

Groton Daily Independent

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Community Calendar

Thursday, Aug. 20

Senior Menu: BBQ pulled pork with Mac n cheese, cucumber salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA "Do Day", 1:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 21

Senior Menu: Hot turkey combo, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Soccer at Belle Fourche (Girls at 5 p.m., boys at 7 p.m. MT)

Football at Miller/Highmore-Harrold, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 22

Soccer at St. Thomas More/Rapid City Christian (girls at 11 a.m., boys at 1 p.m. MT)

Sunday, Aug. 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monday, Aug. 24

Senior Menu: Ground beef stroganoff with noodles, peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

Senior Citizens meet at the Community Center, with potluck at noon

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

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1440

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

Novel Cancer Vaccine

A personalized mRNA vaccine helps prevent skin cancer from returning or spreading, drugmakers Moderna and Merck said yesterday. The result marks the first positive late-stage trial for an mRNA cancer therapy, an approach scientists have been developing for decades.

Researchers sequenced tumors from patients with melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. They then encoded the genetic instructions for those mutations into molecular messengers called mRNA and used them to manufacture bespoke vaccines—a process that took about six weeks. These vaccines train the immune system to recognize and attack cancer cells. The drugmakers have yet to release the full late-stage trial data, but an earlier trial found that pairing the vaccine with immunotherapy nearly halved the risk of recurrence or death after five years, compared with immunotherapy alone. Similar vaccines are being tested for breast, lung, kidney, and other cancers.

mRNA was first discovered in the 1960s, but the first mRNA vaccine didn't come to market until the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reservoir Remains

Suspected human remains were discovered this week in Lake Mead, Nevada, the US National Park Service has revealed. The finding comes as the US' largest reservoir experiences record-low water levels, conditions that may help unearth skeletal remains.

Authorities were still investigating the finding as of this writing, including the possible identity of the deceased. A decades long drought has caused water levels at the lake to fall to a record 1,039 feet above sea level—nearly a foot below the last record set in 2022, when four bodies were discovered. Those men disappeared or were killed between 1974 and 2002, including periods when water levels were 20 to 30 feet higher. The lake is about 30 miles from the Las Vegas Strip, where mob violence may explain some killings.

As water levels recede, they are also exposing ghost towns like St. Thomas. Lake Mead began filling in 1935 with the creation of the Hoover Dam.

👉 **Humankind:** Fossil hunter who opened his own museum at age 9 is recognized as the world's youngest male museum curator; tour his collection. (w/video)

Fastest Star Discovered

Astronomers have discovered the fastest known star in the Milky Way, new research published yesterday reveals. Its proximity to the galaxy's central black hole could offer scientists a way to directly measure the spin of the supermassive cosmic entity for the first time and test Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

Star S301 travels at speeds up to approximately 56 million mph, 100,000 times faster than a commercial plane. It follows a tight, lopsided orbit that places S301 roughly as close to black hole Sagittarius A* as Saturn is to the sun (scroll through a scaled solar system). Researchers believe Sagittarius A*'s spin slightly alters the star's orbit each time it passes the black hole every 8.7 years. Observing S301's position over the next decade may unlock unprecedented insight into the black hole's rotation and its impact on the galaxy's evolution.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Amazon seemingly leaks Jason Statham's upcoming action thriller "Mutiny" on Prime Video ahead of its

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official theatrical release tomorrow.

Nicaragua defeats Dominican Republic in opening game of the Little League World Series, which runs through Aug. 30 (More, w/bracket)

WNBA star Nneka Ogwumike to retire after this season, her 15th in the league.

Former Wimbledon finalist Nick Kyrgios is provisionally suspended from tennis after testing positive for cocaine.

Science & Technology

Scientists develop pacemaker battery that generates electricity from a patient's heartbeat, potentially eliminating the need for pacemaker replacements.

Largest study of psychedelics outside clinical trials finds participants report relief from anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms three months after using psilocybin, or magic mushrooms.

Jellyfish reveal how rapid cell turnover may protect against cancer by enabling tissue to proofread, destroying and easily replacing cells that could become cancerous.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +0.2%, Nasdaq +0.2%) after Treasury announces plans to increase buybacks of long-term debt.

Moderna shares rise 177% following promising mRNA cancer vaccine result.

President Donald Trump pauses threat to enact 50% tariffs on Canadian imports for three days; goods expected to be impacted include wine, honey, hockey sticks, and dairy products.

Gross US debt exceeds \$40T, setting new record just five months after surpassing \$39T.

Federal Reserve's July meeting minutes show policymakers may increase interest rates if inflation does not decline in coming months.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump nominates aide, Dr. Heidi Overton, to lead the Food and Drug Administration; Overton has advised Trump on lowering prescription drug prices and has been an outspoken opponent of abortion drug mifepristone.

Israel opens criminal investigation into the attacks that killed 5-year-old Palestinian girl, Hind Rajab, in Gaza in 2024 and more than a dozen medical workers in 2025.

United Arab Emirates suspends trade with Iran after accusing the country of firing two ballistic missiles Tuesday; the UAE was Iran's biggest source of imports in 2024, responsible for 30% of total imports or \$22B in goods.

EMPLOYMENT

Wanted full or part time help for harvest. Someone who can drive combine, semi or tractor. Housing available. Near Aberdeen call 605-380-4898. (0819.0909pd).
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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Rounds announces bill to encourage converting cropland back to pasture

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

MITCHELL — Republican U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds unveiled a bipartisan bill Wednesday at Dakotafest that would pay farmers to convert less-productive cropland back to grass and allow the acres to be grazed by livestock all season.

The Rebuilding America's National Cow Herd Act, or RANCH Act, would create a voluntary federal program with an enrollment cap of 20 million acres. Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota co-sponsors the legislation.

Under the proposal, eligible land would need to have had crops planted on it in at least four of the previous six years or have history of being cropped, according to a bill summary from Rounds' Office. Farmers would sign 10- to 15-year contracts and establish and maintain perennial grasses or non-woody vegetation like wildflowers, buckwheat or radishes.

The program has additional incentives for beginning farmers and ranchers, and would prioritize contracts for poorly performing and highly erodible cropland.

A South Dakota State University study estimated the state lost about 1.8 million acres of grassland between 2006 and 2012, predominantly to cropland conversion. Across the Great Plains, 32 million acres of grassland were converted from 2012 through 2021, with row-crop expansion identified as the leading cause, according to a World Wildlife Fund analysis.

Under Rounds' new bill, participants would receive annual payments equal to 75% of their county's average cropland cash rental rate. The program would also pay 50% of the cost of establishing grass, increasing to 75% for beginning farmers and ranchers. Producers are still eligible for other federal cost-share programs that help establish things like fencing.

The federal government has a program that permits livestock grazing while paying landowners to maintain it as grassland, called the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program. In April 2024, nearly 1.5 million South Dakota acres were enrolled in that program, totaling \$23.67 million in payments; the average annual payment per acre was about \$16.

The existing program, however, pays to preserve existing grass. Rounds' bill would pay to convert cropland back to grass, and it does not include seasonal grazing restrictions like the current program. It would also pay landowners at a rate based on the land's cropland value, rather than its pastureland value, which would amount to larger payments.

Rounds said the legislation's cost has not yet been calculated. Its supporters await a congressional budget estimate that accounts not only for the new payments, but also the savings that would come with removing up to 20 million marginal crop acres from federal subsidized crop insurance programs.

"You might very well save money on the insurance side of it," Rounds told reporters.

Rounds said he hopes to add the proposal to this year's farm bill, which has not yet advanced out of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Rounds shared the news of the proposal during a panel discussion held by South Dakota Farm Bureau that also included U.S. Congressman Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, and Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota.

All three agreed that getting the 60 votes in the Senate needed to pass the farm bill — which would require some Democrats to support it in an election year where they're assumed to gain more control —

was unlikely.

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.

COMMENTARY

Recently deceased state lawmaker shined a light on South Dakota's Jewish heritage

by Mary Garrigan

I started writing this column because the man who was, arguably, South Dakota's best known Jewish person, died earlier this month.

But I'm really writing it because of the way Stan Adelstein lived and worked and made a positive impact on his community and state during his nine decades of life. Surely there are other men named Stan who have lived in Rapid City, but whenever I heard that name mentioned in Rapid City circles in the last or 30 or 40 years, and I heard it a lot, I never had to wonder who they were talking about. When it came to public life in western South Dakota – whether it was political, legislative, religious, philanthropic, economic development, community advocacy or media coverage of any sort, there was ever only one Stan.

Adelstein died Aug. 10 and his memorial service was held Tuesday, Aug. 18. Age and declining health kept him mostly out of the public eye in recent years. His obituary highlights his time in the South Dakota Legislature from 2001 to 2013, where he represented a Rapid City district in both the House of Representatives and then the Senate, doing a job he loved.

