked in the country.

A stronger state swings into action

But even if Venezuela's response had been perfect, the aftermath might still have looked very different from Colombia's: The twin quakes struck densely populated La Guaira around nightfall, complicating

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 28 of 65

reconnaissance, while Colombia's hit largely rural areas in daylight.

Experts caution that it often takes weeks for a full picture to emerge after a disaster of this magnitude. Colombia is only days into its response, with thousands still missing.

Still, many Venezuelans marvel at how the Colombian government has drawn on resources that years of economic crisis and mass migration under former President Nicolás Maduro have hollowed out in their country.

"From the very beginning, we saw the news media broadcasting live from the sites of the catastrophe; mayors, governors, health secretaries, emergency officials providing details about the dead and missing," Bastidas said.

Juan Mogollon, a 28-year-old Venezuelan living in Orlando, Florida, learned from a TV broadcast Monday morning that his 16-year-old cousin, José Juan Vivas, and the boy's grandparents were trapped in the ruins of their apartment building in Cali. Vivas, a U.S. permanent resident, was living there with his grandparents, who settled in Colombia after leaving Venezuela.

Having watched people back home plead for rescuers and equipment after Venezuela's June earthquakes, Mogollon feared the worst.

Yet within a few hours, he said, footage from the collapse site showed excavators, cranes and other heavy machinery, along with firefighters flown in from Bogota. Security forces deployed dogs and drones equipped with thermal cameras to identify victims across stricken towns.

"They are prepared, they have the equipment, they have the protocols, they know what to do," Mogollon said, still anxiously waiting to hear if his relatives survived. "That's the least we should expect as citizens in every country, you know? That's the difference between my country and Colombia right now.

USAID fallout: In Nepal, when the aid workers stopped coming, the women and babies started dying

By KRISTEN GELINEAU Associated Press

GAUR, Nepal (AP) — The young mother's breath had grown ragged. Inside her mud home in rural Nepal, she hunched over in agony, pain pummeling her pregnant belly, her swollen legs scarcely able to support her.

Kabita Mukhiya was in the midst of an emergency, but didn't know it. For weeks, she'd suffered at home, because there was nobody around to tell her to rush to a hospital. The aid workers who once regularly visited her village to help pregnant women had stopped coming, after foreign aid cuts by the United States shuttered a program aimed at saving mothers' and babies' lives.

Kabita was uneducated and impoverished, and she did not know what was happening to her body. In desperation, she turned at last to her aunt for help, who hauled her off to the hospital, where both women wept as the doctors said things neither could understand.

Which is why Kabita — confused and confined to her hospital bed — turned to something she could understand: prayer.

"Please save the baby," she begged God through her tears. "Please save me."

Then, through the chaos, came the words that Kabita finally grasped, but could not bear: It was too late. Her baby was dead.

And her own life was now hanging by a thread.

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One baby at a time, the world is marching toward a grim milestone: Because of global cuts to foreign aid, the Gates Foundation has predicted that 2025 will be the first year this century where child deaths will increase.

For many experts, the health of a country is measured by the health of its smallest: Children under the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 29 of 65

age of 5. And while global child mortality data for 2025 won't be available for several months, health officials are already bracing for a surge in deaths among the world's youngest and most vulnerable.

The decision by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration to dissolve the United States Agency for International Development — once the world's largest humanitarian donor — gutted maternal and neonatal care, decimated nutrition programs for millions of pregnant women and children and left scores of birthing centers devoid of equipment, medicine and staff. The U.S. cuts, followed by foreign aid cuts from several other countries, forced 60% of women's organizations to reduce their services, according to the World Health Organization.

The U.S. government has repeatedly insisted that no one — and, particularly, no children — have died because of its funding cuts. But the AP has documented the deaths of women and children from Myanmar to Nigeria.

A study published in The Lancet journal, meanwhile, said the U.S. cuts could lead to more than 14 million deaths, including more than 4.5 million children under age 5, by 2030.

"It's heartbreaking to see what's happening. It's decades of progress being washed away," says Rajat Khosla, executive director of WHO's Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

In a statement to The Associated Press, the U.S. State Department said the Trump administration had reinvigorated its assistance programs to focus on efficiency, effectiveness and partnership. The department also said the U.S. spends more on health and humanitarian assistance than any other country, and still supports programs in Nepal aimed at improving maternal and child health.

"The rest of the world needs to contribute more and share the burden," the department said.

In Nepal, cuts to nutrition and reproductive outreach programs have already increased pregnancy complications and deaths, according to health workers, government officials, aid workers and families interviewed by the AP.

"The number of deaths of mothers, young mothers, during delivery has really increased," says Mona Sherpa, country director for the aid group CARE Nepal, which lost more than half its funding from the U.S. cuts. "The expected number within a year is happening within four to six months."

Maternal and child health programs are perhaps the clearest foreign aid example of small, relatively cheap interventions leading to the greatest good. Packets of fortified peanut paste that cost less than a dollar each can bring a malnourished child back from the brink of death within weeks. Clean birth kits that cost a few dollars slash the risk of mothers and newborns dying from infections.

In Nepal, a five-year, \$35 million program canceled by the U.S. cuts reached more than 100,000 women and girls in its first three years. The program equipped birthing centers and trained nurses, midwives and outreach workers known as female community health volunteers. These workers regularly visited pregnant women's homes, explained the warning signs of complications and urged them to attend prenatal appointments, often escorting them there.

When the program was canceled, many pregnant women were left to navigate a medical system they struggle to trust or understand, Sherpa says.

The consequences can be found in the dusty, sun-scorched villages of Nepal's Rautahat district, home to Kabita's family and one of the poorest and least-literate parts of the country. At a birthing center in Rautahat's municipality of Dewahi Gonahi, the number of women coming for prenatal checks has halved since the funding cuts, says the officer in charge, Kishori Shah. Because of that, women aren't identifying complications fast enough, he says, leading to emergencies.

"There would have been a decrease in complications if the USAID program was still running," he says.

In the village of Prempur Gonahi, it took just 10 months — a touch longer than a typical pregnancy — for newborns to begin dying again after the U.S. cuts, says the officer in charge, Sadho Baitha.

Before CARE's program launched in Rautahat in December 2022, Baitha says, the village averaged 10 to 15 neonatal deaths per year. By 2024, records show, there were zero. But since the program's cancellation, newborns have begun dying again; the first was in December, and four more followed by March.

Yet many deaths linked to the funding cuts will remain invisible, in part because the cuts themselves

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 30 of 65

left scores of mortality data collectors jobless. In some places, there is simply no one left to count those who died.

This is the case in Dewahi Gonahi, where mortality reporting and recording services have collapsed, says Shatrudhan Singh, executive director of Campaign Nepal, CARE's partner. Which is why, he says, the government record shows just two infant deaths in the municipality since the funding cuts, despite his group knowing of eight.

"There must be more than that," he says. "We just can't identify them."

The stories of loss are hidden inside the cramped homes of the loved ones left behind and in the vacant eyes of now-motherless children.

From the shadows of her own home, Phula Devi tries to verbalize her loss in a voice so halting and hushed it's barely audible. She has never spoken of her grief to anyone — not even to her husband.

Like most women in this village a few miles from Kabita's, Phula never attended school. She knew almost nothing about pregnancy; she does not even know her own age, just that she is not yet 20.

Phula is the type of woman outreach workers say they would have targeted. Instead, one morning in January, an informal village health practitioner came to her home and said the fetal heartbeat was slow. He told her to go to a hospital, then left.

Phula didn't understand. And she was at the mercy of her relatives, who waited until that night to take her to the hospital.

There, the doctors urged a C-section. But Phula didn't know what that meant. Terrified, she pushed the baby out on her own. He emerged silent and still, declared dead and whisked away before Phula could hold him, name him or even see his face.

He was overdue, hospital records show, a risk factor for stillbirth. Nurse Guddi Rahami, who remembers Phula's case, says the region's uneducated families often resist C-sections because they believe the operation is somehow bad.

From inside her darkened home, Phula hides her tear-streaked face behind a scarf.

"I think of my baby all the time," she murmurs.

She would have done anything to save him, she says. If she'd only known how.

Down a winding dirt path peppered with bleating goats, Kabita's two-room home emerges into view. Outside, women trudge past in a rainbow of saris that cling to their fragile frames, seared by the punishing sun.

This became Kabita's home at 14, when she married her husband after a life of loss. Her mother died when she was little, and her father soon abandoned her to move to India with his new wife. Her three siblings would later follow him.

Her wedding photo shows her as the child she still was when she married: slender, with wide-set brown eyes, soft cheeks and a shy smile. She struggled to bond with her mother-in-law, who shared their home, but endeared herself to her aunt and neighbor, Shraddha Mukhiya. Shraddha relished Kabita's innocence and was amused by her constant, occasionally nonsensical, chatter. She came to view the girl as her daughter.

Kabita quickly fell pregnant with a daughter of her own, Sonam. Her second daughter, Anushka, followed a year later, and her son, Yubraj, a year after that.

Her husband, the family's sole provider, was rarely home, forced to chase construction jobs around Nepal and India that brought the family around 12,000 Nepalese rupees (\$80) per month. It was enough to buy rice, lentils and vegetables, but little else.

Despite the difficulties, the 20-year-old Kabita was overjoyed to learn she was pregnant with her fourth; she and her mother-in-law longed for another boy. She scraped together enough money to buy clothes for the baby, whom she planned to name Shivraj, and dreamed that he would one day get the education she was never afforded.

When she was pregnant with Yubraj, she received a U.S.-funded nutritious powder that helped supplement her limited diet. But by the time she became pregnant last year, the funding cuts had eliminated the local birthing center's nutritional supplements and food for pregnant women, says Punam Mahato, a

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 31 of 65

nurse who treated Kabita.

U.S.-funded nutrition programs were crucial to the region, particularly for children, health workers say. The prevalence of wasting — a life-threatening form of malnutrition — among children under 5 in Kabita's province was 7.4% before the U.S. funding cuts, according to a survey conducted by the government and the United Nations' children's agency. That number rose to 12.3% after the cuts, according to a national malnutrition screening conducted in May by the government and the aid group Helen Keller Intl, which saw its nutrition program halted by the U.S. cuts.

As her pregnancy progressed, Kabita's belly swelled while the rest of her remained gaunt. Sometimes she only managed to eat two small meals a day. And the mothers' group meetings she attended while pregnant with Yubraj had ceased.

She missed the recommended first trimester appointment, and made her first visit to the birthing center for a check at 16 weeks. Mahato, her nurse, noticed she was pale. She suggested Kabita get a blood test to check her hemoglobin, which can plummet in pregnancy amid nutritional deficiencies.

But Kabita never got the test, and didn't seem to understand its necessity; she never mentioned it to her mother-in-law. At 24 weeks, Mahato was worried by Kabita's pallid complexion and again recommended a blood test. Again, Kabita demurred, likely because she didn't grasp its importance, Mahato says.

Rajkumari Patel, a community health volunteer who worked under CARE's now-canceled program, said they would have acted as mediators to explain to Kabita why the test was crucial.

Instead, Kabita returned home. She was tormented by stomach pains that grew increasingly fierce. Her body swelled.

She suffered for weeks. By December, when she was 28 weeks pregnant, Kabita had become so weak she could not walk. Her husband was working in India, so she turned to Shraddha, her aunt, for help. The elder woman took her to the hospital.

Doctors drew Kabita's blood to check her hemoglobin levels, then handed the results to the women. But Kabita and Shraddha didn't know what they meant. Nor did they understand the rush of activity and tests and medical explanations that followed.

Their understanding finally came amid the absence of a heartbeat. A test confirmed it: Kabita's baby was dead.

Everything was happening so fast.

The hospital was not equipped to remove the baby's remains from Kabita's womb. Staffers urged them to go to another hospital. But with no money and no sense for the danger Kabita was facing, the grieving women returned home.

By the next day, Kabita's vision was distorted. Her head pounded. She was delirious.

In desperation, Shraddha took her to another hospital with lower fees. The doctors determined that she'd had a seizure from preeclampsia, where dangerously high blood pressure can be fatal if untreated, says paramedic Hridaya Narayan Mahato, who is not related to Kabita's nurse.

Doctors gave her oxygen while the staff rushed to prepare the ICU.

Kabita's hemoglobin levels were critically low, leaving her short of oxygen and straining her heart. She lay on her back, shaking and gasping for air. Shraddha sat helplessly at the foot of the bed. "You'll be OK," she told her niece through tears.

And then she watched as Kabita drew her final breath.

She was dead before they could get her into the ICU.

A short drive from Kabita's home, Patel, the community health worker, sits outside her home, her words laced with frustration. Deaths like Kabita's, she says, are precisely what she and her colleagues had been trained to prevent.

Patel used to know every pregnant woman in her village, visiting them at home. She would have done the same for Kabita, she says.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 32 of 65

"I would have asked her, 'Is the baby kicking? When did you last feel movement?' I would have checked for swelling in her hands and face. I would have looked at her eyes for signs of anemia," she says. "These are the signs I would have noticed in Kabita and said, 'This woman needs a hospital today -- not tomorrow.' Maybe we could have saved her life."

Kabita died from complications of eclampsia, with severe anemia contributing significantly, says Mahato, the hospital paramedic. Both conditions can often be identified and managed through regular prenatal care, he says.

The loss of Kabita and her baby so overwhelmed Shraddha that she couldn't bear to tell Kabita's husband. Still working in India, he was oblivious to the crisis until neighbors called him. His bus ride home took so long that he didn't arrive back in the village until three days after Kabita's funeral.

In the months since, he has frequently refused to work, lying in the dark crying for days at a time. He speaks only of Kabita, never the baby. Shraddha and his mother, Lachhiya Devi, remind him that they will all starve unless he returns to work. And so he does.

Both in their 60s, Shraddha and Lachhiya worry about how long they can care for Kabita's little ones. From the bed she shares with her grandchildren, Lachhiya strokes the leg of 4-year-old Anushka, who slumbers next to her in the midday heat.

"How will I feed them? I'm old," Lachhiya says, her bangles barely clinging to her bony arms. "You can see how desperately I'm trying to get by."

Their home is quiet now without Kabita's cheerful chatter or the cries of the baby who never made it home. The last reminders of Kabita's life — her sparkly green sari, the pink and yellow tapestry she knitted — are packed away in a box that will be given to her children one day.

Shraddha remains tormented by what she didn't know.

"We don't have anyone to help us out here, to tell us about these things. If there was someone, we would ask them, follow their advice," she says. "It would have saved her life."

She looks at Kabita's children and aches for their mother, who was barely beyond childhood herself.

"She was too young to die."

Kennedy Center board set to vote on whether to move forward with closure

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Kennedy Center's board is expected to meet Thursday to consider plans for the performing arts venue's future after a federal judge blocked an earlier move for a two-year closure that would allow for substantial renovations.