I will leave it to others to write about Adelstein's legislative legacy. As a newspaper reporter who wrote a lot of religion page stories, I knew him mostly because he was always eager to share his Jewish heritage and traditions with the wider, non-Jewish public. I often picked up my telephone at work to find Stan, or his longtime assistant Kati (followed later by another assistant, also named Katie) on the other end of the line. He invited me to Hanukkah celebrations, Menorah lightings, Passover Seder meals, synagogue events and, once, to a demonstration on how to blow a shofar, the ram's horn that is part of Jewish High Holy Days rituals. Because of Stan, I also wrote food stories about potato latkes, matzo balls, Jewish chicken soup, and much more.

He knew all about South Dakota's rich Jewish history. As his son, Daniel, and his granddaughter, Shirley, said in their eulogies, he lived his life in gratitude for the "accident" of being born a Jewish child, free and safe in the United States in the 1930s, when so many others were born into the danger and death of Hitler's Europe. That gratitude informed a lifetime of public service and philanthropy.

The American Jewish Year Book estimates that there are now about 765 Jewish people in South Dakota. That's less than one-tenth of one percent of the state's population. Back in 2013, the year that Adelstein left the South Dakota Legislature, there were about 350 Jews in the state. Precisely because it is the history of such a small faith community, he did not want Jewish life and culture to be forgotten or go unacknowledged among South Dakota's much, much larger Christian population.

Stan liked to shine light on the things he considered important, including himself. He had a healthy ego and liked attention, but it was often in service to the larger common good. That was the case when he shone a light, literally, on the historic mural artwork that adorns the ceiling of the state House of Representatives. As a freshman legislator, Adelstein wondered why the 1910 Charles Holloway mural, "Peace," was so hard to see from his desk. His curiosity led to the discovery that the mural wasn't actually dirty or in need of restoration, but rather that it had never been properly lit. Working with capitol building staff, Adelstein hired an art restorer and donated the price of that fee, along with the costs to purchase and install new floodlights on the artwork, from his own family philanthropy fund.

Like much of Adelstein's philanthropy, it all happened very quickly. He saw a need, and he met it. Now the mural is seen and enjoyed by anyone who visits the House chambers. It's amazing what a little light,

and a little money, can do for a problem. Stan knew that, and acted on it often to benefit the people and places he cared about. I'm betting his light will shine through those gifts for generations to come.

Mary Garrigan is a retired newspaper reporter and current member of the South Dakota chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. She lives in Rapid City, where she served on the Rapid City Public Library's board of directors from 2019 through 2024.

Thune calls energy development permitting reform a rare opportunity for bipartisan action

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

SIOUX FALLS — U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, said this week that permitting reform could offer a rare opportunity for bipartisan action in Congress.

Thune discussed the issue on Tuesday during a summit hosted by Northwestern Energy, which has about 65,000 customers in the state and plans to merge with Black Hills Energy to become Bright Horizon Energy Corporation.

Thune told attendees lawmakers are considering shorter federal reviews for energy projects and time limits on legal challenges from project opponents.

"As soon as they're ready to go, we'll put it on the floor" of the Senate for a vote, Thune said.

The politics around the issue, Thune said, have shifted because developers of coal, natural gas, wind, solar and nuclear projects have run into similar obstacles, and have brought those concerns to their elected officials. Democrats have watched renewable energy projects encounter those hurdles, which he said has created momentum for reform.

Support from Democrats matters in the Senate, he said, where major legislation requires 60 votes to overcome a filibuster. Republican senators need some Democratic support.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and Energy and Natural Resources Committee are hashing out potential permitting reform, he said.

Ranking Democratic members of the two committees said in March they want a bipartisan bill to speed up development, lower energy costs, and create jobs. The Democrats warned, however, that progress depended in part on the Trump administration backing off its opposition to renewable energy projects.

Among other policy shifts, the administration has argued that offshore wind is a national security threat, tightened eligibility requirements for wind and solar tax credits and moved to pull back Biden-era "Solar for All" grants. Last October, the Bureau of Land Management cancelled what would have been the nation's largest solar energy project.

Thune said the negotiations come at a time when Congress is more partisan and polarized than he has ever seen. That makes bipartisan policymaking difficult, but energy permitting reform may be an exception.

"I'm a realist," Thune said. "But I feel good about where things stand."

Permitting reform

Northwestern and other utilities anticipate rapidly growing demand, including that associated with data centers. Thune said faster and more predictable permitting could unlock more private investment at a time when the nation needs additional electricity generation and transmission.

Congress should put permitting reform into federal law rather than rely on regulations that can change from one presidential administration to another, Thune said. He said different administrations will continue to treat fossil fuels and renewables differently. Thune, for his part, said he favors an "all of the above" energy strategy.

A permitting "shot clock" to establish deadlines for the review process is one possibility, he said. He also wants Congress to address litigation after permits are issued, including how quickly courts deal with litigation and who can file legal challenges.

Nuclear power

Nuclear power could also draw bipartisan support, he said, particularly small modular reactors. The

reactors are designed to be smaller than traditional nuclear plants, looking more like a warehouse than a large power plant. They produce up to 550 megawatts of electricity, according to information shared by Northwestern Energy.

"Nuclear is, you know, it's kind of back in vogue, especially the smaller modular reactors," Thune told Searchlight. "We want to, as much as we can, create conditions that are favorable for investment there."

Northwestern Energy has spent more than \$800,000 studying small modular nuclear reactors in South Dakota. The company is evaluating potential sites and is helping establish a nonprofit to educate the public about nuclear power, dubbed the "South Dakota Nuclear Collective" in documents filed by the company with the state Public Utilities Commission.

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.

Violent crime in US fell at record pace in 2025

BY AMANDA WATFORD

Violent crime in the United States fell by an estimated 9.3% in 2025, marking the largest year-to-year decline in the national violent crime rate since the FBI began estimating crime in 1936, according to new national data.

The estimated murder and nonnegligent manslaughter rate also fell 18.1%, to 4.1 killings per 100,000 people — tying the lowest rate recorded since national estimates began. The rate matches those recorded in 1955 and 1956, according to the FBI.

The decline across major crime categories was broad. The estimated robbery rate fell 18.5%, aggravated assault fell 7.2% and rape fell 7.6%. Property crime also dropped sharply, declining 12.4% from 2024. Motor vehicle theft fell 22.7%, while burglary declined 15.8%.

The FBI's figures are based on reports of crimes submitted by law enforcement agencies, meaning they do not capture offenses that aren't reported to police. Participation in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program is voluntary, and agencies submit their data either through state programs or directly to the FBI.

In 2025, 17,075 law enforcement agencies submitted data, covering 96.2% of the U.S. population. Every city agency with populations over a million submitted a full year of data.

Crime statistics can be affected by changes in reporting practices and public willingness to report crimes, particularly as trust in law enforcement and government institutions varies.

An estimated 1.12 million violent crimes occurred nationwide in 2025, with the violent crime rate falling from 362.9 offenses per 100,000 people in 2024, to 327.6 per 100,000 in 2025.

The findings largely align with other recent estimates. The nonpartisan Council on Criminal Justice, which analyzed crime trends in 40 large U.S. cities, found that 11 of 13 offenses it tracked, including homicide, declined in 2025.

The sharp drop in homicides has persisted in 2026. Data analyzed by the council shows killings continued to decline through June across the cities it tracks, putting the nation on pace for another historic low.

"The homicide drop is historic and crystal clear. But right now, what's driving it is about as clear as a glass of milk," Adam Gelb, the council's president and CEO, said in a statement.

"Rates are falling in cities with very different public safety strategies, economic conditions, and political leadership," Gelb said. "The consistency across the map should make us cautious about handing credit to any one leader, party, policy, or program before the evidence catches up."

Experts say it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what is driving the declines. Researchers have pointed to a range of possible factors, including the normalization of social activity after the pandemic, changes in policing and violence-prevention strategies, demographic shifts and the unwinding of the factors that contributed to the pandemic-era crime surge.

The declines also began before President Donald Trump returned to office in January 2025, making it difficult to attribute the national trend to policies implemented by his administration.

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Cities with populations between 500,000 and 999,999 recorded the largest drop in violent crime, at 15.3%, according to the FBI. Smaller cities also saw double digit declines in overall violent crime.

Nonmetropolitan counties saw violent crime decline 6%, the smallest decrease among the population groups analyzed. No population group recorded an overall increase in violent crime.

Cities with populations over 1 million saw a 1.2% increase in rape between 2024 and 2025, the only increase in a specific violent crime among the population groups.

The data shows continued declines in several crimes that had surged in recent years. The estimated motor vehicle theft rate fell to 197 per 100,000 people in 2025, a 23% decrease from 2024 and a 38.8% decline from its 2023 peak. The robbery rate, at 49.4 per 100,000, was the lowest estimated rate in 20 years. Burglary and larceny-theft rates also reached 20-year lows.