Ahead of the meeting, the Kennedy Center's management said it would present the board with three approaches for consideration.

The options would include a complete closure or a partial closure that would allow "some continued public access and limited programming in spaces unaffected" by the work. A third option would "consider a highly limited series of phased closures to address only the Center's most serious infrastructure needs while scheduling and maintaining a full slate of programming."

In blocking earlier plans for closure, U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper ruled the board's March 16 vote backing the move appeared "ill-informed and seemingly preordained." In moving forward, the board, which is largely made up of President Donald Trump's allies, may face pressure to prove they've thoroughly considered their options.

During Trump's second term, the Kennedy Center has become an unlikely — and highly visible — metaphor of presidential power. While he largely ignored the institution during his first round in Washington, Trump moved quickly to oust the institution's leadership when he returned to office in January 2025 and replaced it with a board of trustees that named him chairman. His name was quickly added to the building, a move that Cooper also declared illegal.

Trump's name came down from the building in June but the area where it once stood is now covered

by a massive tarp. Cooper has asked the Kennedy Center for updates on how long the tarp is expected to stay in place.

Trump's push to remake the nation's capital

The Kennedy Center moves are part of Trump's broader push to reshape the physical landscape of the nation's capital in ways that have few modern parallels.

He demolished the East Wing of the White House and is building a controversial ballroom in its place, though an appeals court ruled last week that construction should stop because Congress didn't approve the project. Trump has said he will take the case to the Supreme Court.

His remodel of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool has also stumbled after algae returned and U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro refuted his claims that a vandal was responsible for the damage.

Meanwhile, Trump is planning extensive renovations of a golf course in East Potomac Park, which could significantly reduce the public's access to running and biking paths. He is also moving forward with a triumphal arch that will sit near Arlington National Cemetery.

Trump has derided the Kennedy Center as "rusty, rotted, and rat and bug infested" and threatened to hand the building over to Congress after Cooper rejected the closure and the addition of the president's name to the building.

The institution's leadership has argued that it's in genuine need of repair and updating.

Matt Flocia, the Kennedy Center's executive director and chief operating officer, guided a group of journalists through the building in April, highlighting severe water damage that he said corroded steel in some places as thin as tissue paper. Some pieces of equipment, including several 800-ton chillers that help cool the building, are decades old and in need of replacement.

At the time, Flocia said he considered doing the repairs individually but insisted it was his recommendation to Trump to close the building and move forward with the renovation all at once.

"When the president asked: 'How do you make these projects the best? How do you make them really excellent and deliver them efficiently?' my recommendation was you close the building and you do everything over a definite period of time, two years," he said.

More recently, the legal battles became the subject of barbs and jokes as comedian Bill Maher accepted the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor in late June. At the start of the program, Pamela Roland DeVos, a Kennedy Center trustee appointed by Trump, described the institution as a "national cultural center open not just for some but for every American patron who wants to experience the greatest art and expression the world has to offer."

"The responsibility that comes with it is one our board takes very seriously," she said.

Nigel Farage faces off against Count Binface in special election that's been denounced as a stunt

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Tens of thousands of voters are heading to the polls Thursday in a special election in a small seaside resort just outside London that will pit a potential candidate to be the next U.K. prime minister against a collection of independents, jokers and single-issue candidates, led by a man who wears a trash can on his head.

That's not what Nigel Farage, the man who arguably did more than anyone to get Britain to vote to leave the European Union a decade ago, intended when he triggered Thursday's special election in Clacton by quitting his seat in the House of Commons last month. When doing so, he expected to run again against candidates from Britain's main political parties, including the governing Labour Party and the main opposition Conservative Party.

Farage, who is the leader of anti-immigration party Reform UK, stood down in the hope the election could put to bed awkward questions about his finances. Farage said he would let voters judge him in a "people versus the establishment" contest. His political foes described the move as a stunt and opted

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 34 of 65

against standing a candidate.

Instead, Farage's main opponent is Count Binface, a political satirist posing as a comic space alien, with a keen interest in earthly matters, including the positioning of a hand dryer in the men's toilet in a pub in west London.

Record number of candidates standing in Clacton

The special election is a novelty, if not quite a circus, with a record 34 candidates standing, including Howling Laud Hope of The Official Monster Raving Loony Party and Marcus White from the Everyone is God Party. They have pounded the streets of Clacton over the past few weeks as they seek to win the support of around 80,000 voters.

Given the numbers standing, Clacton residents will be presented with a ballot paper that is around 3 feet long (around 1 meter). That's not going to be easy to navigate.

Turnout is widely expected to be low for a variety of reasons. For one, turnout is usually lower at special elections rather than at general elections. In the July 2024 general election, Farage faced eight rivals and garnered 21,225 votes, or 46.2% of the total. Turnout was 58.7%.

This election is taking place in the midst of the summer holidays when thousands of voters will be far away from Clacton. It's also taking place during another U.K. heatwave, which could prompt many to opt against making the trip to the polling station as they seek sanctuary from temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit).

Election isn't the one Farage was planning

Farage, who in 2024 was elected to Parliament at his eighth attempt in the strongly Brexit -backing town, has for months been facing what he considers to be unfair scrutiny of his finances.

Parliament's standards watchdog is investigating an undeclared donation of 5 million pounds (\$6.7 million) to Farage in 2024 from Christopher Harborne, a Thailand-based cryptocurrency billionaire. Farage says he didn't need to declare the money because it was a personal gift he used to fund his security and came before he was elected.

Newly elected lawmakers must declare gifts worth more than 300 pounds (\$400) received in the previous year if they are related to political activities.

When he stood down on July 7, he described the scrutiny as an "establishment hit job" and a media-driven "witch-hunt."

His decision to stand down put a pause to the parliamentary investigation, but if he wins on Thursday, as most pollsters expect, it is set to start up again.

If he's found to have breached Parliament's rules, then he could face a recall petition in Clacton, which may lead to another special election later this year, costing the British taxpayer hundreds of thousands of pounds more. The difference is that in that one, the other parties would choose to stand.

Farage's decision to trigger another election in Clacton came weeks after Andy Burnham returned to Parliament in a special election in the Makerfield constituency near Manchester. That campaign shone a positive spotlight on Burnham, triggering a chain of events that saw him become Britain's prime minister a few weeks later following the resignation of Keir Starmer.

Any hope that Farage had that the Clacton campaign would be similarly positive for him was dashed when the other political parties failed to play ball and he was left standing against the likes of Count Binface.

Binface leads the alternatives

Under Binface's black cape, trash can and ample body armor that looks straight out of a low-budget sci-fi film, is a middle-aged comedian named Jon Harvey trying to keep his cool during a sweaty summer.

He has been a regular candidate in high-profile elections before, having previously stood against then prime ministers Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak.

He says his repeated candidacies are aimed at promoting the beauties of Britain's centuries-old democracy where even the most high-profile politicians are above no one — including someone from his fictional native planet of Sigma IX.

He's also funny.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 35 of 65

The numbers backing him have been negligible — and fairly costly. Candidates standing for election have to put down a deposit of 500 pounds (\$675). They only get it back if they muster 5% of the votes cast. In his most recent run, against Burnham in Makerfield, the comedian received 95 votes, or 0.2% of the total.

There is an expectation that he will do a lot better in Clacton. Many of the voters of the other political parties have been lending him their support, partly in the hope of embarrassing Farage.

The result of the election, which will be announced as Farage is onstage with all his fellow candidates, is expected Friday morning between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m.

Judge will hear whether Tate brothers should stay in custody as they fight extradition to the UK

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A federal judge in Miami will hear arguments Thursday over whether social media influencers Andrew and Tristan Tate should remain in custody as they fight extradition to the United Kingdom, where the brothers are accused of rape and sex trafficking.

U.S. Magistrate Lauren Louis will have a chance to question both sides before determining if the brothers, who have repeatedly denied wrongdoing, should stay in jail or be released during what could be a monthslong extradition process.

The Tates have remained in a federal detention center in Miami since making a brief court appearance two days after their July 18 arrest. Their attorneys have argued the Tates' high profile makes it nearly impossible for them to flee and that they regularly post updates about their locations on social media.

The Tates have become among the world's most polarizing internet personalities with their promotion of wealth, male dominance and misogyny through their social media empire. The new allegations are the latest in the Tates' long-running international legal saga spanning the U.S., Britain and Romania.

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office filing, the Tates should be detained pending their extradition hearing because they cannot overcome the strong presumption against bail in international extradition cases.

The serious pending U.K. charges involving human trafficking and violent rapes and assaults against multiple victims, along with allegations in Romania that the Tates attempted to intimidate witnesses, present a clear public safety concern, prosecutors say.

While prosecutors call the brothers a flight risk, their attorneys said they have proved they are not by complying with all pretrial restrictions in Romania, where they are accused of luring women for sexual exploitation.

The U.K. has until mid-September to provide evidence to the State Department to support extradition, meaning the brothers could spend months in the Federal Detention Center in Miami before the proceedings are resolved, the defense motion says. No date has been set for an extradition hearing. They are being held in a special unit for their own protection.

Earthquake response strains Colombia's new government and rescuers as they race against the clock

By ASTRID SUÁREZ, MEGAN JANETSKY and MARKO ALVAREZ Associated Press

PEREIRA, Colombia (AP) — Tons of aid from regional partners began to roll into Colombia on Wednesday, as the search for survivors in the rubble of a powerful earthquake grew more desperate after the temblor razed buildings, buckled roads and crushed cars.

The devastation has tested Colombia's new president, Abelardo de la Espriella, and his government as it scrambles to respond to the disaster and civil society as it pushes to provide aid to the most affected communities.

De la Espriella said Wednesday evening that at least 265 people died in the 7.4 magnitude earthquake that struck the country's west on Monday. The president said nearly 500 people were reported missing, though civilian-run databases put that number at more than 4,100. In total, more than 25,800 families

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 36 of 65

were impacted, de la Espriella said.

"Our efforts are focused on the disappeared," he told journalists in Colombia's capital.

Teams continued to pick through the rubble in the hardest-hit cities of Cali, Pereira, Manizales and Quibdó, as time ticked away for victims to be found — and rescued — alive. Aid agencies consider the first 48 to 72 hours crucial for retrieving survivors, though that threshold can be extended if those trapped have access to food and water.

On Wednesday afternoon, Alejandro Eder, the mayor of Cali, told reporters that rescue teams continue to find signs of people alive under the rubble and are racing to save them.

"The next 20 hours are the most critical to find and rescue people alive," he said. "Every minute is vital."

Survival takes many forms in hard-hit areas

In Pereira, rescuers pulled Daniela Largo alive from the rubble late Tuesday, capping a complex 12-hour rescue in which crews carved a small opening in the debris to free her pinned arm and a doctor administered IV fluids to stabilize her. Wrapped in a blue blanket, the young woman was carried to an ambulance as firefighters embraced and onlookers cheered.

Another moment was marked by mourning, as a man was pulled from a building in the same city, lifeless and covered in a white blanket.

Across the coffee-growing region, among the areas worst affected by the quake, authorities have converted sports arenas, schools and other public buildings into shelters for thousands of displaced Colombians.

Ebert Jonathan Morales, a Cali resident, said his family lost everything in the earthquake.

"My house was completely destroyed. We can't live there," Morales said. "It collapsed. The floor collapsed, the walls cracked. The roof came down."

In Pereira and Cali, families have been sleeping in parks — some fearing aftershocks or the collapse of their damaged homes, others without homes to return to.

Colombia's geological service has documented 130 aftershocks since the quake.

"We have the most important things: a roof over our heads, food, water and, in my case, medical care," said Edith Penagos, 48, who was staying with her teenage son in one of the white tents set up in a Pereira park.

Rodrigo León Loya, a seismologist and geosciences professor at the University of the Andes, said the probability of an earthquake of a similar magnitude occurring in the same area is low but he would not rule out more seismic activity.

"Let's remember that Colombia is full of active fault lines," he said. "The question isn't whether it can happen again. The question is rather when an earthquake of similar magnitude will occur at another of Colombia's seismic sources."

Aid groups provide humanitarian relief

In many areas, including the epicenter of the quake, Choco, the official response to the disaster has been complicated by the ongoing crises of deep poverty and civil warfare that has created waves of forced displacement for decades. The true impact of the earthquake in the jungled northwest remained largely unknown because cell service has been lost and many of the likely affected communities are remote, accessible only by river.

"This earthquake compounds an already severe humanitarian situation, and there is a need for increased support for the humanitarian response," said Giovanni Rizzo, Colombia director for the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Many aid organizations were already on the ground in Choco supporting a 2016 peace accord between the government and leftist rebels, and responding to violence in the region involving other armed groups that has persisted since then.

Those humanitarian workers were able to quickly pivot to disaster relief, said María José Torres, the U.N. resident coordinator in Colombia.

"We have a presence on the ground. Therefore, our ability to be there, present with the people, I think, has increased exponentially," Torres said in a statement Tuesday.

Regional partners promise to help

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 37 of 65

At the same time, aid from other countries and nonprofits abroad continued to roll in.

The State Department posted on its website that disaster response teams started to arrive in Colombia on Monday. The U.S. has also offered over \$15 million in aid.

Mexico, meanwhile, said it had sent two military aircraft carrying 19.5 tons of nonperishable food and 19 members of Mexican security forces to Pereira, and it plans to send another 39 tons of aid in the coming days. A further 255 military specialists and 20 dogs are on standby to be sent to Colombia if needed.

Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele offered to send two planes loaded with 100 tons of aid.

On Wednesday, Pope Leo XIV thanked those contributing to recovery efforts and said he is praying for those killed, injured or otherwise affected by the earthquake.

"I want to express my solidarity with my Colombian sisters and brothers who have suffered the effects of the recent earthquake," he said.

Deaths and damage reported as severe weather in the Midwest spawns tornadoes and flash flooding

By DAVE COLLINS and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — First responders rescued more people from floodwaters Wednesday as utility crews cleared trees and wires downed by severe storms in the Midwest that unleashed tornadoes, heavy rains and flash flooding, leaving hundreds of thousands of customers without electricity.

A 4-year-old boy was killed when a tree fell on a home in Geneva, Indiana, during Tuesday's storms, the Jennings County Sheriff's Office said. In Ohio, Gov. Mike DeWine said a resident of Roseville died during a health emergency when first responders, faced with flooded roads, couldn't reach them. Officials in Portage, Indiana, were investigating whether the severe weather played a role in a reported house explosion that killed a person.

Lightning struck a prison complex southwest of Cleveland on Tuesday, injuring 16 incarcerated people who were hospitalized, according to the Ohio Department of Corrections. DeWine said four remained hospitalized as of Wednesday, including one with severe injuries.

Storm damage was reported from the Chicago area all the way to western Pennsylvania. Three tornadoes in counties south of Chicago were confirmed by the National Weather Service.

Flood warnings on Wednesday stretched from northern Illinois to eastern Indiana, and there were flash flood watches from Indiana to parts of Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia and Tennessee, the weather service said.

"Severe thunderstorm and heavy rainfall threats continue across the Plains, Midwest, Ohio Valley, and central Appalachians the next couple of days," it said.

People had to be rescued from rising floodwaters

Authorities in Ohio and western Pennsylvania reported numerous water rescues. DeWine sent 40 Ohio Army National Guard members to help in two counties east of Columbus and he said dozens of local departments also responded to help, including from West Virginia.

Floodwaters barged into Kaitlyn Rodgers' home in Crooksville, Ohio, early Tuesday morning, reaching knee deep as it stranded her and her husband and four children. With the currents too strong to make it out themselves, they were rescued by firefighters in a boat in the predawn darkness.

"Water just started pouring into the house," she said. "Because of my house being very old, when the water was coming up I was very worried about the electric outlets that were on the floor, because there was water literally coming out of them, so I was afraid that my children were going to get shocked."

In Athens County, Ohio, nearly 300 people called 911 for help on Tuesday, including 42 involving vehicles stuck in floods, with more calls Wednesday as high waters flowed toward the Ohio River, said the emergency management director, Teresa Fouts-Imler.

DeWine surveyed the hardest hit areas by helicopter on Wednesday and called the extent of the flooding "stunning."

"These communities have been hit exceedingly hard in a historic way," DeWine said during an afternoon

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 38 of 65

news conference from Perry County. "They've been hit before with water challenges, but this is certainly the worst."

The storms pummeled a wide swath of the Midwest

More than 650,000 customers were without power Wednesday afternoon in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia, according to poweroutage.us.

Columbus, Ohio-based American Electric Power was still surveying the damage but had already identified more than 100 broken poles, some 650 downed wire spans and another 85 entangled with trees. About 76,000 of its customers remained without power, even after crews had restored electricity for 135,000, it said Wednesday.

To give Ohio's capital city time to grapple with power outages and cleanup, Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther declared an emergency Wednesday.

Heavy rains and high winds damaged homes and inundated neighborhoods

Photos posted on social media from the Chicago area and across the state line in Indiana showed flooded roads, trees tangled in power lines and homes with gashes in their roofs.

"No power. It was very scary. We were down in the basement," said Javid Jenkins of Homewood, a Chicago suburb. "We're built for snow. We're built for cold. We're not built for this."

Jenkins, 54, was driving around for gas to fire up a generator to preserve food in his refrigerator.

Forecasters said a wind gust of 99 mph (159 kph) was recorded in Gary, Indiana. Elsewhere there were numerous reports of gusts of 80 mph (128 kph) or more at personal weather stations.

Preliminary information indicated that the intense system that swept from Iowa into Indiana over several hours qualified as a derecho, the weather service's Storm Prediction Center said Tuesday evening. Derechos are prolonged straight-line windstorms that unleash heavy rainfall and travel far. The damage they cause is sometimes comparable to the destructive forces of tornadoes or hurricanes.

"Total devastation. No roof," said Kerry Hourigan, standing outside her home of 25 years in Tinley Park, another Chicago suburb. "Stupid thing, but my focus was I just bought a new barbecue grill, and I have no idea where that is. It's disappeared."

Dayton, Ohio, set a daily rainfall record with 2.07 inches (5.25 cm), shattering a mark set in 1915, the weather service said.

Rubio and Bessent stayed on decoy flight from Turkey as Trump switched planes, official says

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The two most senior members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, flew out of last month's NATO summit in Turkey on what was effectively a decoy plane following an Iranian threat, while Trump was secretly moved to a smaller military jet, a senior U.S. official said Wednesday.

The official, who was briefed on the situation and spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive details of presidential travel, said Rubio was aware of the switch and details of the threat behind it but could or would not say why he had stayed on the plane. The official said Bessent was likely aware but did not know for sure.

The official, however, noted that security precautions for the president — especially one who has been the target of several assassination attempts — are more robust than those for even top members of the Cabinet.

Under the U.S. Constitution, the secretaries of State and Treasury follow the vice president and the highest ranking member of each chamber of Congress in the presidential line of succession.

Trump had flown to the annual gathering of NATO country leaders in Ankara, Turkey, in a new Qatari-gifted and retrofitted red, white and navy blue jet. But ahead of departing Turkey, he said he would fly partway home on an older-model baby blue Air Force One plane instead.

The president at the time said the new luxury jet was being flown out ahead of his departure from

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 39 of 65

Ankara to give some U.S. troops based in eastern England a chance to check out the new Air Force One.

The Washington Post reported this week that Trump wasn't on the old Air Force One on the return flight from Turkey and that he instead was smuggled onto another jet via a catering cart to avoid a possible Iranian assassination plot. The ruse was carried out as journalists and some White House staff members were led to believe they were on the same plane as the president as he began his journey back to Washington.

The New York Times and CBS News had reported last month that intelligence officials had raised concerns about a potential attack on the president or his jet, triggering additional precautions and the decision not to use the newly inaugurated aircraft gifted to Trump by Qatar for the first leg of Trump's trip home from Ankara.

Trump acknowledged the transfer late Tuesday.

"It's only up to the Secret Service. I just follow what they'd like to do, so I go by Secret Service and the military," the president told reporters at Joint Base Andrews. "They wanted me to go on a different flight, a different plane, equal safety, but they wanted me to do it, so I do it, I do what they say."

Defense in Charlie Kirk's killing say shooter should not get death penalty, hit 'intended target'

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

The man charged with killing Charlie Kirk shouldn't get the death penalty because the shooter "hit the intended target" and no one else was endangered when the conservative activist was shot from a rooftop at an event in Utah last year, his lawyers said.

Defendant Tyler Robinson's attorneys say the bullet traveled above the crowd of several thousand people at Utah Valley University on Sept. 10 and "there were no threats to others." Whether the shooting endangered the crowd is a key issue: Prosecutors cited the risk that other people could have been harmed as an aggravating factor under state law that makes Kirk's killing a capital crime.

"The only evidence presented supports that the bullet traveled above, not through, the crowd," defense attorneys wrote in documents filed late Tuesday as the defense tries to block the case from proceeding to trial.

Prosecutors have said numerous people were within a "zone of danger" around Kirk, where a stray or ricocheting bullet could have hurt anyone close to the victim.

The defense lawyers also disputed claims that Robinson targeted Kirk over his political views. Prosecutors allege Robinson told his roommate that he killed the activist because he "had enough of his hatred." But the defense said that was not enough to prove what motivated Robinson, after searches of his apartment, computers and telephone failed to produce anything beyond that one statement.

Prosecutors last month during a weeklong hearing presented what they call "overwhelming" evidence against Robinson, including DNA tests that tie him to the suspected murder weapon and apparent confessions by the defendant.

His attorneys questioned the reliability of the DNA tests and other evidence. They didn't offer any alternative theories for Kirk's assassination, and made no mention of DNA in Tuesday's filing.

Robinson is charged with aggravated murder and has not yet entered a plea. He turned himself in a day after Kirk was killed.

His defense attorneys previously tried to get the death penalty taken off the table after prosecutors were found to be in contempt of court for talking about the case to the media. State District Judge Tony Graf rejected that request.

In documents filed last month, prosecutors said the fact that Robinson loaded his rifle with four bullets showed that he knew he could miss Kirk, "thereby putting others in danger."

But defense attorneys said "it is just as likely that the shooter did not believe he would miss."

Robinson faces possible sentence enhancements if prosecutors can prove he targeted Kirk because of his politics. They contend that Kirk's strong opposition to same-sex marriage and gender transitioning stood in contrast to Robinson, who was in a romantic relationship with a roommate, Lance Twiggs. Twiggs told

investigators that he had been considering transitioning around the time that Kirk was killed, according to prosecutors.

Twiggs also told investigators that Robinson sometimes talked about politics, including President Donald Trump. Yet Twiggs said he never heard Robinson talk about Kirk before the shooting. The defendant also did not talk much about gender issues or LGBTQ+ rights, Twiggs said. The AP emailed Twiggs' attorney seeking comment.

Closing arguments in the preliminary hearing are scheduled for Sept. 1. Graf will then decide if the case can go to trial and on what charges. Lawyers for Kirk's family have asked Graf to make his decision by or on Sept. 1 so the case can proceed.

Prosecutors have until Aug. 18 to respond to the latest defense arguments. The Associated Press left telephone and email messages with the Utah County Attorney's Office seeking comment.

Preliminary hearings typically don't last so long. Legal experts said the slow pace reflects a cautious approach by Graf, the large volume of evidence and a desire by prosecutors to disprove conspiracy theories around the case.

ICE's plan to give officers electric shock gloves draws outrage and fears of misuse

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

Immigration and Customs Enforcement's plan to give officers gloves that deliver painful electric shocks faced criticism Wednesday from Democratic elected officials and civil rights advocates, who called it unnecessary and cruel.

ICE plans to spend between \$10 million and \$20 million to outfit officers and agents with "conductive distraction and de-escalation devices," according to a notice published Monday and revealed first by The Associated Press.

The devices known as the G.L.O.V.E., which stands for Generated Low Output Voltage Emitter, are normal patrol gloves until an officer presses a button to activate its electrical mode. They must be applied directly to someone's skin to produce a voltage that causes pain, which is intended to gain compliance from people who are resisting. Unlike Tasers, they do not leave burn or contact marks.

New York AG says she is 'outraged' by plan

The size of the purchase suggests ICE plans to give the device to most or all of its officers. The gloves have been used by local departments more often in jails than in the streets, where ICE officers have increasingly used force to extract people from cars and faced protests over their actions carrying out President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration.

"We are outraged," New York Attorney General Letitia James said at a news conference Wednesday, where she warned that ICE officers who misuse the gloves in her state could face criminal and civil consequences.

The Department of Homeland Security, ICE's parent agency, issued a statement that did not mention the product specifically or explain why it had been chosen.

"ICE is constantly assessing the needs of our officers in the field to ensure they have the tools and equipment necessary to safely arrest and remove criminal illegal aliens from our country," the statement said. "Every decision is made with careful consideration and appropriately reviewed to ensure that any technology ICE utilizes is consistent with all applicable law enforcement policies and standards."

Lawsuit alleges shocks from gloves contributed to man's death

While the devices are marketed as nonlethal and safe for the heart, a pending lawsuit alleges a 43-year-old man died in 2024 after he was shocked 27 times with the gloves and 13 more times by a Taser at a jail in Richmond, Kentucky. An internal investigation found two of the glove shocks lasted 45 and 99 seconds apiece — far more than the manufacturer's recommended 15-second limit.

"These actions not only inflicted unnecessary pain but also heightened the risk of serious health complications," the investigation by the Madison County Detention Center found, according to court documents.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 41 of 65

An Associated Press review found two other lawsuits alleging injuries from the gloves, including a man with heart problems who was shocked at a Las Vegas trade show and a defendant who said he was laughed at after he was unnecessarily shocked in court. Both cases have been dismissed.

Several Democrats in Congress, including Reps. Pramila Jayapal, Maxwell Frost and Delia Ramirez, said on social media that ICE did not need another weapon.

"This won't make anyone safer and in fact just gives ICE another dangerous tool to target citizens and immigrants alike," Jayapal wrote on X.

Former ICE leader, law professor worry gloves will be misused

The manufacturer warns the devices should not be used against some populations that ICE agents routinely encounter: the elderly, small children, pregnant women and the severely handicapped. The device's user manual also warns it should not be used in response to verbal defiance, or for punishment, torture or horseplay.

"It's too easy for this to get misused, against a population that doesn't pose a threat," former ICE acting director John Sandweg said Wednesday in an interview on MS NOW.

The maker of the Taser recently phased out its drive-stun feature, a similar pain compliance tool that had been misused by some officers.

Michael Mannheimer, a law professor at Northern Kentucky University who has written about police use-of-force and issues in federal law enforcement operations, agreed the gloves raised concerns about officers using disproportionate force.

"One concern I would have is if ICE agents have this at their immediate disposal, will they use it more than they should? Will they jump over lesser force that could be appropriate and successful to attain compliance and instead use this first?" he said.

The notice published in a DHS database indicated the solicitation for a no-bid contract to purchase the gloves could be released as early as Friday, and the contract would last through March 31, 2027. The founder of Compliant Technologies LLC, which manufactures the gloves, declined comment.

Minnesota man kills his wife and daughter at a daycare after killing another relative

By MARK VANCLEAVE and R.J. RICO Associated Press.

HOPKINS, Minn. (AP) — A Minnesota man killed his wife and their 7-year-old daughter as young children gathered at a home daycare the couple owned before taking his own life, police said Wednesday. Some time prior to the attack, police believe he also killed a 78-year-old relative at her home.

The 41-year-old man fatally shot himself after stabbing his wife and child at their in-home daycare in Hopkins, a suburb of Minneapolis, police said.

All six other children who were at Brown Bear Childcare were not physically harmed, authorities said. Another parent called police after witnessing the attack in the home's basement while dropping off a child, Hopkins Police Chief Brent Johnson said.

"There's no worse scenario than this, where you drop off your child somewhere you think is safe, and you get that phone call," Johnson said at a news conference.

"This is a tragic day and horrific scene for little children to witness, if they did witness this," Johnson later added.

EDITOR'S NOTE — In the U.S., the national suicide and crisis lifeline is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at 988lifeline.org

More than three hours after the killings, Burnsville Chief Matt Smith said officers were called to a home in his community, 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Hopkins, where they found a woman who had been fatally stabbed. He said investigators believe the two tragedies are linked, and that the man had been living at the home of the "close family relative."

No names were released. Johnson said no clear motive had been determined yet and there was no history of police calls to the Hopkins address.

Johnson said it will take time for authorities to determine the timeline between the killings in Hopkins and Burnsville.

Amanda Marx, a nurse who lives across the street, didn't realize anything was wrong until she noticed police officers trying to break down the home's front door.

She said officers moved behind the house before reappearing and calling for crime scene tape. Later, several young children emerged — one being carried by an officer.

The brown, two-story house has a mural on the garage door of a tree-lined lake and a moose. Photos on the daycare's Facebook page show kids playing with toys inside and in the backyard, with colorful decorations and artwork on the walls.

Marx said she and her 7-year-old son always referred to it as the "garage house" due to the colorful mural. The longtime resident said she'd never met the home's owners and was unaware they were running Brown Bear Childcare out of the home. She didn't recall any prior disturbances.

"I'm just trying to figure out how to explain to my 7-year-old why there's crime scene tape on our deck," she said.

Records show the daycare has been licensed by the state since 2019 and has a capacity of 10 children. It was found to be in compliance during visits in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Johnson said killings are a "rarity" in Hopkins and that his officers were shaken by the scene they found inside the home.

"I could see on the look on their faces that this was one of those ones that you'll remember for your entire career, if not life," Johnson said.