The FBI reported declines in arrests of juveniles as well. The number of people under 18 arrested for violent crimes fell 5% in 2025, from 39,117 to 37,156, while juvenile arrests for property crimes fell 12.2%, from 77,779 to 68,281.

By comparison, adult violent-crime arrests fell 1.7%, and adult property-crime arrests fell 3.8%.

Despite the decline in reported crime, law enforcement cleared less than half of reported violent crimes in 2025. Agencies cleared 47.4% of reported violent crimes through an arrest or exceptional means, while just 17.4% of reported property crimes were cleared.

Some crime rates also remain higher than before the pandemic. The 2025 aggravated assault rate of 238 offenses per 100,000 people, for example, was lower than recent years but remained higher than every year from 2013 through 2015.

The FBI said preliminary data indicate crime continued to decline during the first half of 2026. Compared with the same period in 2025, violent crime was down 10.6%, while murder and nonnegligent manslaughter fell 23%, rape fell 18.6%, robbery fell 19.6% and aggravated assault fell 7.2%.

The latest national figures provide the most comprehensive accounting yet of the sharp decline in crime that followed the pandemic-era surge. The FBI's 2025 murder rate of 4.1 per 100,000 compares with a recent high of 6.6 in both 2020 and 2022.

Stateline reporter Amanda Watford can be reached at awatford@stateline.org.

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

Amanda Watford (née Hernández) is a national reporter covering criminal justice and public safety for Stateline. Her reporting focuses on how states are reshaping approaches to policing, crime victims' services, corrections, courts, drug policy, gun violence and more.

Dozens of cities and counties sue fire truck makers over soaring costs, delivery delays

BY ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS

In the summer of 2023, a third of the fire engines owned by the fire department in Kansas City, Kansas, were unusable. Five of 15 pumper trucks were out of commission, and the department was waiting on parts from the manufacturer.

So Kansas City fire officials went on a nationwide hunt for trucks. But their frantic search turned up just four they could buy immediately, and the vehicles were designed for smaller, more rural departments.

Their experience was not unusual: Municipalities and fire departments in every state are struggling with soaring prices and years-long delivery times for trucks. It's a crisis many cities and departments lay squarely at the feet of the country's biggest fire apparatus manufacturers.

"There must come a day of reckoning when the manufacturers of our most important tools are held accountable for runaway pricing and extended delivery times," Dennis Rubin, the chief of the Kansas City Fire Department, told U.S. senators last fall at hearing convened to investigate price increases and delivery delays on fire trucks.

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Kansas City is one of more than 60 cities, counties and fire departments across the nation — from Milwaukee to San Diego, Pittsburgh to Tampa — that say the country's three biggest fire truck manufacturers have conspired to suppress competition, resulting in skyrocketing prices for fire trucks and repair parts, and yearslong manufacturing delays.

In April, a federal court rolled up their claims into a trio of antitrust class action lawsuits in a Wisconsin district court.

The defendants are fire apparatus manufacturers REV Group Inc., Oshkosh Corporation and Rosenbauer Group, along with some of their subsidiaries and related companies, as well as their trade group, the Fire Apparatus Manufacturers' Association.

By some estimates, the three manufacturers together control 70-80% of the U.S. fire truck market. Fire engine prices have nearly doubled since 2020, from about \$589,000 to over \$1 million, according to the International Association of Fire Fighters.

Fire departments also are reporting extended wait times for new fire trucks. In 2024, officials with the Seattle Fire Department noted it took more than four years to replace a ladder truck — a process that had previously taken just a year.

And some departments are accusing manufacturers of charging them "floating prices" that increase soon before a truck is ready to be delivered. The president of a volunteer fire department in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, said his department paid a 50% deposit on a fire truck and the supplier later said it could no longer deliver at that price, leading to the department paying an additional \$110,000, reported the Pennsylvania Capital-Star.

"By hiking prices for trucks and replacement parts without competition, the defendants have made it harder for the city of Pittsburgh and other municipalities across the country to make the required investments in lifesaving services and put the burden back on our communities," Pittsburgh Mayor Corey O'Connor said in a July statement announcing its antitrust lawsuit. A city representative declined to comment further.

The plaintiffs in the suit assert that manufacturers worked together to throttle the production of fire trucks nationwide and minimize competition to increase prices. Many cities and fire departments also allege the Fire Apparatus Manufacturers' Association — the industry's primary trade group — helped the manufacturers coordinate price increases and limit production by passing secret or proprietary data between them.

Dan Meyer, vice president of sales at Pierce Manufacturing, a subsidiary of Oshkosh, has said his company has worked to expand its manufacturing capabilities and hired more workers. REV Group did not respond to Stateline's request for comment.

On Tuesday, the defendants moved to dismiss two of the suits.

"The pandemic prompted skyrocketing demand and disrupted supply chains causing price increases and longer wait times," they said in a joint court filing. "None of that has anything to do with an antitrust violation."

The defendants also assert that the trade association shared "anonymized and aggregated industry statistics" that weren't anticompetitive, and that the rollups and acquisitions of fire truck manufacturers occurred "many years ago" and didn't result in anticompetitive harm to the plaintiffs.

Some states, too, have recently jumped into the fray.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, launched an investigation in February into potential anticompetitive conduct of the same three manufacturers, after hearing complaints from Texas cities and their fire departments. His office said it had already uncovered "multiple potentially unlawful price hikes" involving Texas fire departments.

California has also filed an antitrust suit, asserting that REV Group and its former private equity owner, American Industrial Partners, created monopolies in fire truck markets. In Pennsylvania, state Rep. Jennifer O'Mara, a Democrat, held a hearing in her district in March, proposing future legislation to address the issue.

And Congress is getting involved. In July, U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat, and U.S. Sen. Jim Banks, an Indiana Republican, along with Democratic Rep. Becca Balint of Vermont and

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Republican Rep. Ben Cline of Virginia, filed a resolution directing the Federal Trade Commission to investigate the consolidation in the fire truck manufacturing industry.

The resolution comes on the heels of a 2025 Senate investigation, launched by Warren and Banks, into the effects of private equity rollups in the fire truck manufacturing industry.

At local, state and even federal levels, there's a bipartisan appetite for antitrust enforcement, said Basel Musharbash, an attorney who represents some of the cities involved in the class action suit, including Little Rock, Kansas City and Las Vegas.

"You can look at any number of industries that supply things to municipalities and you'll see the same dynamic," he said, pointing to consolidation in the ambulance industry, public works and public transit buses.

"Across the economy, there's no shortage of industries where we're seeing decision-making and control being concentrated in the hands of a few executives at a few companies, and that's just inconsistent with American's views about freedom and markets and democracy."

Attracting investors

Last fall, the Garden City Fire Department in rural Garden City, Kansas, had been waiting nearly two years for the two new fire trucks it had ordered for one of its fire stations. The department serves all of Finney County, an agricultural area in the southwest part of the state.

Without the new trucks, the department was moving trucks around from its other stations to try to fill the void, and using three aging backup vehicles — the oldest was built in 1989; the newest in 2006 — that had a host of repair issues and few or no safety features.

Fire truck manufacturers rely on cities, counties and other local and state governments to purchase their products — and that steady flow of public funding has proven attractive to investors.

A decade ago, private equity firm American Industrial Partners began buying fire truck manufacturers around the country, eventually rolling them up into one conglomerate called the REV Group. As it consolidated smaller companies, it also shut down some of its manufacturing plants even as fire truck orders climbed after federal pandemic assistance dollars flowed to state and local governments, said Musharbash.

REV Group may control as much as 40% of the market now, he said, with Oshkosh subsidiary Pierce Manufacturing controlling around 25-30% and Rosenbauer a smaller piece.

In 2024, REV Group's private equity fund owner, American Industrial Partners, divested from its fire truck conglomerate, and the other companies are publicly traded. But they've boosted profits through private equity-like tactics, he said.

For example, Los Angeles County and other municipalities say that Oshkosh, a publicly traded company, boosts its profits partly by requiring customers of Pierce Manufacturing to purchase only Pierce proprietary parts, despite cheaper prices available from competitors.

Draining public dollars

In Providence, Rhode Island, city officials purchased three pumper trucks in 2021 from Oshkosh subsidiary Pierce Manufacturing for \$449,159 per truck. In 2024, when the city bought five more, the cost had jumped more than 63% to \$734,320, officials said in court filings. Those trucks won't be delivered until next year.

Fire chiefs, industry watchers and local officials hope the FTC will commission a study to dig into the industry to better understand why smaller manufacturers are having a hard time entering the industry.

"In an industry like fire trucks, where you've seen skyrocketing prices, backlogs, deteriorating quality over a period of more than half a decade, we should be seeing a large number of new manufacturers cropping up," Musharbash said. "We should see smaller manufacturers expanding, and yet that's not happening."

Musharbash said cities and local lawmakers should reexamine how they purchase fire trucks, ambulances, city transit buses and other equipment manufactured by big corporations.

"There are these rackets in these industries that local governments depend on, and they're draining dollars out of municipal budgets and state budgets. It's a huge waste of public funds."

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

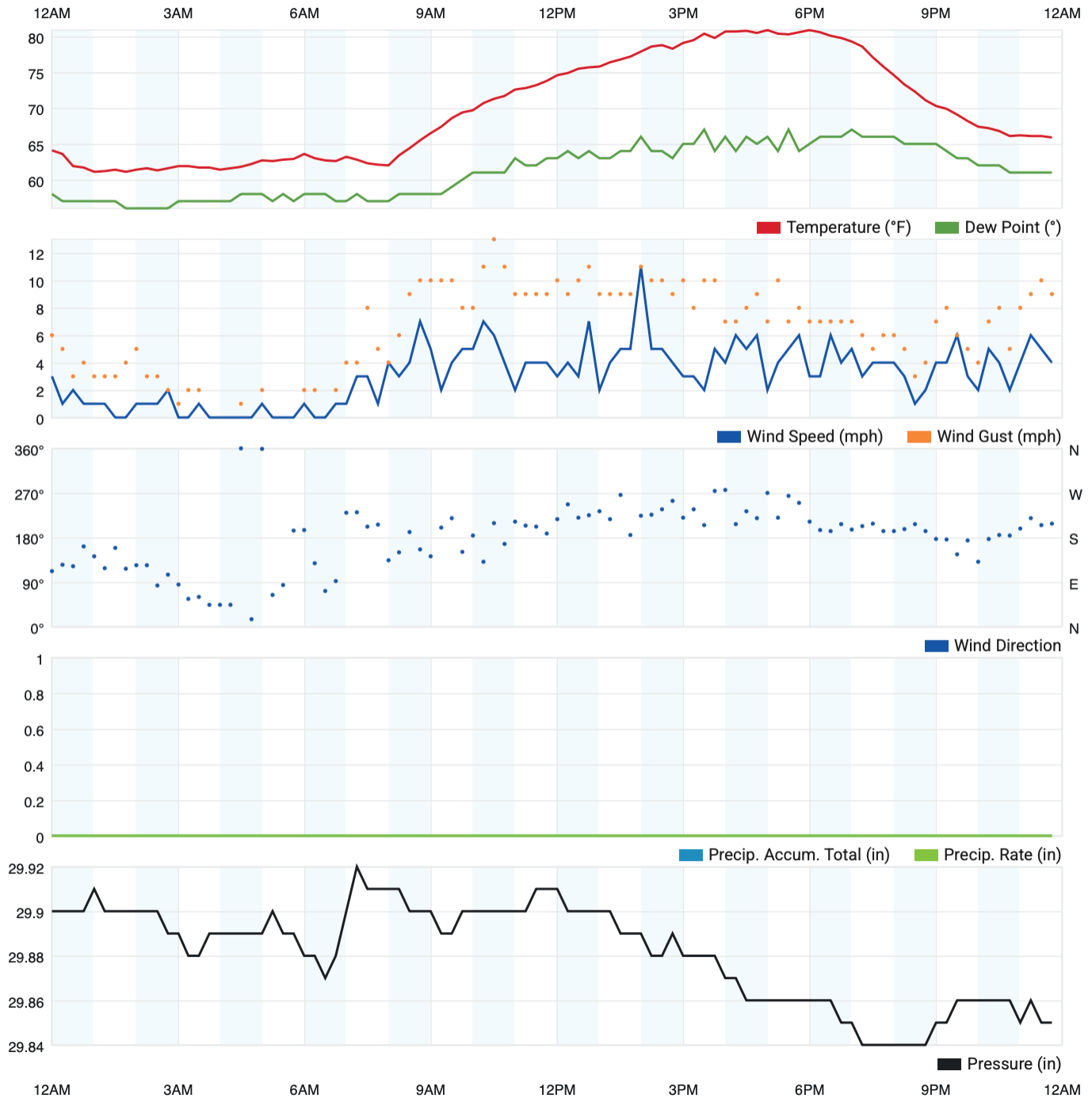
Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 19, 2026



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Today



High: 86 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Tonight



Low: 57 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 85 °F

Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 57 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 81 °F

Sunny

Overall Dry, Smoke Aloft, and Average Temps

Today

Isolated (15-25%) storms over far NESD/MN in AM and possible over far east central SD/MN late.



Highs: 80s to around 90

Tonight

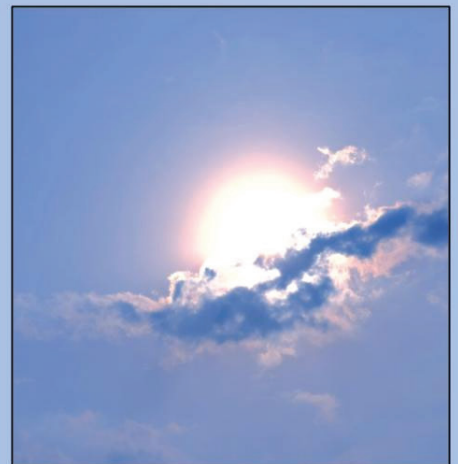
Clear to partly cloudy



Lows: Upper 50s to lower 60s

Friday

Partly to mostly sunny



Highs: 80s to around 90



National Weather Service Aberdeen, South Dakota

Updated: August 20, 2026 3:05 AM

Other than the chance for isolated showers and thunderstorms over portions of northeastern SD/MN this morning and possibly again this afternoon, the forecast will overall be dry for much of the region through the end of the week. Temperatures will remain around normal to slightly above normal.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated Severe Storms
Possible

This afternoon and evening
across portions of NE SD &
west central MN

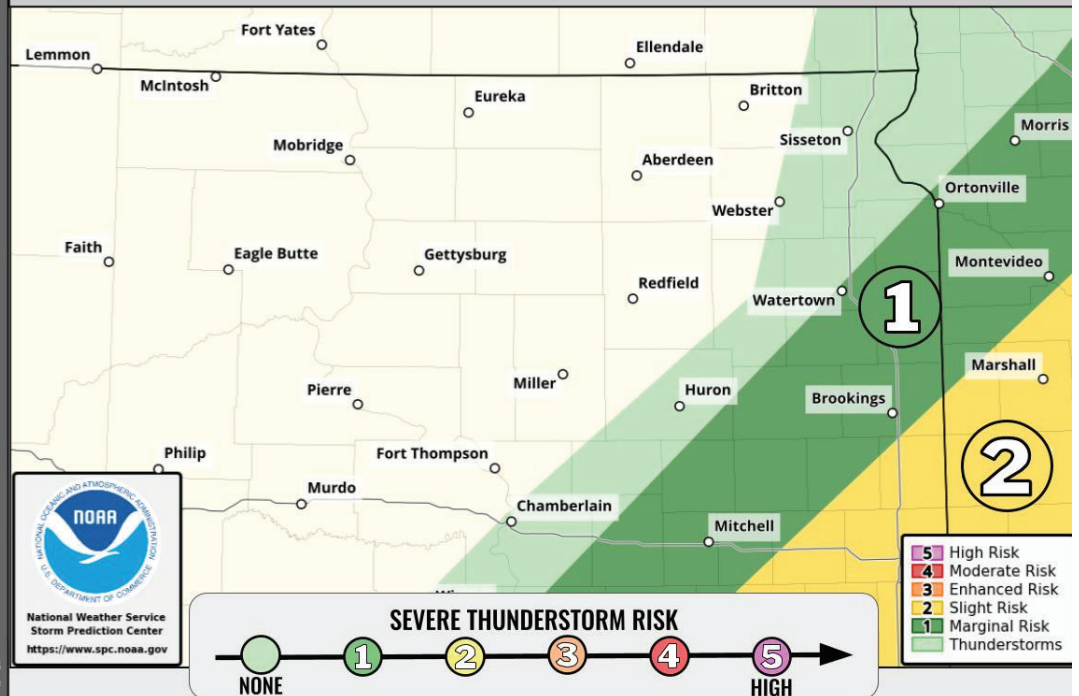
PRIMARY THREATS



DAMAGING
WIND
GUSTS
of 60 mph

NWS
Aberdeen, SD

Slight Risk For Severe Storms Today



Isolated thunderstorms are possible over portions of northeastern SD/MN this afternoon and evening, however, confidence remains low on if the storms will form with the better potential southeast of the coverage area. If storms do form, then there is a Marginal Risk, level 1/5, for a couple to produce 60 mph wind gusts.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 81 °F at 4:20 PM

Low Temp: 61 °F at 1:03 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 10:23 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1976