New indictment alleges Nick Reiner was lying in wait before killing parents Rob and Michele Reiner

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A Los Angeles County grand jury has indicted Nick Reiner on murder charges in the killings of his parents, Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner, and adds the allegation that he was lying in wait before attacking them.

The grand jury, which had been meeting in secret, returned the indictment on July 20, and it was unsealed Wednesday, when 32-year-old Nick Reiner entered a not guilty plea.

Rob Reiner, a director, actor and Hollywood luminary, and his wife, a photographer and producer, were stabbed to death in their home in the upscale Brentwood section of Los Angeles on Dec. 14. Nick Reiner was arrested within hours and charged two days later.

The grand jury indictment is a major step toward trial and allows prosecutors to skip California's preliminary hearing process, where evidence is publicly aired.

Lying in wait means a suspect waited for or hid from victims in order to ambush them, and as an allegation it's meant to show premeditation. A finding that he was lying in wait along with a murder conviction would make Reiner eligible for the death penalty, but prosecutors said they haven't decided whether to seek it.

"This was a profound betrayal by someone who was loved and trusted by the very people he is accused of killing," Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman said in a statement. "We hope that by having a grand jury return an indictment in this case it will bring us one step closer to a trial and achieving justice."

Unsealed indictment gives few new details in secrecy-shrouded case

Prosecutors have said nothing about possible motives, and leaks in the case have been virtually nonexistent on both sides.

The Los Angeles County chief medical examiner told The Associated Press he would like to make their autopsy reports public, but a court order has prevented him from doing so.

The unsealed indictment reveals few new details in a case that has been shrouded in secrecy. It does not

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 43 of 65

explain how or why Reiner was lying in wait. Without elaborating, prosecutors have said since December that the parents were stabbed. The indictment includes a special allegation of use of a deadly weapon — a knife — that could also contribute to a stiffer sentence.

Indictment released as Nick Reiner seeks trust funds

The indictment comes as Reiner is seeking unpaid money from a trust his parents established for him, saying he needs it to help in his defense.

Reiner said in a court petition that the trustees who oversee the funds have denied them to him without legal justification. The money was to have gone to Nick Reiner even if his parents were alive, legal filings say. The petition says the trust has at least \$1.5 million in assets, but trustees would not share the exact amount.

"Nick loved his parents, and he is devastated by their deaths. But the facts about what did and did not happen to them are not at issue," the petition says.

He is seeking to hire back high-profile criminal defense attorney Alan Jackson, who initially represented him before Reiner's siblings would no longer agree to fund his defense and a public defender took over.

A hearing on the petition is set for next week.

The LA County Public Defender's Office, which is representing Reiner, declined to comment on the indictment.

Grand jury process happens in secret

California prosecutors can charge a defendant and take the case through a preliminary hearing — a sort of trial in miniature where evidence is publicly aired and a judge decides whether it should be sent to trial — as recently happened with singer D4vd.

Or they can use a grand jury to go through the process in secret. They can also publicly file charges and later seek a secret grand jury indictment, essentially creating a new version of the case, as happened here and in the Los Angeles prosecution of Harvey Weinstein.

Rob Reiner had prolific career as actor and director

Rob Reiner began as an actor, starring in the TV sitcom, "All in the Family," as Michael "Meathead" Stivic, the liberal son-in-law to a much more conservative and bigoted Archie Bunker, played by Carroll O'Connor. Reiner won two Emmy Awards for the role, and last month got a posthumous Emmy nomination for his work as a guest star on "The Bear."

He became a prolific director whose work included some of the most memorable and endlessly watchable movies of the 1980s and '90s. His credits included "This is Spinal Tap," "Stand By Me," "A Few Good Men," and "When Harry Met Sally..." during the production of which he met photographer Michele Singer. They wed soon after and were married for 36 years.

Nick Reiner was the second of the three children they had together. He and his father co-wrote the script for the 2015 film "Being Charlie," which was partly based on the son's teenage struggles with addiction and homelessness.

His older brother Jake Reiner wrote in April that the experience of losing his parents and having his brother at the center of it was "a living nightmare" that is "too devastating to comprehend."

Ex-Southern Poverty Law Center official charged in broader criminal case against group

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, KIMBERLY CHANDLER and JAIMIE DING Associated Press

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP) — A former Southern Poverty Law Center official has been charged in the Department of Justice's broader criminal case against the Alabama-based civil rights group, a frequent target of conservative critics who claim the nonprofit is politically biased.

Heidi Beirich, a political extremism expert who left the law center about six years ago, was named in an indictment unsealed Wednesday.

Beirich, 59, of Palm Springs, California, is charged with wire fraud conspiracy, conspiracy to submit false statements to a federally insured bank and conspiracy to commit concealment money laundering. She was

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 44 of 65

charged in the government's existing case against the SPLC in Montgomery, Alabama.

In ankle cuffs and wearing a red T-shirt, Beirich made her initial court appearance for a bond hearing in Riverside, California, Wednesday afternoon. She did not enter a plea and U.S. Magistrate Judge David T. Bristow ordered her to surrender her passport and appear in court in Alabama within two weeks.

The judge released Beirich on her own recognizance after prosecutors declined to file a request for detention. Her lawyer, Michael Proctor, said in court that Beirich is a "highly, highly responsible, pro-social and trustworthy" member of society with no criminal history.

Outside the courthouse, Proctor said his client is innocent of the charges and described the case as politically motivated.

"She has dedicated her life to fighting the KKK, neo-Nazi groups, extremists. And for all of that life's work, we're all safer. We're all better as a community," he told The Associated Press. "It is not just ironic, but terrible, that for this work she's been indicted by the current Department of Justice."

Attorney General Todd Blanche announced the new charges at a news briefing in Washington, but did not name Beirich. CNN was first to report on the charges against Beirich.

"This is exactly what we said would happen in a case like this," Blanche said. "Our investigators and the U.S. Attorneys and the agents working the case will keep on working it even after the initial indictment."

An SPLC spokesperson said the case against it and Beirich "will not shake our resolve."

"Taking on violent hate and extremist groups is among the most dangerous work there is, and we believe it is also among the most important work we do," the spokesperson said in a statement. "We are confident in our position and look forward to presenting the evidence and making our case in court."

Beirich led the SPLC's Intelligence Project, which incurred the anger of conservatives with its annual report on organizations that it classified as hate groups. Critics accused the law center of unfairly tarnishing right-wing groups with the same label that it applied to white supremacists.

Beirich co-founded the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism in 2020 after leaving the SPLC. She has testified before Congress about far-right extremism and is frequently interviewed about the subject by news outlets. Her current organization did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment Wednesday.

A superseding indictment filed in June appears to refer to Beirich as "Employee-2" and by her former title as director of the SPLC's Intelligence Project.

The indictment alleges that between 2007 and 2023, more than \$4 million in donated funds were secretly funneled to people who infiltrated or were associated with violent extremist groups. Prosecutors said some of the money was used for recruiting new members and purchasing Ku Klux Klan robes and materials for cross-burning ceremonies.

The indictment says "Employee-2" oversaw the payment of donor money to SPLC informants or "field sources," including KKK members and white nationalists who initially approached the SPLC for help leaving the extremist organizations. The SPLC employee was in a romantic relationship with a source who infiltrated a neo-Nazi group at the direction of the law center, the indictment alleges.

Proctor said Beirich "won't be silenced or intimidated by the government's false and politicized allegations."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt is leaving the Trump administration

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt, the youngest person to hold the role, will leave the Trump administration at the end of the month to spend more time with her young family.

Leavitt, 28, called it a "bittersweet decision" in a social media post Wednesday shortly after President Donald Trump announced she would be stepping down. She recently returned to the White House podium after the birth of her second child, a daughter named Viviana, in May. She also has a 2-year-old son.

"The truth is since returning to the White House after the birth of my daughter, I have felt in my heart that I cannot be the best mom my two young children deserve while devoting the constant time, energy, and attention required of the White House Press Secretary — and that is why I have ultimately made the bittersweet decision to depart the White House and embark on a new chapter in my life," Leavitt wrote.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 45 of 65

Trump did not outline plans for who might replace her in the high-profile role. He said in a social media post of his own that her decision to leave is one "I totally understand and respect!" and indicated she would continue to play a role in his orbit.

"Karoline will now be one of my top outside advisors, and an influential voice within the Republican Party, as we work to defy History, and conclusively win the Midterm Elections," the president wrote.

Leavitt worked as a spokesperson for MAGA Inc., a super PAC supporting Trump, before joining his 2024 campaign. In 2022, she ran for Congress in New Hampshire, winning a 10-way Republican primary before losing the general election to incumbent Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas.

During Trump's first term in office, Leavitt worked as an aide in the White House press office. She then became communications director for New York Republican Rep. Elise Stefanik.

Leavitt briefed from the White House press room less frequently than some of her recent predecessors. Trump, who regularly engages with reporters during White House events and during his travels, primarily deployed Leavitt to Fox News and other conservative news outlets to trumpet his agenda and take shots at Democrats and the mainstream media.

Trump's first-term press secretaries included Sean Spicer and Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who were known for quarreling with reporters. Another, Stephanie Grisham, never held a briefing. Her successor, Kayleigh McEnany, often lectured the news media during her appearances in the press briefing room.

Wall Street rises near a record as AI stocks climb and worries about inflation ease a bit

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street finished just shy of a record Wednesday after several AI stocks reported better growth for the spring than analysts expected, while a report showed inflation across the United States was slightly less bad last month.

The S&P 500 rose 0.3% for its first gain since setting its all-time high on Friday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 21 points, or less than 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 0.5%.

Stocks in the artificial-intelligence technology business helped lead the way after strong profit reports bolstered hopes they can continue to deliver big-enough growth to justify the huge gains their prices have made.

Super Micro Computer, which sells servers and other equipment, jumped 19% after reporting earnings per share for the latest quarter that were 84% higher than analysts expected. It also gave forecasts for upcoming profit and revenue that topped analysts' expectations.

CoreWeave, which offers AI computing power to customers over the cloud, leaped 19.3% after reporting better revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected, along with a milder loss. CEO Michael Intrator said demand is accelerating from customers as big businesses adopt AI.

CoreWeave gives its customers access to AI chips from Nvidia, and Nvidia climbed 3%. It was the single strongest force lifting the S&P 500.

It's a return to strength for AI stocks, which have been veering on a roller-coaster ride. After surging to records, AI stocks came under pressure on worries that they shot too high. Investors wanted to see big spenders on AI prove their investments are yielding enough in profits and productivity to make them worth it. That in turn could lead to continued demand for chips and other AI infrastructure.

Wall Street also got some support from easing yields in the bond market. Treasury yields fell after a report showed that U.S. consumers paid prices for gasoline, groceries and other costs of living last month that were 3.4% higher than a year earlier.

That's higher than anyone would like, but it's not as bad as June's 3.5% inflation rate.

The deceleration could give the Federal Reserve more leeway to hold off on hikes to interest rates. Higher rates would help keep a lid on inflation, but they would do so by making it more expensive for U.S. households and companies to borrow and forcing a slowdown in the economy. Higher interest rates also would undercut prices for stocks and other investments.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 46 of 65

The Fed's members are notably split about whether they should have already begun hiking interest rates. But Wednesday's update on inflation pushed traders to pull back on bets the Fed will hike its main interest rate at its next meeting in September.

Traders are betting on a 40% chance of it, down from the coin flip's chance seen the day before, according to data from CME Group.

That helped pull the yield on the 10-year Treasury down to 4.68% from 4.70% late Tuesday. It, though, still remains well above its 3.97% level from before the war with Iran, which sent oil prices and worries about inflation spiking.

Oil prices swung between modest gains and losses Wednesday, and the price for a barrel of Brent crude added 0.1% to \$88.98.

Higher yields have already pulled long-term mortgage rates to their highest levels in a year. That's hurting the housing industry, and losses for homebuilders on Wednesday helped keep the market in check.

D.R. Horton fell 3.3%, and PulteGroup lost 2.5%. Builders FirstSource, which sells countertops and other building materials, dropped 3.6%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 20.30 points to 7,748.50. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 21.58 to 53,770.27, and the Nasdaq composite gained 143.04 to 26,588.49.

In stock markets abroad, indexes dipped in Europe following a mixed showing in Asia.

South Korea's Kospi jumped 3.7% for one of the world's bigger gains. It's been at the center of the jarring swings for AI stocks because it's dominated by two tech giants, Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix.

Republicans see Minnesota fraud scandal as a chance to go on offense in a blue state

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — It's been 20 years since a Republican won a statewide race in Minnesota, but some in the party think a fraud scandal that has engulfed state government will be their ticket back to relevance in the state.

Their enthusiasm was buoyed by Tuesday's primary, which saw former sportscaster Michele Tafoya win the Senate nomination and state House speaker Lisa Demuth win the primary for governor. Both women defeated rivals seen by some GOP strategists as too extreme for Minnesota's left-of-center electorate.

And the newly minted GOP ticket wasted no time before hammering Democrats over the fraud. Dozens of people have been convicted of stealing hundreds of millions of dollars meant to provide food, shelter, healthcare and childcare to people in need.

"We have seen now what all of these years of single-party rule has done to this state," Tafoya said Wednesday. "And it is mobilizing voters in a way that I think is new and refreshing and exciting. And that's what we're going to tap into."

Republicans are mostly playing defense as they look to hold onto their narrow House and Senate majorities. President Donald Trump is unpopular, and voters have a negative view of the state of the economy and the country's direction.

In the fight for Senate control, most of the competitive seats on the ballot this fall are held by Republicans and in states that Trump won by healthy margins in 2024, such as Texas and Iowa. Minnesota presents one of the GOP's few opportunities to go on offense.

Meanwhile, Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, the Democratic nominee, is emerging from a contentious and expensive primary, and as the state's No. 2 Democrat, Republicans think she's uniquely vulnerable to attacks over fraud. Demuth faces Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who has easily won other statewide races.

Republicans see an opening in Minnesota

Minnesota isn't as blue as the GOP's two-decade losing streak suggests.

Republicans have come close to winning in the recent past — Trump lost the state by just 1.5 points in 2016. The Legislature is nearly evenly divided, with 101 Democrats and 100 Republicans; the state House is tied and has a Republican speaker under a power-sharing agreement between the parties.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 47 of 65

"The Republican party has just really struggled to field good candidates, to run strong campaigns, and as a result, it's withered," Amy Frederiksen, a Republican strategist and former minority leader in the state Senate, said in an interview before the primary.

Frederiksen said backlash to the fraud scandal gives Republican candidates a chance to reach new people. Republicans say the state's Democratic leaders should have caught the fraud, which unfolded over years as organizations with state contracts to provide social services stole hundreds of millions of dollars through various means, including faking clients and billing for services that were never provided.

Amid the outcry, Democratic Gov. Tim Walz dropped his reelection campaign.

"There's an opening for Republicans to make the case that even though Tim Walz isn't running for reelection, it's not enough to just replace Tim Walz with another Democrat," said Brian McClung, who was deputy chief of staff for former Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the last Republican to win a statewide race in Minnesota.