Record Low: 33 in 1950

Average High: 82

Average Low: 56

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.44

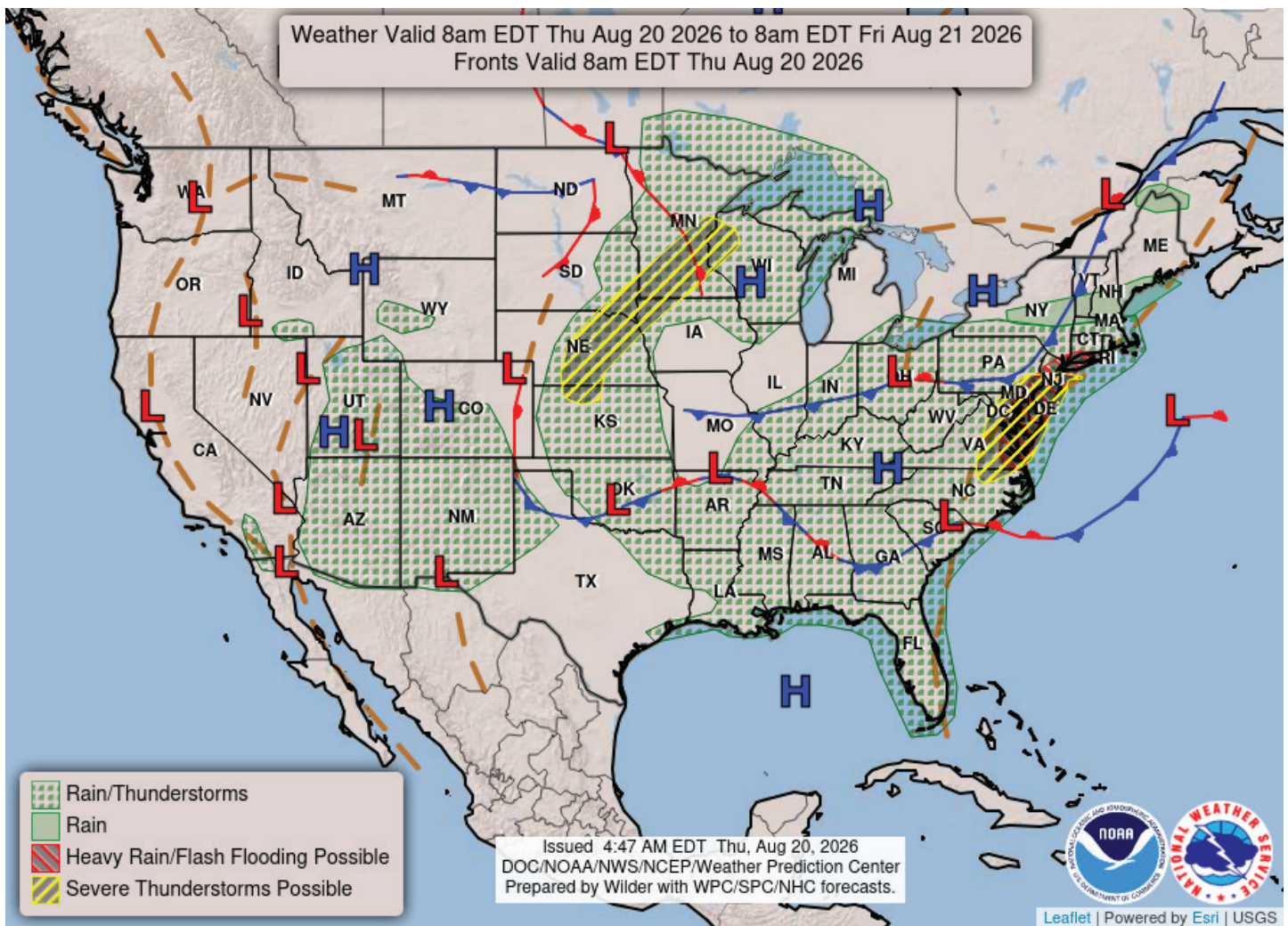
Precip to date in Aug.: 10.14

Average Precip to date: 15.54

Precip Year to Date: 19.61

Sunset Tonight: 8:32 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:40 am



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Today in Weather History

August 20, 1904: A destructive, estimated F4 tornado moved ESE from 7 miles WNW of Willow Lake, through the town, and on into Bryant in Hamlin County, South Dakota. Most of the damage occurred in those two towns. All buildings on at least three farms were blown away. One woman died in Bryant as the tornado swept across the residential west side of town. Another man was killed just west of Willow Lake, as his farm house was scattered for miles.

1886: The 1886 Indianola Hurricane destroyed the town of Indianola, Texas and as such had a significant impact on the history and economic development of Texas. The storm ended the rivalry between Galveston and Indianola as the chief port of Texas. With the abandonment of Indianola and the unwillingness of the former residents to rebuild close to shore, Galveston became the essential Texan port until the 1900 Galveston Hurricane led to the rise of Houston as a major port. It was the fifth hurricane of the 1886 Atlantic hurricane season and one of the most intense hurricanes ever to hit the United States.

1910: The Great Fire of 1910 finally came to an end in Idaho. A record dry August fueled 1736 fires that burned three million acres destroying six billion board feet of timber. The fires claimed the lives of 85 persons, 78 of which were firefighters, and consumed the entire town of Wallace. The smoke spread a third of the way around the world producing some dark days in the U.S. and Canada. The forest fires prompted federal fire protection laws.

1928: A tornado estimated at F4 intensity initially touched down in Winnebago County, Iowa, moved to Freeborn County, Minnesota, and hit the south side of Austin, MN. Five of the six deaths were in Austin with 60 injuries.

1886 — The 1886 Indianola Hurricane destroyed the town of Indianola, Texas and as such had a significant impact on the history and economic development of Texas. The storm ended the rivalry between Galveston and Indianola as the chief port of Texas. With the abandonment of Indianola and the unwillingness of the former residents to rebuild close to shore, Galveston became the essential Texan port until the 1900 Galveston Hurricane led to the rise of Houston as a major port. It was the fifth hurricane of the 1886 Atlantic hurricane season and one of the most intense hurricanes ever to hit the United States.

1987 — Half a dozen cities in the Central Plains Region reported record high temperatures for the date, including Pueblo CO with a reading of 102 degrees, and Goodland KS with a high of 104 degrees. Hill City KS reached 106 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Sheridan, WY, reported a record hot temperature reading of 100 degrees. Evening thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail near Fortuna ND, and wind gusts to 70 mph near Webster SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Early morning thunderstorms produced heavy rain in southeast Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma, with up to six inches reported around Tulsa OK. Some roads in the Tulsa area were closed by water 10 to 12 feet deep. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in northern Oklahoma and southern Kansas. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 75 mph in Major County OK, and hail two inches in diameter at Jennings KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



The Source of Jealousy

Where jealousy takes hold within us, God offers contentment in its place.

Galatians 5:17-21: 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Jealousy is one of those emotions that can catch us off guard. We might not even realize we're feeling envious until we notice ourselves comparing our circumstances to others'—their success, their relationships, their opportunities. It's a common human struggle, but that doesn't make it any less corrosive.

The answer to where jealousy comes from may be surprising; it springs from within, not from external circumstances. We might tell ourselves, Well, they just shouldn't have that. They don't deserve it, so I'm perfectly justified in feeling this way. But that reasoning reveals the real issue: Jealousy is rooted in our own sense of entitlement or insecurity. In Galatians, Paul lists jealousy among the works of the flesh—attitudes and actions that stand against the character and work of God in our life (5:17-21).

Covetous feelings can lead to unhealthy comparison, which often grows into a competition with others. Left unchecked, envy breeds resentment and damages relationships.

Though jealousy is a common struggle, it has no place in a believer's life. When we notice envious thoughts, we should bring them honestly to the Lord. He understands our struggles and offers grace to help us find contentment in what He's given us rather than fixating on what others have.

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

10 12 26 44 57 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 32 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.18.26

5 19 30 38 59 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$113,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 17 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

23 31 40 41 45 1

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,700,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 32 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

10 16 17 25 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 47 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

5 18 38 56 67 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 16 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

10 21 58 61 64 17

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$68,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 16 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Chinese court sentences founder of troubled property developer Evergrande to life in prison

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Chinese property developer Hui Ka Yan, founder of the Evergrande real estate group, has been sentenced to life in prison and the companies were fined a total of more than \$2 billion, a court in the southern city of Shenzhen said Thursday.

The decision marks a milestone in Evergrande's saga after it collapsed with more than \$300 billion in liabilities when Chinese authorities cracked down on excessive borrowing in the real estate industry in 2020. That triggered a crunch among many developers and brought on a downturn in the property market that has weighed on the broader economy ever since.

The Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court convicted Hui, 67, and Evergrande of engaging in large-scale financial fraud in inflating the group's assets and concealing its liabilities.

In a statement, the court also said Hui, also known as Xu Jiayin, abused his position in orchestrating fraud and misappropriating company assets.

Evergrande group was fined 8.82 billion yuan (\$1.31 billion) and Evergrande Real Estate Group was fined 7 billion yuan (\$1.04 billion), the court said in the statement.

"The amount involved is exceptionally large, the circumstances are particularly egregious, and extraordinarily heavy economic losses have been caused," the court's statement said. "The harm to society is extremely serious. Therefore, severe punishment should be given in accordance with the law."

Hui's sons, Xu Tenghe and Xu Zhijian, were also sentenced alongside senior Evergrande executives and others linked to the group on charges including illegally taking public deposits, fundraising fraud and the illegal use of funds, China's official Xinhua News Agency said. A total of more than 50 individuals were sentenced to imprisonment of between 22 months and 18 years, Xinhua said, although a breakdown of sentencing details was not provided.

A photo of Hui's courtroom appearance released by the Shenzhen court on Thursday showed an aged Hui, who used to be a high-profile figure but had long been out of public view, wearing a navy blue shirt standing in between two uniformed officers behind a sign that read "defendant."

Hui pleaded guilty in April to various charges including illegal absorption of public deposits, fraud and bribery after he was detained in China.

China Evergrande, founded in 1996, defaulted on its debts in 2021. It was the world's most heavily indebted real estate developer before it was ordered to liquidate its assets. After Evergrande's downfall triggered the broader downturn in China's massive property sector, home prices have fallen by roughly 20% or more since 2021.

Authorities in Hong Kong and mainland China earlier said their investigations found Evergrande had manipulated its financial data by tactics that included prematurely booking revenue from property sales before completion and delivery of the apartments to buyers. Revenues were overstated by roughly \$80 billion over 2019 and 2020, they said.

Hui was fined 47 million yuan (\$6.5 million) in 2024 and banned from China's securities markets for life by the China Securities Regulatory Commission over inflating company financial results, among other issues.

Once reported to be China's richest man, Hui used to own the football club Guangzhou Evergrande. At one point, he and his companies were involved in investing in and building theme parks and electric vehicles.

His story was one of rags-to-riches. Born in 1958 into a rural family in central China's Henan province, he worked in the steel industry in the 1980s before establishing Evergrande, which then prospered during China's housing market boom. He was one of many businessmen who have also gained political influence by joining a major advisory organization, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress.

A Russian missile and drone barrage kills at least 14 in Ukraine's Kyiv region

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia pounded the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and the surrounding region with scores of missiles and drones in a nighttime aerial attack that lasted for hours and killed at least 14 people, officials said Thursday.

Moscow's forces have in recent months intensified their ballistic missile attacks on Kyiv, exploiting Ukraine's chronic shortage of U.S.-made Patriot air defense interceptors, the sole weapon in its arsenal able to shoot down ballistic missiles.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pleaded for countries to send more Patriot interceptors but international stockpiles are low amid the Iran war and Ukraine's more than four-year fight against Russia's all-out invasion.

Russia's overnight barrage also included cruise missiles and fast-flying jet-powered drones that put further strain on air defenses, the Ukrainian air force said.

Explosions boomed across the city in the dark. Kyiv was the primary target, but hits were recorded at 28 locations across the country, according to the air force. About 40 people were wounded, Zelenskyy said, as air raid warnings remained in place until after dawn.

"It was a massive attack," Zelenskyy said on social media, adding that Russia "had been preparing (it) for a long time, combining different types of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones, aiming to cause as much damage as possible to civilian infrastructure."

But the Russian Defense Ministry said the attack struck a Kyiv industrial site manufacturing components for Ukraine's Flamingo cruise missiles. Sites involved in the production and storage of drones, an ammunition depot and a logistics center were also hit, it said.

Russia and Ukraine have battered each other with drones and missiles as their armies struggle to gain the upper hand on the 1,250-kilometer (780-mile) front line, where huge numbers of drones are pinning down troops.

Ukraine has attempted to shift the war onto Russian soil through long-range drone strikes on oil facilities and other infrastructure.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Thursday morning that air defenses shot down 726 Ukrainian drones overnight over a number of Russian regions, annexed Crimea and the Black and Azov seas, in one of Ukraine's biggest aerial attacks of the war. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

Attacks put Ukraine's neighbors on alert

Russia's relentless onslaught on Kyiv has spooked other European countries, especially those bordering Ukraine, which fear what Russian President Vladimir Putin might have in store for the continent.

As the Russian attack on Kyiv unfolded, the Polish Armed Forces Operational Command activated its military aviation operations, ground-based air defense systems and its radar reconnaissance.

Polish and other NATO military aircraft were deployed to monitor the country's airspace, Polish news agency PAP reported.

Romania's Defense Ministry said that an unidentified drone crashed and caught fire in an uninhabited area near the border with Ukraine.

Two Spanish F-18 jets, deployed on an air policing mission in Romania, were scrambled after 2 a.m. local time to monitor a group of "air targets" near the border, the ministry said.

Also, Moldova's Defense Ministry said that its airspace was breached by an unauthorized drone.

Explosions blow out windows as screams fill the air

Russia's overnight strikes hit 12 locations across Kyiv's Darnytskyi, Sviatoshynskyi and Solomianskyi districts, damaging residential buildings, a medical facility and an educational institution. Emergency crews were at the scene and pulled people out from under the rubble.

60-year-old Larysa Bondaruk sat on the ground, holding her cat, Chanel, which had been rescued by firefighters.

With tears in her eyes, she said that her neighbor's grandson had been trapped under the rubble and died. Her apartment was badly damaged.

"A rocket hit the roof. It was incredibly loud. Immediately, debris and doors were blown out. There were columns of smoke, columns of fire, screams, crying and despair," she said. "Two people were killed in our building, but the rescuers responded quickly and professionally. I am grateful to them for that."

In Solomianskyi district, the top two floors of a 9-story residential building were destroyed and fires broke out on other floors. People were also trapped in two residential buildings and a school shelter.

AP investigation shows how banned goods are smuggled into Gaza and millions of dollars change hands

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Palestinians face inflated prices for groceries and batteries, hospitals have turned to smugglers for medicine and equipment, and Israeli soldiers and other middlemen are accused of pocketing millions of dollars as the smuggling of goods restricted by Israel into the Gaza Strip has boomed, according to an Associated Press investigation based on court documents and interviews with traders, truckers and officials.

Cigarettes and tobacco — banned from entry to Gaza since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in October 2023 — rake in the biggest profits for smugglers and merchants, officials and residents say. But everything from iPhones and solar panels to fuel and anesthetics are also brought into the tiny coastal territory illegally. Israel restricts quantities of some goods and bans others outright. It defines many as "dual use" — including concrete, vehicle parts and X-ray machines — asserting they could be repurposed by Hamas militants for military functions.

To build a picture of the illicit trade, The Associated Press analyzed Israeli court documents and spoke to five major traders who import smuggled goods, three merchants who sell them, and two truckers — all on condition of anonymity because of their roles in the illegal smuggling business and concerns about their safety in Gaza. AP also interviewed four Palestinian officials, two on condition of anonymity because of worries about retribution from Israel, Hamas or merchants; two U.N. officials, on condition of anonymity over concern for their jobs; and a dozen Palestinian residents, who spoke about how they get everyday items and their skyrocketing costs.

AP found a rush from all sides to profit off the tight restrictions imposed by Israel on Gaza and its 2 million residents, most of whom have been displaced by the war. Smuggling rings — which have long flourished, circumventing two decades of Israeli blockades and building a network of businessmen and collaborators — pull in millions of dollars. Payoffs go to Israeli troops, drivers, warehouse workers and others on both sides of the border, according to traders and court documents.

"The occupation has left no other option before us. Smuggling has become routine," one trader said, noting that some in Israel's military are willing to help — for a price. "We benefit, they benefit and the people in Gaza benefit because we provide goods, including food, to the market."

The Israeli military said via email that it takes the issue of smuggling "very seriously and works to prevent it." It said any cases of suspected involvement by Israeli military personnel are "examined and handled in accordance with the law." But military officials did not answer a list of detailed questions from AP on the roles of soldiers or Gaza's government in smuggling.

Gaza's Hamas-led government also takes in some of the profit, according to merchants and one Palestinian official. Merchants call it "taxing" — on both smuggled goods and those brought in legally.

Mohammad Barbakh, of the Palestinian Economy Ministry in Gaza, told AP the government receives up to 20% of the price of any smuggled goods if the merchant reports them to authorities, and that increases to 80% if the items go unreported and authorities discover them. But he said authorities don't refer to their cut as "taxes" and that they haven't taxed goods entering legally since the war's start.

How smuggled goods flow into Gaza

Since the war began, Israel has tightly controlled all entry of food, aid and goods into the Gaza Strip,

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including a total aid blockade that shut off entry entirely for nearly three months last year, pushing parts of the territory into famine. The flow of goods has increased since a fragile ceasefire deal went into effect in October but remains well below prewar levels.