Still, winning GOP converts will be hard. On top of the headwinds Republicans face nationally, in Minnesota they will also face Democrats galvanized by last winter's immigration operation in the Minneapolis metro area. Citing fraud, Trump surged federal agents into the city for an aggressive enforcement push that led to tense and deadly confrontations.

The GOP is pinning its hopes on Michele Tafoya

Tafoya has caught the attention of Republicans in Washington, and the National Republican Senatorial Committee supported her early.

A well known sportscaster who reported from the sidelines of NFL games for years, she has a profile separate from politics and doesn't have a lengthy voting record that Democrats can mine for ammunition to use against her.

She supports abortion rights up to 12 weeks of pregnancy, a position that put her out of step with many GOP primary voters but could help neutralize a potent Democratic line of attack.

Democrats immediately previewed their plan to beat her — they will link her to Trump.

"We are not about to give Donald Trump another loyal soldier like Michele Tafoya to take his orders and do his bidding," Flanagan said in her victory speech Tuesday night.

Flanagan has suggested Republicans are disingenuous to focus on fraud in Minnesota when she says Trump has used the presidency to enrich himself.

"They're going to have to answer for that corruption," she told reporters at a campaign event last weekend.

David Crowley's razor-thin primary win sets up Wisconsin governor's race against Trump's pick

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — David Crowley's razor-thin primary win over a democratic socialist sets up a Wisconsin governor's race against a Republican congressman who has voted with President Donald Trump 100% of the time, potentially giving moderate Democrats an ideal matchup as Trump's approval ratings sag in the swing state.

Crowley overcame Francesca Hong in dramatic fashion in Tuesday's primary, stunning pundits and pollsters who had long placed Hong as the front-runner. That means Crowley's challenger, U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, must pivot to face a Democrat known for working across the aisle with Republicans as the county executive in Milwaukee, the state's largest source of Democratic voters.

Crowley immediately leans into Tiffany's ties to Trump

After a unity event with Hong and others on Wednesday, Crowley pledged to build a broad coalition — including Hong's progressive backers — to take on Tiffany by zeroing in on the Republican's support for the Make America Great Again movement.

"This isn't establishment versus progressive. This isn't insider versus outsider," Crowley said. "This is Democrats defeating a MAGA extremist in Congressman Tom Tiffany and that's what we should be focusing on moving forward."

It will be easier for Tiffany to pivot away from his ties with Trump and unpopular federal policies because

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 48 of 65

he's running for governor and not Congress, said former Republican Gov. Scott Walker, a Trump supporter.

"He's got to be on point, on message every time that comes up, and say, 'That's not what's on the ballot,'" Walker told The Associated Press. "What's on the ballot is who's going to be governor the next four years."

But former Republican state Senate Majority Leader Dale Schultz, who opposes Trump, said Crowley makes the path "way harder for Tiffany."

"It's going to force the campaign back to the issues that people care about like affordability, the war in Iran and the cost of healthcare," Schultz said.

Tiffany represents a broad swath of Wisconsin's rural, conservative north woods. Trump won the state in 2024 and 2016, but lost in 2020. All three elections were decided by less than a percentage point. Crowley's win on Tuesday was even more narrow — about half a point, further cementing Wisconsin's reputation for close elections.

Democrats look for a trifecta in Wisconsin

Democrats savored the shift in focus from their chaotic primary to the general election against Tiffany, an opponent they've long seen as vulnerable. They hope to capitalize on Trump's low approval ratings to retain control of the governor's office and flip both chambers of the Legislature to earn full control of Wisconsin state government for the first time since 2010.

Just as Crowley highlighted his Republican opponent's ties to Trump, Tiffany began the general election campaign with a message connecting Crowley to Hong.

"I've said all along that there's not a dime's worth of difference between these Democrat candidates," Tiffany said in a statement Wednesday. "His record in Milwaukee County shows exactly what Wisconsin would get: mismanage the government, run up the bill, and raise your taxes to pay for it."

And it may be tough for Crowley to connect with the young people who were among the nearly 40% of primary voters who supported Hong, Republican strategist Rusty Schultz predicted.

"Making sure they come out in November will be no small feat," he said.

Crowley's surprise win came after he had dropped out of the race

Crowley, 40, often notes on the campaign trail that he grew up in poverty in the poorest ZIP code in Wisconsin on Milwaukee's north side, his parents struggled with drug abuse and mental health issues, and his family was evicted multiple times.

Elected to the state Assembly in 2016 at the age of 30, Crowley served just over three years before being elected as Milwaukee County executive. In 2023, Crowley worked closely with the Republican-controlled Legislature to pass a bipartisan deal that sent more state aid to Milwaukee and local communities.

Crowley launched his bid for governor 11 months ago. But he dropped out of the race on July 8, saying he didn't see a path to victory. He rejoined it on July 18, less than a month before Tuesday's primary. With the backing of Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, a fellow moderate who crisscrossed the state with him in the final week, Crowley made a case that he was the better matchup against Tiffany.

"Obviously Hong was the never-ending gift in terms of one gaffe after another, wasn't really ready for primetime," Walker said. "But Crowley didn't get any real scrutiny either."

Crowley shared a meal with Hong, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan and others at a unity event outside Madison before embarking on a statewide tour. Evers, who is not seeking a third term as governor, had another commitment and did not attend.

Crowley became the first Black person to win a major party nomination for Wisconsin governor. Now he's vying to become the first Black governor of the state and just the fourth Black governor elected in the country's history.

"This historic moment is not lost on me. But I'm not even thinking about that because we've still got work to do," Crowley said. "The job is not done. The job is not finished. My job is not to become the first, and if I do become the first, my job is to make sure I'm not the last."

Forget left vs. center.

Democratic voters are making clear they just want change

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats remain mixed over what ideological direction the party should take. But across a series of closely watched primaries, they are sending a clearer message about the party's path forward: They want change.

In marquee Senate primaries in Michigan and Minnesota, progressive candidates defeated two members of Congress with significant backing from party leaders. Wisconsin voters narrowly rejected a democratic socialist but still chose a 40-year-old county executive who is seeking to become the state's first Black governor. And in Connecticut, voters ousted one of the longest-serving Democrats in Congress for a challenger who campaigned on generational change.

The results so far this month deliver no clear ideological mandate. Instead, they add to mounting evidence from this year's primaries of a Democratic appetite for turnover that is cutting across the party's traditional divisions.

"The through line between these races isn't ideology. It's impatience with this political system that feels disconnected from the urgency voters feel," said Lis Smith, a national Democratic strategist. "The demand for change is much broader than the demand for socialism."

The immediate challenge for Democrats is whether they can harness the frustration fueling revolts against their own party and turn it against Republicans in November. Beyond that looms the 2028 presidential race, when a new generation of leaders will compete to shape a changing Democratic Party.

"If leaders in our party don't recognize that we need to make changes, then the changes are going to come from the ground up," Luke Bronin, a former mayor who defeated 14-term Connecticut Rep. John Larson in Tuesday's primary, said in his victory speech. "That's a message our party needs to hear."

Progressives are ascendant, but Wisconsin shows their limits

Progressive leaders touted Tuesday's results as further proof that their message is working after victories in Minnesota and Michigan.

"What we are seeing is that people are sick and tired of establishment politics and establishment policies," Sen. Bernie Sanders told The Associated Press on Wednesday, pointing to a string of progressive victories around the country.

In Wisconsin, Democratic socialist Francesca Hong had hoped to also ride the wave of recent progressive victories to the Democratic nomination for governor. Instead, she narrowly lost to Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley, a more moderate Democrat who had the backing of outgoing Gov. Tony Evers.

Hong's defeat also came after a number of her past comments resurfaced, including support for defunding the police and a call to cancel Thanksgiving, which she said was a joke. Unlike El-Sayed, Hong didn't receive the backing of some of the nation's most prominent progressive leaders, including Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Sanders said Wednesday that he didn't endorse Hong because his team lacks the resources to "get involved in every single race. Period. And that's about it." He nevertheless praised her "very strong grass-roots campaign" for getting "a whole lot of people excited."

The result illustrates a tension for the party's ascendant left flank. Candidates running on populist economic messages have found growing success with Democratic voters. But some positions associated with the progressive movement's recent past remain vulnerabilities — particularly among voters worried about electability in November.

"A lot of Democrats are traditionalists on things like culture issues. This is not about culture, it's about economics. It's about corruption," said David Axelrod, who was an adviser to President Barack Obama. "The closer that candidates hew to those issues, the larger the base they're going to be able to accumulate."

That tension was evident Tuesday for Sarah Atkins Hoggatt, 61, who said she agreed with Hong on some issues but worried that Hong's deeply progressive politics and the democratic socialist label would make it harder for her to defeat Republican Tom Tiffany. She voted for Crowley.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 50 of 65

"I didn't vote my heart," Atkins Hoggatt said.

Progressives scored a much clearer victory in Minnesota, where Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan resoundingly defeated centrist Rep. Angie Craig. Craig had the backing of House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and other prominent Democrats, while Flanagan was supported by Sanders and Sen. Elizabeth Warren.

Flanagan, similar to El-Sayed in Michigan, highlighted her opponent's support from wealthy donors while also attacking her vote for a Trump-backed immigration bill that became a liability after immigration agents shot and killed Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis.

As in Michigan, the winning progressive candidate was significantly outspent.

"Super PACs spent over \$80 million trying to defeat El-Sayed and Peggy Flanagan," Sanders said. "They lost both elections. I think what people are saying is, we're sick and tired of billionaires and their super PACs buying elections."

Democrats are hungry for change

Flanagan is 46 years old. Crowley is 40. And El-Sayed is 41. But nowhere was the demand for generational change more explicit Tuesday than in Connecticut.

Bronin, 47, defeated the 78-year-old Larson — who was first elected to Congress in 1998. A central theme of Bronin's campaign was the need for a new generation of leadership in Washington.

Larson became the seventh Democratic House incumbent to lose a primary this year, many of them to younger challengers. The defeated incumbents and the Democrats replacing them span ideological lines, making the wave of losses difficult to explain simply as a shift to the left.

The push for generational turnover has taken on greater urgency since 2024, when concerns about President Joe Biden's age ended his reelection campaign and forced Democrats into a reckoning over aging leadership.

That sentiment was evident among voters in Larson's district. Dan Schnaidt, a 73-year-old Democrat, said he appreciated Larson's service but believed it was time to move on.

"It's time for new blood, for new ideas," Schnaidt said.

The generational divide extends to the electorate

While Hong fell just short in Wisconsin, the strength of her insurgent campaign highlighted another force reshaping Democratic politics: younger voters.

Cody Chandler, a 35-year-old software engineer, voted for Hong and called her "probably the most exciting candidate I've seen." Unlike in elections past, Chandler said, he voted for the candidate he most wanted to win rather than the one he considered most electable.

That support showed up geographically. Hong won Madison, home to the University of Wisconsin's flagship campus, by nearly 7 percentage points, though it wasn't a big enough of a margin to help her win the nomination.

A similar pattern helped propel El-Sayed to victory a week earlier in Michigan.

El-Sayed won Washtenaw County, home to the University of Michigan, by nearly 25 percentage points and Ingham County, home to Michigan State University, by 23 points. He also won Grand Rapids, with its large population of younger, college-educated voters, by nearly 26 points.

Jordan Snyder, a 20-year-old Michigan voter who supported El-Sayed, said she backed him because of his progressive positions and because she viewed him as someone she could trust, rather than "someone who I feel could be bought and sold."

"People are feeling like a lot of the people that they've trusted that have been in government haven't really been living up to expectations," Snyder said.

Israel says Gaza drone strike targeted a Hamas commander, and other developments in the Mideast

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military said it struck a Hamas commander Wednesday in northern Gaza using a targeted drone strike despite pressure to halt such attacks from officials overseeing peace efforts.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 51 of 65

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

Israel says it struck a Hamas commander, but unclear if he was killed

An Israeli drone strike hit a man in the city of Beit Lahiya who was described by Israel's military as a Hamas commander. It was the first targeted strike Israel has announced since Aug. 3.

Targeted strikes have come under closer scrutiny since U.S. President Donald Trump announced a deal aimed at advancing peace efforts in Gaza that would include halting such strikes.

Though Hamas accepted the plan to decommission its weapons, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected it earlier this week, saying Hamas must fully disarm before Israel accepts the terms. Board of Peace officials have urged Israel to stop the strikes as a way of moving the deal forward.

The Israeli military did not provide details about the man targeted or say whether he was killed. Officials at Shifa and Nasser hospitals said four injured people were brought in Wednesday.

The Health Ministry in Gaza has reported 45 people killed since Aug. 1.

Three Pakistanis among the dead in Houthi attack on ship

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday condemned an attack by Houthi rebels on a ship in the Bab el-Mandeb strait, saying three Pakistanis were killed and another wounded. The attack Tuesday killed six people total.

With the Strait of Hormuz effectively shut down by Iran and a U.S. blockade on Iranian ports, there has been a renewed focus on the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb strait at Yemen's southern tip, which is an alternate route for Saudi Arabia to ship its oil.

The attack came as part of a growing number of Houthi strikes against government forces in Yemen and oil facilities in neighboring Saudi Arabia, which supports the Yemeni government, and the kingdom's shipping in the Red Sea.

Trump insists blockade gives US control of Strait of Hormuz

Claiming the U.S. has "total control" of the Strait of Hormuz, President Donald Trump said Wednesday: "I THINK WE WILL KEEP IT!"

Trump's social media post referred to the U.S. blockade of Iran's ports. A vital route for one-fifth of the world's traded oil before the war, the strait has been largely closed to other traffic since the start of the war because of Iran's attacks on shipping.

Those attacks have continued despite the blockade and U.S. strikes.

Iran has said the strait will only reopen if the U.S. meets a list of demands, including lifting the blockade.

Pakistan presses to defuse tensions between US and Iran

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar met Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam in Islamabad on Wednesday as Pakistan seeks to resume peace negotiations between Iran and the U.S.

Their meeting came a day after Pakistan sent Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to Tehran for talks with Iran's top leaders.

An interim deal to end the fighting reached in mid-June is set to expire Monday. The ceasefire collapsed last month as the U.S. and Iran exchanged strikes over more than two weeks before pausing.

Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi told reporters Wednesday the June deal remains valid and the deadline could be extended.

"We are not closing the chapter," Andrabi said.

Turkey condemns Colombia's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights

Turkey condemned the decision by Colombia's new government to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, calling it a move to "legitimize Israel's occupation" of the territory.

Colombia, shortly after the swearing-in of conservative Abelardo de la Espriella as president on Friday, became just the second country to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the territory, which Israel captured during the 1967 Middle East war and annexed in 1981.

The United States was the first during Trump's first term, reversing a longstanding U.S. policy.

The United Nations recognizes the territory as part of Syria.

Kuwaiti authorities thwart plot against unnamed facility

Kuwait's Interior Ministry said a "terrorist plot" against an unspecified facility was thwarted Wednesday when a Kuwaiti citizen affiliated with the Islamic State group was detained shortly before carrying out his plan.

The ministry said the man had received training on making explosives and activating drones to be used in the planned attack.

The ministry said a vital facility had been targeted but gave no further details.

After an earthquake, how long can trapped people survive?

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For those trapped in rubble after an earthquake, survival depends on many factors, including weather and access to water and air.

If their injuries aren't too severe, victims can survive for a week or more, assuming the weather isn't too hot or cold, experts say.

Two days after a powerful deadly earthquake struck western Colombia, rescue teams are racing against the clock to search for survivors.

Most rescues happen in the 24 hours after a disaster. The chances of survival drop with each day after that, experts say. Most victims are badly injured or buried by falling stones or other debris.

After the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, a teenager and his 80-year-old grandmother were found alive after nine days trapped in their flattened home. And the year before, a 16-year-old Haitian girl was rescued from earthquake rubble in Port-au-Prince after 15 days.

Water and air are crucial as time passes

Trapped victims are more likely to survive if they are in a debris-free pocket that prevents major injury while they await rescue, like under a sturdy desk, said geophysicist Victor Tsai from Brown University. Experts call this a survivable void space.

If fire, smoke or hazardous chemicals were released as a result of the building collapse, they may decrease a person's survival odds, said emergency response expert Dr. Joseph Barbera at George Washington University.

Beyond that, having air to breathe and water to drink are crucial as the days go on.

"You could survive a while without food," Barbera said. "You could survive less without water."

Temperatures where someone is trapped may affect survival, and temperatures outside the rubble can affect rescue missions.

In Colombia, where governments across Latin America have offered help, authorities have said most of the earthquake deaths occurred in the cities of Cali, Pereira, Manizales and Quibdo, but there is less information about rural areas.

There have been signs of hope, including a 32-year-old woman who was pulled from a collapsed building in Pereira after being trapped for 36 hours.

It can be important for survivors to receive vital medical care before they are removed from the rubble, Barbera said. If not, the buildup of toxins from crushed muscles could make them go into shock after they are rescued.

What to do during an earthquake

The best practices for survival during an earthquake depend on where you are in the world. Building codes in regions with active fault lines are often designed to withstand earthquakes, but that doesn't hold true everywhere.

In many countries, including the United States, the best practices are to drop, seek cover and hang on unless you are close to a building exit. Seek shelter under a heavy table or near sturdy furniture that may yield a survivable pocket if the roof collapses. Cover your face with cloth or a mask to protect from dust and debris.

If you are trapped in the rubble after an earthquake, save your energy and don't overexert. Ration food and water, listen for rescue calls and search for something near you to make noise. If you have a phone

with you, conserve its battery and try for help in short spurts each day.

Pope hats, bloody shirts and so many bobbleheads: The creative ways MLB teams lure fans to the park

By JAY COHEN AP Baseball Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — It started as a limited promotion for a specialty theme night. Then the Chicago White Sox heard from their fans.

Everyone wanted a pope-themed hat.

"When things go bananas ... that's when it gets really fun," said Brooks Boyer, Chicago's chief revenue and marketing officer.

Fun is the overarching theme when it comes to stadium giveaways, and business has been good at major league ballparks this year.

An array of creative promotions — everything from the New York Mets handing out fake glasses and mustaches for a Bobby Valentine Disguise Night to the Texas Rangers giving away a Nolan Ryan bloody lip jersey — has played at least a small role in an MLB-wide average attendance of 29,618 through Tuesday's games, the highest such number for a full season since 2017.

Bobbleheads remain popular — like the Brandon Nimmo Bull Riding bobblehead in Texas, or the butter-churning Nick Kurtz "Big Amish" bobblehead with the Athletics — but it's not just those iconic figurines that are drawing big crowds. The Brewers handed out 25,000 bar dice sets to fans 21 and over on Saturday, and they had a crowd of 40,625 at American Family Field.

The pitch clock and other innovative rules introduced by MLB in 2023 are often credited for spurring fan interest. But it's clear from the long lines — and occasionally astronomical resale prices on eBay — what a clever giveaway can do for ticket sales, too.

"I definitely think across the league, there's been an increase in demand and desire, and even necessity, to do things that are outside of the box," said Meagan Hermosillo, the director of marketing and promotions for the Arizona Diamondbacks. "For us, we can't really do a standard bobblehead or a standard anything. It has to have some kind of unique factor if we want it to move the needle."

Chicago's pope hats took creative — and careful — planning

The White Sox ended up giving the pope hats — shaped like the Pope's miter, with the team's sock logo in the middle — to everyone in the crowd of 38,113 for Tuesday night's 5-4 loss to the Cincinnati Reds. The tribute to Pope Leo XIV, a Chicago native and longtime White Sox fan, helped push the club's season-long attendance to 1,460,383, surpassing its total of 1,445,738 for all of 2025.

The team leaned into the theme. There were signs posted in the ballpark that read "LEO KNOWS MUNE" and "LEO KNOWS KONERKO," referring to current White Sox first baseman Munetaka Murakami and former slugger Paul Konerko. Sister Mary Jo Sobieck threw out a ceremonial first pitch, and former White Sox pitcher Donn "The Pope" Pall kicked off the game with the "play ball" announcement.

"I thought it was a great idea, knowing that the Pope is from Chicago and he's a Sox fan, which is great," said Edward Lopez, 58, a truck driver from the south side of the city.

Lopez was supposed to go to the game with his girlfriend, but she wasn't able to make it. So he went through two different gates to make sure he secured two pope hats.

"It was worth it," he said.

Promotions for the White Sox go through a committee led by senior director of marketing and promotions Mike Downey. They throw out ideas and concepts, and they also look at samples from different vendors.

The team also is handing out wooden domino sets to 10,000 fans on Aug. 22 and magic wands to 20,000 fans on Sept. 4, a nod to the viral wand-waving dugout displays of injured reliever Mike Vasil.

"We've always looked to have our giveaways be something that we know people would wear or use or value because it adds value to the ticket," Boyer said. "So it starts with that."

While planning the pope hat night, religious sensitivities were part of the conversation for the promo-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 54 of 65

tions committee.

"We haven't done items that would be Pope Leo's likeness," Boyer said. "We wouldn't do that without the permission of the Vatican. ... We've been very careful. There is a little bit of nuance and finesse that needs to be done. And items, you know a lot of items may not be for everybody."

Teams are eagerly jumping on larger cultural moments for eye-catching promotions

The Baltimore Orioles handed out a Tupac Shakur bobblehead in May. The New York Yankees gave out a "KPop Demon Hunters" bobblehead on Tuesday night, and they have a George Costanza calzone bobblehead — paying tribute to a 1996 "Seinfeld" episode — coming up on Aug. 27. Every MLB team except Toronto had a Star Wars Night this season.

Following in the footsteps of the minor leagues in many cases, it's not enough anymore to just feature a popular player for a giveaway.

"You can see that teams are doing a much better job with their understanding (of) who they're trying to target," said Jim Strode, an associate dean and professor at Ohio University's College of Business. "When I think of the 'Seinfeld' one, I'm thinking, you know, they're targeting Gen X, they are targeting some, you know, younger baby boomers to try to get out to the ballpark."

There is also what Lauren Anderson, the director of the Warsaw Sports Business Center at the University of Oregon, described as the "collector chase game." There were multiple fans looking to buy additional pope hats at Tuesday night's game, and there were several listings for the giveaway and the "KPop Demon Hunters" bobblehead on eBay on Wednesday.

"You want something that's unique and cool and something that you can, you know, I'm one of 5,000 people to get these, I'm one of 10,000," Anderson said. "I mean, there is also a bit of the game of people want something that's limited so they can flip it and sell it, like on an eBay."

Everyone wants to 'tax the rich.' In New York City, it's getting complicated

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Across the U.S., calls to "tax the rich" have become potent political slogans. But even in Mayor Zohran Mamdani's New York, getting the wealthy to pay more isn't playing out as smoothly as supporters hoped.

What seemed at first like an easy idea — slapping a new tax on people who own luxury second homes in the Big Apple but live elsewhere most of the year — has instead created a lot of confusion in the city's notoriously convoluted world of real estate arrangements.

"It seems very simple but the more you dig into it, the more nuances you look at, the more complicated it gets," said Gary Bingel, a state and local tax expert and partner at EisnerAmper, an accounting firm.

It has also prompted pushback from both the city's very wealthy and the merely moderately wealthy.

President Donald Trump, whose gilded Manhattan penthouse could be subject to the tax since his primary residence is now in Florida, said he was looking into whether federal intervention could "avert this disaster, before it is too late."

A group of homeowners sued over the city's rollout of the tax, arguing that officials had not done enough to figure out who would have to pay the tax and instead made it property owners' responsibility. A judge temporarily paused the process this week, but the city moved to appeal, allowing the tax effort to continue until it's sorted out in court.

Securing a new tax on multimillion-dollar second homes, known as pied-à-terres, was an early win for Mamdani in his quest to raise taxes on the city's highest earners to pay for his ambitious liberal agenda.

The so-called pied-à-terre tax would levy a new surcharge on one-, two- and three-family homes valued at more than \$5 million, as well as condos and co-ops valued at \$1 million or more, if those dwellings are not a person's primary residence.

The idea, according to officials, would bring \$500 million to the city's coffers annually, paid primarily by bigwigs who get to enjoy city life but don't pay city income taxes.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 55 of 65

That's where things start to get hairy.

It's common for high rollers to place their properties in trusts, obscuring ownership while allowing the property to pass more easily to family members. Limited liability companies can similarly shield an owner's identity, also making it hard for government officials to tell who actually lives in any given apartment.

From there, there are numerous arrangements that can complicate who would be subject to the tax. For example, letting a distant family member stay at a second home without formal documentation, or if someone owns one or more properties and rents them out, but the tenants don't have documentation that the unit is their primary residence.

"Those situations make it difficult to prove people are in there," said Mark Limardo, a partner at the law firm Herrick in Manhattan who focuses on taxes. "The concept is simple, but the ownership rules and the documentation rules have made it very complicated."

Outcry and litigation

City Hall, for its part, argues that it shouldn't be difficult to provide proof that someone actually lives in the city and says that its finance department is experienced in parsing tangled webs of paperwork.

Mamdani, no stranger to razzing wealthy people, debuted the tax with a video singling out hedge fund CEO Ken Griffin by standing outside a Manhattan penthouse the billionaire purchased for around \$239 million. The clip sent Mamdani's supporters swooning, but Griffin later said it was "frightening" that a public official would call attention to one of his homes, especially after the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson in the same neighborhood.

The city then published an expansive online list of property owners who it said could be subject to the tax, listing their names, addresses and property values. The list, which the city is legally required to publish, inflamed tensions between the mayor and the city's wealthy, many of whom argued the roll amounted to doxing or public shaming.

The administration has mailed notices to a much smaller group — about 17,000 properties — that it suspected would be subject to the tax, telling them they could apply for exemptions. Mamdani announced the mailers in a celebratory social media post that read: "If you have a second home in New York City worth more than \$5M, check your mailbox when you're back in the five boroughs — because you've got mail."

He later pushed back the deadline for exemption requests following public outcry from people who claimed to have received the letters in error or had trouble navigating the process.

Stewart Sterk, a real estate law professor at Cardozo School of Law in New York, predicted last week's lawsuit wouldn't be the last, saying he expected many of the targets of the tax to file individual cases over denied exemptions, given the vast number of apartments at play and the various arrangements people have connecting them to their properties.

"This is going to be a subject of litigation for quite a while," he said.

A blockbuster \$12.5B deal as Josh Kushner and Bob Iger agree to buy the Lakers, AP source says

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles Lakers are being sold for the second time in a year, going to businessmen Josh Kushner and Bob Iger for a record-breaking price.

This sale agreement is \$12.5 billion, according to a person familiar with the terms who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Wednesday because neither side revealed specific details of the latest stunning development with one of North America's marquee sports teams.

ESPN first reported that Kushner and Iger are buying the NBA's most valuable franchise. The Lakers were valued last year at \$10 billion — a record for a pro sports team — when Mark Walter purchased a controlling stake from the Buss family, which had owned the team since 1979.

"As lifelong NBA fans, we are deeply honored for the opportunity to become stewards of the Los Angeles Lakers, one of the most iconic sports franchises in the world," Iger and Kushner said in a statement. "We

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 56 of 65

have immense respect for the leadership and vision of Jerry and Jeanie Buss. Our long-term commitment is to build on that foundation, compete at the highest level, and serve this extraordinary team, its fans, and the city of Los Angeles.”

Kushner, a venture capitalist, and former Walt Disney Company CEO Iger had been working together on landing a possible NBA expansion team for Las Vegas. By buying the Lakers, they don't have to wait until the possibility of expansion in the 2028-29 season at the earliest.

Lakers icon Magic Johnson, a partner in Walter's ownership of baseball's Los Angeles Dodgers, praised the deal on social media.

“Laker fans, you couldn't have two better owners,” Johnson wrote. “I've known Bob personally for over 40 years — he has always loved the Lakers and basketball and he will bring championships back to LA.”

The sale still will need approval from the NBA's board of governors, and that process can take several weeks. The next board meeting is set for September in New York.

The \$12.5 billion price tag is not only a record for U.S. pro sports but a new summit in skyrocketing NBA franchise values. Only three years ago, Michael Jordan sold his majority stake in the Charlotte Hornets for a \$3 billion valuation, while the Boston Celtics were sold last year to private equity mogul Bill Chisholm at a valuation of just over \$6 billion.

Walter's agreement to purchase a controlling stake in the Lakers at the \$10 billion valuation last summer obliterated that mark, and now Iger and Kushner have pushed the bar even higher.

The 66-year-old Walter's shocking decision to sell after just 10 months of official ownership is reverberating throughout the team's massive fan base, which appeared to be uniformly excited about the purchase last year. Walter has stewarded the Dodgers into the most successful stretch in franchise history, with three World Series championships in the past six seasons as the most aggressive spenders in baseball.

Multiple media outlets last month reported that Walter's business empire is under scrutiny from both federal prosecutors and the Securities and Exchange Commission in tax fraud investigations.

The Lakers are 17-time NBA champions who won their most recent title in 2020. They've made the playoffs in each of the past four seasons, and their current roster is built around NBA scoring champion Luka Doncic, who is signed through the 2028-29 season. The Slovenian superstar has become passionate about Los Angeles and the Lakers less than two years after his arrival.

“Being a Laker means everything to me, and I'm excited to get back on the court and bring a championship to LA,” Doncic wrote on social media after hearing of the sale. “I've gotten used to big changes over these last few years, but I know that no matter what, there is no limit to the potential of this iconic franchise. I look forward to meeting Josh and Bob so we can get to work building something special in LA together.”