Besides the U.N. and other humanitarian groups bringing in aid, Israel has given 12 senior traders in Gaza permits to import commercial goods. Contents of shipments must be approved by Israeli authorities, a process aid workers and merchants say can be long and opaque, sometimes ending with a rejection on grounds of "dual use."

The military classifies a list of some 150 broad categories of items as "dual use," including concrete, asphalt, steel pipes and wooden planks, according to documents provided by COGAT, the military department in charge of coordinating entry of goods into Gaza. In a statement to AP, COGAT said it has let in some "dual use" items including generators and X-ray machines, in specific cases under strict monitoring.

Some senior traders turn to smuggling networks to meet demand in Gaza, where smaller merchants look to sell contraband.

Two merchants and a trucker who is part of Gaza's union told AP that sometimes government agencies ask for specific items to keep functioning — fuel, spare parts for civil defense vehicles or generators. Hospitals also turn to smugglers, for drugs and some equipment.

And tribal elders request smuggled goods for their communities, including medicines that are in short supply, a tribal leader told AP, on condition of anonymity over concerns for his safety.

Two senior traders and an aide to a third told AP they send lists of contraband goods they want to import to "coordinators" — Israeli and Palestinian middlemen in Israel and the West Bank. Coordinators line up merchandise, then arrange a route into Gaza.

Commercial goods and aid mostly go through the Kerem Shalom crossing in the south, where every truck is inspected. The military also has routes in and out of Gaza for its vehicles. Smugglers use both avenues, bribing soldiers to smooth the way for trucks or carry goods in military vehicles, according to the traders and Israeli court documents.

Trucks belonging to humanitarian groups are also used sometimes, though less often, according to merchants and Israeli government statements.

Smuggling accounts for much of Gaza's economy

Smuggling has become vital to Gaza's economy — it's a major source of income as most of the population "lost their source of living," the tribal leader said.

Several top merchants estimated that smuggling makes up over half their total operations and can bring in more than 70% of profits.

Payments go to many players, including drivers and warehouse workers in Israel and Gaza, said one major trader. "You are paying at every step, plus the price of the goods themselves," he said.

All those costs get passed on to the people in Gaza. Residents say a vehicle battery can go for more than \$2,300, compared with \$140 prewar. Solar panels sell for \$3.25 per watt, from 16 cents a watt.

"The smuggling flourished in the second half of 2024 as the market started to dry up," said Mohamed Abu Taha, a Gaza resident and father of one, noting that chicken, meat, and other food staples were brought in covertly. "Baby formula and pet food were also smuggled."

But perhaps no item is as in demand as cigarettes and tobacco. The price per pack, residents say, has hit as much as \$140 recently, and over \$1,000 during Israel's total blockade.

"You could find two or three men sharing one cigarette," Abu Taha said. Some resort to smoking a dried green called molokhia. COGAT did not reply when asked why cigarettes are banned.

For smugglers, cigarettes and nicotine products are easy to hide and the potential profit huge. Shipments of thousands of packs have been hidden in Israeli military vehicles, commercial trucks, aid shipments and even hollowed-out pineapples, according to traders, court documents and Israeli official statements.

The Hamas-led government is taking in money on smuggled goods, sources say

On smuggled goods, Gaza's government profits primarily by taking its percentage of the price but doesn't engage in commercial smuggling directly or oversee the trade, according to merchants and Barbakh, the

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economy ministry official.

Two major traders said the government demands for money increased since the ceasefire deal. Both said they were summoned by Hamas authorities over goods they smuggled to Gaza over the course of the war. A settlement was reached, and one of the traders said he paid \$3.5 million; the other, around \$3.75 million.

Two senior officials in the Hamas administration said — on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to journalists — the money helps fund social services and pay salaries for the tens of thousands employed in Gaza's civil service and police force. They estimated up to \$100 million had been collected on smuggled goods since the ceasefire.

Barbakh said the government doesn't have exact figures on smuggled goods "because these operations are conducted clandestinely, away from the oversight of relevant authorities."

In response to AP questions, Ismail al-Thawabta of the government's media office said none of the collected funds go to Hamas' military wing. He said all resources are directed to providing services to people and "maintaining the continuity of public facilities under the exceptional circumstances in the Gaza Strip."

The government destroys any expired goods it confiscates, including groceries.

But the two senior officials — as well as two merchants and one trucker — told AP that Hamas sells confiscated cigarettes. Al-Thawabta did not respond when asked about the claim.

'He is the master,' an official says of one smuggling coordinator

Smugglers appear to wield enormous influence. In court documents, Israeli prosecutors pointed to one mysterious smuggler known only as Abu Bassel who they said has "numerous connections within the Israel Police."

In one instance described in the documents, Israeli police stormed a warehouse in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank full of cellphones and cigarettes that smugglers were loading onto trucks for Gaza. One of the smugglers called Abu Bassel and handed the phone to an officer, the document says, and after a conversation, police called off the raid, leaving without arresting anyone or confiscating any goods.

All of those who spoke to AP said Abu Bassel is the smuggling world's biggest coordinator. They also said they knew nothing about him — his real name, whether he was Israeli or from the Palestinian territories, or how he built his network.

"He is the master," a senior Gaza Chamber of Commerce official said. "Nothing can enter Gaza without his stamp."

One Gaza merchant said he has spoken by phone with Abu Bassel but wouldn't provide AP the number. He said the shadowy figure uses connections with the military and intelligence to resolve problems for shipments. "Many police raids have been thwarted because of him."

The Israeli court documents also have no details about Abu Bassel's identity but said he uses an aid organization, Al-Mughtarib Al-Falastini, as a cover. The group denied in a Facebook post that it was involved in smuggling.

Israeli indictments show some of the scope of smuggling

Since late 2025, Israeli authorities have broken up several alleged smuggling rings, indicting more than a dozen people, including reserve soldiers operating in Gaza. But the traders, merchants and truckers who spoke to AP say that's only a fraction of those involved.

In one of the biggest cases, prosecutors accused two Israeli brothers, Eliran and Avi Algarabli; business partner Yaron Peretz; and another Israeli of running a smuggling ring out of the central town of Kiryat Gat.

According to a series of indictments against them and others, they're accused of bribing reserve soldiers in Gaza, chief among them Bezalel Zini, brother of the head of the Shin Bet, Israel's powerful domestic security agency.

The documents say Zini was a commander in a military engineering unit. The ring allegedly paid Zini the equivalent of about \$120,000 to smuggle three shipments totaling some 6,000 packs of cigarettes in his vehicle, according to the indictments. Two other reservists enlisted by the ring ran four trips into Gaza in one day, ferrying in 20,000 packs of cigarettes, hundreds of iPhones and medical equipment, the indictments say.

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Court documents assert that millions of dollars are changing hands in smuggling rings. The Algarabli brothers earned some \$2.2 million from a series of smuggling runs from October to December, when they were arrested, documents say. Other defendants in cases are accused of making \$1 million to \$3 million.

Gaza residents question why items are banned

For Gaza residents, living through another summer with limited resources has become almost unbearable. Fans that once cost \$100 can run \$500.

"When we ask the merchants why they don't import fans, they say the Israeli army refuses to allow them in because they're dual use," resident Mohamed Abu Olwan said.

Mohamed Abuel-Enein, a displaced man from the southern city of Rafah, said that's illogical.

"I don't understand the harm in allowing fans through the crossings," he said.

"What would they make with them? Rockets? We can't live in these tents. All day long, we use cardboard to light a fire, or we splash water on the children because of the heat."

Israeli military launches criminal probes into killings of Hind Rajab and Palestinian paramedics

By JULIA FRANKEL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military on Wednesday announced its first criminal investigations into troop conduct in Gaza, focusing on the killings of 5-year-old Hind Rajab and her family and of 15 Palestinian paramedics.

The military said it would not probe three other attacks that killed aid workers from World Central Kitchen and Doctors Without Borders. It said it had completed reviews of 150 incidents of troop conduct in Gaza and made decisions on the five cases.

Chef José Andrés, founder of U.S.-based World Central Kitchen, condemned the decision on X as "wrong and painful."

The investigations involve killings that drew a heavy international outcry. Hind was trapped in a vehicle with her slain relatives, pleading for help by phone before she too was killed in February 2024. After the shooting of the 15 medics in March 2025, troops bulldozed their bodies into a mass grave.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 73,000 people, including tens of thousands of women and children, according to the territory's Health Ministry. Rights groups and U.N. commissions have said the campaign amounts to genocide and that Israeli forces have committed a litany of war crimes, including indiscriminate use of force and deliberate killings of civilians.

Israel denies accusations of genocide and war crimes and says it is targeting Hamas after its October 2023 attack on southern Israel. It blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the militant group operates in populated areas in the tiny, overcrowded strip.

Israeli officials contend the country's justice system can address any violations by its troops, but rights groups say soldiers are almost never held accountable.