The 41-year-old Kushner has been a minority owner of two NBA teams, but he jumped into the international sports spotlight this summer when his capital holding company, Thrive Eternal, was set to be the “anchor investor” in FIFA President Gianni Infantino's plan to sell stakes in future World Cup profits. Infantino abandoned the idea on July 31.

Kushner's older brother is Jared Kushner, son-in-law of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Josh Kushner currently owns a minority stake in the Miami Heat, and he previously owned a stake in the Memphis Grizzlies.

The 75-year-old Iger became one of Hollywood's most well-known executives while he ran Disney for two lengthy stints between 2005 and last March, when he stepped aside. Iger and his wife, former sports journalist Willow Bay, became the controlling owners of NWSL team Angel City FC in 2024 with a deal that valued the club at \$250 million.

Walter's purchase of the Lakers was approved by NBA owners last October. He originally bought a 27% minority stake in the team in 2021 before purchasing control of the team last year.

The Lakers' 17 championships going back to the franchise's origin in Minneapolis are the second-most in NBA history behind Boston's 18. It is a global brand, always at or near the top of the league's merchandise-sales rankings.

This record sale price comes just weeks after LeBron James, the league's all-time leading scorer, left the Lakers after eight seasons to become a free agent. James ultimately decided to sign with the Philadelphia

76ers.

Walter and his team had already begun to make extensive changes to the Lakers, who were often perceived as an antiquated franchise in many aspects during their decades of Buss family ownership.

The Lakers had beefed up their basketball operations department with new hires in the front office around longtime general manager Rob Pelinka. They also boosted the business side with extensive searches for new revenue, including sales of new jersey patches and additional prominent sponsorship deals.

When Walter bought his controlling interest in the Lakers, the deal specified that Jeanie Buss would stay on as the team's governor. With new ownership, it's unclear whether Buss will have a continuing role in the team she inherited along with her siblings from her father, Jerry Buss, who died in 2013.

Along with the Dodgers, Walter and his various partners also have ownership interests in the WNBA's Los Angeles Sparks, English Premier League club Chelsea, the Professional Women's Hockey League and the new Cadillac Formula 1 racing team.

An overnight Ukrainian blitz damages Russia's Black Sea naval stronghold, Zelenskyy says

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian anti-ship missiles and drones blitzed a major Russian naval base on the Black Sea coast in a "unique" nighttime operation, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday.

Cutting-edge drones developed by Kyiv since Moscow's full-scale invasion over four years ago have repeatedly targeted Russian ships in the Black Sea, including warships and oil tankers.

Ukraine's air and sea drones have succeeded in limiting the movements of Russia's once-dominant Black Sea navy, Kyiv officials say, in one of the country's biggest accomplishments of the war.

But Ukrainian officials believe Russian President Vladimir Putin is bent on pressing ahead with the war, despite his bigger army's slow and costly progress on the battlefield and U.S. diplomatic efforts to find a settlement.

Putin is planning "an additional rapid mobilization of several hundred thousand Russians by the end of the year," Zelenskyy said Tuesday night on social media, citing Ukrainian intelligence reports.

Those reports have said recently that Russia is expanding production of ballistic missiles and jet-powered drones, both of which are hard for Ukrainian air defenses to counter.

Ukraine also is trying to scale up its weapons manufacturing through agreements with partner countries.

Russia shows no sign of a new mobilization

Neither Putin nor other senior Russian officials have hinted at a possible major call-up of forces to fight in Ukraine. Some officials have accused Kyiv of trying to rattle the Russian public with talk of a mobilization.

Russian lawmaker Andrei Gurulyov brushed off reports of a possible autumn mobilization. "It is the enemy deliberately spreading rumors about mobilization in order to destabilize the situation inside Russia," he was quoted as saying by pro-Kremlin online outlet Tsargrad in comments published Monday.

After the widely unpopular partial mobilization of some 300,000 men four years ago, Russia has relied on volunteers attracted by relatively high pay. However, the decree declaring the partial mobilization that Putin signed in September 2022 is open-ended, allowing authorities to resume it if needed.

Ukraine says it hit Black Sea port infrastructure

The Ukrainian military "carried out a unique operation targeting the naval base in Novorossiysk — the last major stronghold of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea," Zelenskyy said in a social media post Wednesday. The attack struck air defenses, piers and other port infrastructure, he added.

Russia relocated most of its naval ships to Novorossiysk after Ukrainian strikes on the main Black Sea base at Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula earlier in the war.

Hundreds of Ukrainian drones attacked Novorossiysk, Anapa and Gelendzhik and the Temryuk district of the Krasnodar region overnight, said Gov. Veniamin Kondratyev.

An 8-year-old child was one of three people killed in the attack on the region, Kondratyev said. He added

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 58 of 65

that 24 others in the region were wounded. Dozens of residential buildings were damaged, Kondratyev said, and debris from downed drones fell on the grounds of four industrial plants.

The strikes damaged two of Novorossiysk's three grain terminals, with one of them halting operations, the Russian business daily Vedomosti reported.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its air defenses downed more than 500 Ukrainian drones.

Struck Russian port is also a key oil hub

Novorossiysk also is home to the Grushovaya oil terminal, one of the largest international hubs in southern Russia for petroleum products. No reports indicated it had been hit.

In February, the U.S. State Department expressed its displeasure about Ukraine's attacks on Novorossiysk, saying they affected U.S. oil interests in Kazakhstan.

The Caspian Pipeline Consortium operates a pipeline from the Caspian coast in northwestern Kazakhstan to Novorossiysk. The pipeline handles much of the crude exports from three major Kazakh fields in which major U.S. energy companies, Chevron and ExxonMobil, have stakes.

With the militaries of European countries boarding and detaining sanctioned Russian oil tankers at sea, hurting the country's trade and heaping economic pressure on Moscow, Putin on Wednesday threatened retaliation for what he termed "piracy."

Speaking on a visit to a Russian warship taking part in a naval exercise in the Pacific, Putin said Western countries are breaking international maritime law by seizing ships they say are part of Moscow's "shadow fleet" of sanctions-dodging merchant vessels.

"It's nothing but piracy and robbery," Putin said. "If this is done, we will be forced to respond in kind."

On the Crimean Peninsula, which was illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014, air defenses downed 115 Ukrainian drones over Sevastopol overnight, said Mikhail Razvozhayev, the city's Russian-installed head. He added that 10 apartment buildings and 25 private houses were damaged.

Russian drones kill 2 and destroy a shopping mall in Ukraine

Ukraine's air force said Russia fired 138 long-range drones as well as an unspecified number of missiles during the night, with damage recorded at 16 locations.

In the Kherson region of southern Ukraine, a large-scale Russian drone attack overnight killed two people and wounded two others, said regional head Oleksandr Prokudin.

The attacks also destroyed a shopping mall in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, according to authorities.

Missiles and long-range drones hit fuel reservoirs and infrastructure used for unloading and storing military cargo in the port of Chornomorsk in Ukraine's Odesa region, Russia's Defense Ministry said.

A bulk cargo vessel carrying military equipment and a tanker loaded with oil for the Ukrainian armed forces also were hit in Odesa, it said.

Inflation slows but prices remain elevated as Iran war and spending on AI push up prices

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. inflation declined slightly last month as the cost of gas and groceries slipped, though prices are still rising more quickly than before the Iran war, posing challenges for the White House as the midterm elections near.

Consumer prices increased 3.4% in July from a year ago, down slightly from 3.5% in June, the Labor Department said Wednesday. Inflation had fallen to 2.4% before the Iran war. On a monthly basis, prices rose just 0.1% from June to July.

The mild decrease is the second straight decline after sharply higher gas prices pushed inflation to 4.2% in May, a three-year high. Yet even with the pause, prices are still rising more quickly than average wages, underscoring the struggle many Americans have had paying for groceries, gas, and healthcare. And many costs grew last month, including airfares, computers, and used cars.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core inflation slipped to 2.5% in July from a year ago, down from 2.6% in June. July's figure matches a post-pandemic low reached in January and February,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 59 of 65

before the Iran war.

Core prices rose 0.2% from June to July. Monthly increases at about 0.2% would be low enough over time to bring inflation closer to the Fed's 2% goal.

"America still has an inflation problem, but there are encouraging signs that price pressures outside of the gas pump are easing," Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union, said.

Inflation report could make Fed rate hike less likely

Cooler inflation could also ease pressure on the Federal Reserve to raise their key interest rate to combat rising costs. Fed officials are sharply split over their next steps. Roughly half the members of the central bank's rate-setting committee support raising borrowing costs this year, while another half think rates are already high enough to slowly push inflation back to their 2% target.

"We're clearly not out of the woods, however it makes the Fed's decision a little bit easier, because now you see that inflation is creeping down," said Dan North, senior economist at Allianz Trade North America.

Still, oil prices remain elevated and gas prices rose in late July and August, suggesting overall inflation could accelerate next month. On Wednesday, gas averaged \$4.04 a gallon nationwide, 16 cents higher than a month ago, according to the motor club AAA.

Inflation has been pushed higher by a series of shocks to the economy, including President Donald Trump's tariffs imposed last spring, higher gas prices stemming from the U.S. attack on Iran, and a surge in investment in artificial intelligence infrastructure that has boosted computer chip prices. The key question for the inflation-fighters at the Federal Reserve — not to mention for consumers struggling with high gas and grocery prices — is how quickly those one-time effects will fade or whether they will lead to persistently rising prices.

Some companies, however, are still struggling with higher costs from Trump's tariffs.

Julie Robbins, CEO of Earthquaker Devices, an Akron, Ohio-based maker of pedals used to create effects for guitars, said her company has paid \$200,000 in tariffs this year and has had to raise prices twice to offset the costs.

Only a small amount of those tariffs have been refunded after the Supreme Court struck down Trump's emergency duties. Robbins is worried they will have to raise prices again as the White House has sought to impose new tariffs to replace the ones that lost due to the Supreme Court decision.

Her company's electric bills have also risen in recent months and the rising costs of fuel have pushed up her shipping costs.

"I am just seeing more and more costs going up all the time," Robbins said. "The money we paid on tariffs, that easily could have paid for two or three more employees."

Gas, grocery prices fell, while computers, airfares rose

Wednesday's report showed that gasoline prices fell 2.9% from June to July, and even grocery prices declined slightly, falling by 0.1%. Yet gas prices are 25% higher than a year ago. And groceries are 2.7% more expensive than a year earlier.

Hotel room prices dropped 2.8% from June to July, likely reflecting the end of the World Cup tournament. Clothing costs rose just 0.1%, though they are up 3.9% in the past year.

Other things are growing more expensive: Computer prices jumped 3.5% from June to July, reflecting a decision by Apple to sharply raise prices for its computers and tablets as AI spending pushes up the cost of semiconductors. Smartphone prices rose 1.1%.

Airline fares rose 2.2% from June to July as jet fuel prices spiral higher along with oil.

Price increases have stayed above the Fed's 2% target for more than five years, suggesting there is more than temporary factors at play.

The cost of services such as healthcare, restaurant meals, and car maintenance rose 3% in July from a year earlier, and they aren't particularly sensitive to gas prices or AI investment. Rising costs for services often reflect higher wages, as companies charge more to offset the cost of higher pay. But incomes aren't growing fast enough to sustain inflation, economists note.

It's a confounding situation that has left many economists — and Fed officials — seeking more information to determine where inflation is headed.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 60 of 65

"You've got all these things that are just not the way the economy used to behave," Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG, said.

For many consumers, years of sharply rising grocery prices have led them to adopt a wide range of coping strategies, from comparison shopping, to couponing, to cutting back on favorite foods.

Retailers, including Walmart, have responded by rolling back food prices, a trend that could have lowered July's inflation figures. Yet many other businesses are still passing on higher costs.

Paint company Sherwin-Williams is planning an 8% price increase in September to offset higher raw material costs, CEO Heidi Petz said late last month.

"We are seeing the impact of higher oil and related cost pressures, and we expect continued volatility throughout the balance of the year," she said.

David Crowley wins Democratic primary for Wisconsin governor over progressive Francesca Hong

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Moderate Democrat David Crowley won the Wisconsin primary for governor, defeating a democratic socialist who fell short while trying to deliver another win for progressives in a battleground state.

Crowley, the Milwaukee county executive, is vying to become Wisconsin's first Black governor and pitched himself as the candidate best positioned to win in November against Republican U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, who is endorsed by President Donald Trump.

Crowley narrowly defeated democratic socialist Francesca Hong, who was hoping to ride the wave of recent victories by progressive candidates, including Abdul El-Sayed in neighboring Michigan's U.S. Senate race last week.

El-Sayed's win was the movement's first major success in a purple state. It also fed fears in the party's leaders that such candidates, farther afield and often carrying political baggage of past stances such as defunding the police, would struggle to beat Republicans and imperil the party's hopes of recapturing control of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House.

Crowley didn't address supporters Tuesday night but was expected at a unity event later Wednesday.

"Now, David is focused on bringing people together, earning the support of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and anyone who believes Wisconsin is at its best when we work together and deliver results," Crowley's campaign manager Garren Randolph said in a statement.

Hong's loss in Wisconsin may have doused the momentum, but it's far from snuffing it out. A democratic socialist coming close to victory in a battleground state sends a clear message: There's unignorable angst among the party's voters.

"We have built something that will change politics forever," Hong told supporters as the outcome of the race hung in the balance late Tuesday. "The work we have done will be remembered forever. I know we don't have the final results right now, but what I do know is we are ready to keep fighting."

Her campaign manager Becky Cooper said after Hong conceded that she was "proud of the race we ran."

"Our team campaigned clean, our souls are intact and we really made meaningful change for the progressive movement," she said.

The Associated Press declared Crowley the winner once Hong's concession removed the possibility of a recount in the exceptionally close race.

Hong could have requested a recount since Crowley's margin of victory was less than 1 percentage point. But because it was wider than 0.25 points, Hong's campaign would have had to pay for it.

Sanders and other top progressives stayed out of the Wisconsin race

Progressives had wanted to notch a clear win, but national progressive leaders, most notably Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, sat out the race and did not endorse.

The movement is not entirely aligned. Not all candidates are democratic socialists or have endorsements from Sanders, but they are often tilling similar voter anger with politics and the party: over military aid

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 61 of 65

to Israel, the amount of money wielded in campaigns, the Trump administration's immigration raids and the high cost of daily life.

In New York City in the June primary elections, two democratic socialist candidates and a progressive came out on top, booting two Democratic incumbents from Congress in the process. All three were backed by the city's mayor, Zohran Mamdani, himself a democratic socialist who framed the upsets as a question of electing "better Democrats."

Democrats in Wisconsin are hoping to capitalize on low approval ratings for Trump in a state he won in 2016 and 2024 to retain control of the governor's office and flip both chambers of the Legislature to earn full control of Wisconsin state government for the first time since 2010.

Wisconsin Democrats are hoping to unite after tight primary battle

Both Hong and Crowley said in the waning days of the race that they expected Democrats to come together and unite to defeat Tiffany, a congressman from conservative, rural northern Wisconsin.

"Our ultimate goal is to make sure we don't have a MAGA extremist occupying the governor's office," Crowley said Sunday.

Democrat David Zimmerman, a 79-year-old retired industrial engineer professor in Madison, voted for Crowley on Tuesday. He said Hong's chance of beating Tiffany in November "worries me a lot."

"I think she's going to have trouble winning," he said.

The photo finish is just the latest twist in a chaotic primary that saw two major candidates drop out amid scandals. Crowley had also dropped out in early July, but he got back in 10 days later with Gov. Tony Evers' endorsement.

Both of them crisscrossed the state in the final week, making the case that Crowley was the better matchup against Tiffany in a swing state known for close elections where independent, moderate voters often decide the outcome.

Democratic socialist shook up Wisconsin race, fueled by national movement

Hong, a single mother and former line cook, tapped into Democratic anger with the party's mainstream and Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement.

The 37-year-old known for sprinkling her comments with profanity and leaning into her edgy and sometimes humorous social media profile excited the liberal wing of the party. Hong called for free childcare and healthcare and a moratorium on artificial intelligence data center construction. But she also wrestled with her past support for defunding the police, saying at the race's only debate that she would not support cutting law enforcement funding.

She also drew criticism for past social media posts in which she called for canceling Thanksgiving because "we should stop celebrating colonialism" and disparaged Valentine's Day as "another day capitalism tells you how to show love."

Hong has since downplayed the posts as her attempt at making jokes.

Chaotic Democratic primary saw candidates drop, come back in

Evers' decision not to seek a third term created an open race for governor that initially had seven Democrats file to run.

Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez appeared to be making a move to consolidate mainstream Democratic support in July, but she dropped out in the middle of the month amid a campaign finance scandal. That led Crowley, who had dropped out a week earlier and endorsed Rodriguez, to get back in the race, this time with Evers' backing.

Former Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, who was seen as an early front-runner after nearly beating Republican U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson in 2022, bowed out less than two weeks before the election amid questions about inappropriate behavior.

In one more twist, reporting the results of about 28,000 absentee ballots from Milwaukee was delayed until early Wednesday morning after a human error related to uploading the data, the city's election leader said shortly before midnight Tuesday.

Trump's vaccine order hands some MAHA voters a win. It also gives Democrats an attack line

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump pivoted the nation's attention back to vaccines this week with an executive order that aims to scale back the childhood immunization schedule and space out shots into separate visits.

After acting to overhaul the nation's vaccine policy and guidance, the Trump administration had recently largely stepped back from additional changes to focus on less controversial subjects, raising questions over the political impetus behind and implications of the Republican president's renewed focus on vaccines.

For well over a decade, Trump has expressed his view — against medical groups' guidance — that childhood vaccines should be administered in smaller doses over a long period of time. The executive order sought to bear out that discredited theory.

While the move could endear Trump to some "Make America Healthy Again" voters who want more flexibility on immunizations, it's also already attracting attacks designed to hurt Trump's aligned candidates in November's midterm elections.

Jayne Franklin, a 28-year-old conservative activist who appeared with the president to promote his executive order on Monday, said she thinks the action is "going to go a long way" for MAHA mom voters like herself.

But Shaughnessy Naughton, president of the left-leaning political action committee 314 Action, which aims to elect doctors to office, said she sees the order as "one more data point" in support of Democrats' cause.

"Our organization and our candidates are certainly going to hammer that message home — that if you want healthcare that's accessible and affordable, if you want medical advice that is science-based, we need to have accountability in Washington," she said.

Trump has long called for shots spread out in separate visits

Trump's doubt in the number and cadence of vaccines dates back at least to 2014, when he posted to social media the disproven claim that combination shots can cause autism and said if he were president he would spread them out.

While he's since shown pride in his first-term Operation Warp Speed effort to disseminate COVID-19 vaccines quickly and praised certain other shots like the polio vaccine, he also has repeatedly called for reforming the childhood vaccine schedule. While his administration released an assessment comparing U.S. childhood vaccine schedules to peer nations', several of his suggestions have come without any new scientific evidence.

"This is based on what I feel," Trump said last September when he called for splitting the measles, mumps and rubella, or MMR, vaccine into three single-disease vaccines.

On Monday, he again pushed for separating the MMR shot into three, ordering the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to work on developing that option for children, since it doesn't currently exist in the United States. Public health experts have warned that spacing out shots could increase the risk of infection with a vaccine-preventable disease before a child returns for the next visit.

Most Americans don't see reevaluating vaccine safety as a top issue

Trump's views have aligned him with Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a longtime anti-vaccine activist before he entered politics.

The president credits Kennedy's diverse coalition of MAHA followers — whose priorities range from regulating pesticides to ending vaccine mandates — with helping him win back the White House in 2024.

Even as the Trump administration has handed several wins to the MAHA coalition, including changing the federal dietary guidelines and loosening restrictions on peptides, some in the movement have grown impatient as their other priorities remain unfinished. It's unclear whether Trump's action to loosen vaccine recommendations, an issue some MAHA supporters are passionate about, will be enough to shore up those voters ahead of the midterms.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 63 of 65

Franklin, who runs a conservative magazine, said she had talked with Trump about making vaccine recommendations more flexible at a MAHA roundtable earlier this year. She was pleased when the administration informed her that her requests were coming true.

"I think it just really shows he loves to hear from everyday Americans on how his policies and his administration affect the lives of people who are raising kids in this country," she said.

But political strategists and Trump's own pollster Tony Fabrizio have warned that efforts to shave down vaccine recommendations may not matter much to most voters this fall.

Polls show most Americans believe children should be vaccinated to attend school, though Republicans are less likely to see vaccines as important. And as rising prices on things like groceries, gas and healthcare tighten Americans' budgets, many view the economy as a top issue they care about.

"Nothing in America matters more than affordability," pollster Frank Luntz said. "And anytime the administration or Republicans goes off affordability, they're not talking about what Americans really care about."

Whit Ayres, a Republican pollster, said with most Americans viewing vaccines positively, Trump's announcement "does not strike me as the most persuasive political message."

Recent polling from the healthcare research nonprofit KFF suggests that even among MAHA supporters, only 10% rank reevaluating vaccine safety as their top priority for the federal government. Higher-ranking priorities included lowering health costs (42%) and restricting chemical additives in the food supply (21%).

Democrats are seizing on Trump's message

Asked about the timing of the order with the midterms approaching, a White House official who insisted on anonymity to brief reporters said that the move was a longstanding presidential priority and that other health issues voters care about were still being addressed.

To that effect, on the day Trump signed the order, the Food and Drug Administration announced an effort to require more transparency from food manufacturers about new ingredients or additives in foods — something many in the MAHA movement had been calling for.

The administration has also touted its efforts to lower drug prices and crack down on federal health program fraud, which it argues will save taxpayers money.

Still, Democratic candidates, including doctors linked to Naughton's group 314 Action, seized on Trump's order in messages to voters this week.

Dr. Richard Pan, a physician running as a Democrat for the U.S. House in Northern California, reposted the American Medical Association's condemnation of Trump's vaccine falsehoods, among other fact checks. He told The Associated Press he thinks voters are deciding between electing people who choose not to hold the administration accountable and those who "stand for the science."

Dr. Annie Andrews, a pediatrician and Democrat running for the U.S. Senate in South Carolina, pleaded with voters not to take health information from Trump in a video posted on Instagram in collaboration with the left-leaning Courier Newsroom.

"Do whatever you can to help elect scientists up and down the ballot in November, including sending me to the U.S. Senate," she said to the camera. "I cannot think of a more urgent time for us to have a pediatrician in the room where these conversations are happening."

Tuesday's takeaways: No clear direction for Wisconsin Democrats

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and TOM BEAUMONT Associated Press

In a race that showcased Democrats' struggle between the ideological left and center, Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley managed a razor-thin victory over his democratic socialist challenger. The race was so close that neither side could claim a decisive victory.

In other contests, experience was rewarded in two governors' races and voters went for generational change in voting out a House incumbent.

For Republicans, a contest to replace the late Sen. Lindsey Graham pitted his sister, Darline Graham, against far more experienced candidates. But she also had the endorsement of President Donald Trump, and she secured a spot in a runoff election later this month.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 64 of 65

Here are some takeaways from the night's elections.

In Wisconsin, verdict anything but clear for Democrats' direction

Crowley eked out a stunningly narrow, surprise win that did not become clear until the predawn hours of Wednesday, but that seemed to settle little in the party's national battle between party establishment candidates and an insurgent, populist movement from the left.

Crowley's win by less than a percentage point over state Rep. Francesca Hong, a democratic socialist, showed neither side of the party debate was winning the argument convincingly.

A week earlier, Michigan's Democratic primary for an open U.S. Senate seat came down to roughly 15,000 votes — a margin of a percentage point — as progressive candidate Abdul El-Sayed edged four-term U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens, who had the support of Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer.

In both Midwestern battleground states, presidential elections have been decided by tiny margins in recent cycles, making midterm statewide elections proxies for the 2028 race for the White House.

Trump won Wisconsin in 2024 and its state legislature has long been in the hands of the GOP, but Democrats have been bullish about reversing that trend. The pressure will now be on Crowley to knit together the divergent wings of the party against Republican Rep. Tom Tiffany in November.

Democrats in neighboring Minnesota weren't as torn. They solidly supported progressive Lt. Gov Peggy Flanagan over centrist Rep. Angie Craig. But there are obvious differences — Minnesota has been reliably Democratic for several elections, albeit by smaller margins. And Flanagan has already won statewide elections before.

Nonetheless, Republicans are hopeful the divisive, bitter primary gives their candidate, sportscaster Michele Tafoya, a chance in November.

Family name + Trump nod = runoff spot for Graham in South Carolina

Darline Graham advanced to a runoff Tuesday night in the primary for her brother's seat. She was appointed to fill the remaining months of his current term after his death last month. While little was known about her, the family name and the goodwill toward her brother propelled her candidacy.

Trump then endorsed her in the GOP primary to occupy the seat for the next six years. He also praised her Tuesday night after returning to Washington. The role Trump chooses to play in the next two weeks could be decisive in a state where he is quite popular.

A who's who of conservative South Carolina politicians also competed for the rare prize of a Senate seat, and Rep. Ralph Norman, a durable conservative who finished second, will face off against Graham in two weeks. Both candidates will need to consolidate votes from the other challengers to win.

Another veteran Democrat goes down in race over generational change

Connecticut Rep. John Larson became the latest Democratic stalwart to lose his primary. The 78-year-old, who served 14 terms in the House, was defeated by former Hartford mayor Luke Bronin.

Larson's loss didn't have the ideological overtones that have dominated some other Democratic House primaries, where younger, socialist candidates ousted veteran House members in Denver and New York City. But there was a definite generational cast, with his 47-year-old challenger arguing voters deserved a different choice in the overwhelmingly Democratic district.

Larson is the 10th member of the House to lose a primary this year, in a sign of bipartisan fury with each party's veterans.

While that tally includes three Republicans, the rest are Democrats. After Joe Biden's collapse during the 2024 presidential election — and the deaths of four Democratic House members over the past 18 months — it's clear that Democratic voters are casting a very critical eye on elderly party members.

Minnesota Republicans reject MyPillow founder, a Trump favorite

Trump backed MyPillow founder Mike Lindell's campaign for his party's nomination for Minnesota governor. Lindell has been a prolific peddler of lies about American elections, including Trump's own false claims that fraud cost him the presidency in 2020. Lindell has claimed that elections in the United States have been "rigged" for decades.

Democrats were eager to have Lindell at the top of the ticket, hoping he'd drag down the entire state GOP. Instead, Minnesota Republicans chose a more traditional nominee, House Speaker Lisa Demuth.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 069 ~ 65 of 65

It's yet another loss for Trump in Republican governors' primaries, after his preferred candidates fell short in Georgia and Iowa. And it improves Republicans' odds in Minnesota in what's shaping up to be a difficult year for the party, especially after Trump's immigration crackdown roiled the state's biggest city in January.

Experience and resume still mattered in some races

While much of this year's midterm campaign cycle has been animated by new candidates with provocative progressive messages and by the fact that being an incumbent seemed like a liability, Democratic voters in Connecticut and Minnesota gravitated toward the familiar in their respective choices for governor.

Connecticut's two-term Gov. Ned Lamont defeated his progressive challenger in the state's Democratic primary while Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who first won her seat 20 years ago, easily won her state's nomination for governor.

Their victories ran counter to any trend toward younger, more progressive candidates who had scored surprising wins in several House primaries, and notably, in the Democratic Senate primary in Michigan last week. Lamont began his political rise as an insurgent challenger to incumbent Sen. Joe Lieberman but is now considered establishment. Klobuchar has a reputation as a bipartisan consensus-builder.

Today in History: August 13, East Germany closes Berlin border

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Aug. 13, the 225th day of 2026. There are 140 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 13, 1961, on what would become known as Barbed Wire Sunday, East Germany sealed the border between Berlin's eastern and western sectors before building a wall that would divide the city for the next 28 years.

Also on this date:

In 1521, Spanish conqueror Hernando Cortez captured Tenochtitlan (teh-natch-teet-LAHN'), present-day Mexico City, from the Aztecs.

In 1792, French revolutionaries arrested and imprisoned King Louis XVI; he would be executed by guillotine the following January.

In 1889, William Gray of Hartford, Connecticut, received a patent for the first coin-operated telephone.

In 1918, Opha May Johnson became the first woman to join the U.S. Marine Corps.

In 1952, Big Mama Thornton first recorded the song "Hound Dog," four years before Elvis Presley's famous version was released.

In 1969, New York City held a ticker-tape parade for Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong, Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin and Michael Collins.

In 1995, Baseball Hall of Famer Mickey Mantle died at a Dallas hospital of rapidly spreading liver cancer at age 63.

In 2011, seven people were killed when a stage collapsed at the Indiana State Fair during a powerful storm just before a concert was to begin.

In 2020, Israel and the United Arab Emirates announced the establishment of full diplomatic relations under a U.S.-brokered deal that required Israel to halt its contentious plan to annex occupied West Bank land sought by the Palestinians.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders is 93. Opera singer Kathleen Battle is 78. High wire aerialist Philippe Petit is 77. Hockey Hall of Famer Bobby Clarke is 77. Golf Hall of Famer Betsy King is 71. Movie director Paul Greengrass is 71. Actor Danny Bonaduce is 67. TV weather forecaster Sam Champion is 65. Actor Dawnn Lewis is 65. Actor John Slattery is 64. Actor Debi Mazar is 62. Figure skater Midori Ito is 57. Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders is 44. Actor Sebastian Stan is 44. Actor Lennon Stella is 27. Actor Corey Fogelmanis is 27.