Wednesday's statement did not mention many other high-profile killings that Israel has pledged to investigate, such as its strikes on a hospital in southern Gaza that killed five journalists in August 2025, including Mariam Dagga, a visual journalist who freelanced for The Associated Press and other news organizations.

The 5-year-old was the last alive in a stranded car

Hind's grandmother, also named Hind Rajab, told the AP by phone that the Israeli investigation into her killing is not enough.

"An international investigation is required to uncover the truth and hold all those responsible accountable," she said. "We call for justice, not only for Hind, but for all Gaza children."

The military in Wednesday's statement admitted to firing at the car carrying the 5-year-old, four of her cousins and her aunt and uncle as they fled an Israeli invasion of Gaza City.

As gunfire sprayed around them, the girl's cousin, 15-year-old Layan Hamada, called the Palestinian Red Crescent paramedic center, telling staff there her family had been killed. Seconds later, more gunshots were heard, and Layan's screaming stopped, according to the Red Crescent recording of the call.

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Palestinian paramedics dispatched an ambulance to rescue Hind and stayed on the line with her until contact was lost. Hind, her five relatives and two medics from the ambulance were found dead 12 days later.

The military admitted Wednesday that troops had fired toward that ambulance, killing the two medics.

Dyab Abou Jahjah, director of the Belgium-based Hind Rajab foundation, told Al-Jazeera he considered the military investigations a "charade meant to whitewash the culprits instead of convicting them."

The Palestinian Red Crescent also insists on an international investigation, according to Raed al-Nims, a spokesman for the organization in Gaza. "Israeli measures are not enough," he told the AP.

A movie docudrama about Hind's death, "The Voice of Hind Rajab," won international awards and was nominated for an Oscar.

The 15 medics had been trying to reach casualties

In the killing of the paramedics, Israeli troops fired on an ambulance driving to retrieve casualties from an Israeli offensive in the southern city of Rafah, then fired on other emergency vehicles that came looking for the first one, according to phone footage and the sole survivor of the shootings. Fifteen medics and emergency responders from the Red Crescent and Gaza's Civil Defense were killed.

Troops then bulldozed over the bodies and vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. U.N. and rescue workers were only able to reach the site a week later to dig out the bodies.

The Israeli military initially said it opened fire because the vehicles were "advancing suspiciously" on troops without headlights or emergency signals. But it backtracked after the footage emerged, showing the teams driving slowly with their emergency lights flashing and logos visible. A deputy commander was directed to step down over the killings.

"We are not obligated to prove the truth because it is already proven to the whole world," Eid Azizi, a Palestinian Red Crescent spokesperson, told the AP in a phone call. "We shouldn't have reached this point if they respected and followed international humanitarian law."

Israel will not criminally probe World Central Kitchen strike

The military said it had decided against a criminal investigation into April 2024 airstrikes that hit a convoy of World Central Kitchen vehicles, killing seven staffers.

The aid group, which distributes food in Gaza, said at the time it had coordinated with the military over the convoy's movement. The vehicles, which had the group's logo on their roofs visible from the air, were left incinerated and mangled.

Wednesday's military statement said individuals in the vehicles were mistakenly identified as armed Hamas operatives. But it concluded that the commanders' decisions "did not raise reasonable suspicion of criminal misconduct." At the time, two officers were removed from their positions and three others reprimanded.

World Central Kitchen responded in a statement saying the military's account of the strike was untrue, "conflates different timelines and events, muddies the story and shifts the blame." It called for an independent investigation.

Australia's foreign minister Penny Wong expressed "outrage" at the outcome Thursday, saying the removals and reprimands of officers weren't sufficient accountability for the killing of Australian aid worker Zomi Frankcom. Wong said unanswered questions remained and her government would continue to pursue the matter.

The military also decided not to take criminal action over the killings of four staffers from Doctors Without Borders in two separate instances in November 2023 and February 2024.

What happens next?

Military investigators will now take up the probes and present their findings to military prosecutors. The military advocate general can then decide to keep investigating, indict any soldiers involved or decline to charge them.

Any action will take a long time, if it comes at all, said Tal Steiner, head of the Israeli rights group HaMoked.

Indictments are very uncommon and convictions even more so, she said, recalling only one soldier who had spent time behind bars since Oct. 7, 2023, for alleged abuse of Palestinian prisoners. That soldier was imprisoned for seven months under a June 2025 plea bargain.

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"It's very rare that soldiers accused of harming Palestinians even go to court ... and even rarer that they get a severe punishment," Steiner said.

Just 0.17% of all military investigations launched during three Gaza operations from 2014 to 2022 led to prosecution, according to an analysis by Israeli rights group Yesh Din.

The war's toll keeps growing

The war began on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in southern Israel and abducted 251 others.

Israeli strikes have continued in Gaza since a ceasefire deal came into effect in October, killing at least 1,270 people, according to the Health Ministry.

The ministry, part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. It does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants but says women and children constitute about half of the dead. _____

Magdy reported from Cairo. Associated Press writer Erin Cunningham in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Israel's military to investigate Gaza attacks, and other major developments in the Middle East

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military said Wednesday it will conduct criminal investigations into the killings of a 5-year-old Palestinian girl and her family and the separate killings of 15 paramedics, following a review of troop conduct during the war in Gaza.

Meanwhile, France announced it will expel two Iranian diplomats in response to the expulsion of French diplomats from the Islamic Republic this week. And the Iranian parliament speaker and chief negotiator landed in neighboring Iraq for a three-day visit.

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

Israel's military plans criminal investigation into Gaza attacks

The Israeli military said it would investigate the killings of 5-year-old Hind Rajab and her family members in February 2024, and the killing of 15 Palestinian medics in March 2025. Both drew international attention.

The announcement followed reviews of 150 incidents of troop conduct during the war in Gaza. The military said it would not launch criminal investigations into three other attacks that killed aid workers from World Central Kitchen and Doctors Without Borders.

Rajab was killed when Israeli troops opened fire on a vehicle that also was carrying her aunt, uncle and four cousins as they tried to flee Gaza City amid an Israeli offensive.

The 15 paramedics were killed when Israeli troops opened fire on their vehicles in the southern city of Rafah, then bulldozed over the bodies and buried them in a mass grave. Troops first shot at an ambulance that was driving to retrieve casualties from an Israeli offensive, then fired on several other emergency vehicles that went out to look for the first one, according to phone footage and the sole survivor.

Australian official angered by move not to probe aid worker's death

Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong expressed "outrage" on Thursday at Israel's decision not to pursue criminal charges over strikes that killed seven World Central Kitchen aid workers, including Australian woman Zomi Frankcom.

Wong said her government was informed of the decision moments before it was announced, leaving officials no time to inform Frankcom's family before it became public.

"There are still many unanswered questions," Wong said.

They included why the convoy was struck three times in a humanitarian fire control zone and why a senior brigade officer involved in the strikes was a signatory to a letter urging the restriction of aid to Gaza, Wong added. Australia had yet to receive drone recordings from the attack, despite seeking them multiple times, she said.

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"The Australian government does not believe that the removal of two officers from their positions and three officers being reprimanded is sufficient accountability for the deaths of seven people, including an Australian citizen," Wong said.

The minister hours earlier summoned Israel's envoy to Canberra Hillel Newman for a meeting. However, she wouldn't expel the ambassador, she said, citing a need to continue engaging diplomatically with Israel.

Newman told reporters after the meeting that he was "very sorry" for Frankcom's family, but did not apologize for her killing.

"One cannot attack findings of a court if the findings are not suitable to one's political agenda," Newman said. He added that the finding of no criminal liability came "after two years of independent research."

Israeli airstrikes in Gaza kill 10 as ceasefire is in doubt

At least 10 people were killed Wednesday in two airstrikes in Gaza, according to local hospitals and the Palestinian Red Crescent.

The attacks cast further doubt on whether new U.S. efforts can advance a tenuous ceasefire in the Palestinian territory.

Just two days after U.S. negotiators reportedly asked Israel to draw down attacks in Gaza, Israeli troops also crossed the ceasefire line in southern Gaza and detained a Hamas police colonel at dawn, two witnesses and a Hamas official said. They spoke on condition of anonymity for their safety.

— Samy Magdy and Wafaa Shurafa

Iran's parliament speaker and top negotiator visits Iraq

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf arrived in Iraq for a three-day visit where he will meet with Iraqi officials and leaders of an Iran-backed political coalition.

Iran-backed Iraqi militias have launched drone attacks on U.S. military and diplomatic targets both within Iraq and abroad, piling pressure on Baghdad, which for years has delicately tried to maintain strong ties with both Washington and Tehran.

Qalibaf praised the country's Tehran-backed militias, which he called the "resistance in Iraq," describing them as a "key component of the country's national power."

His comments came even as the Iraqi government has been trying to disarm the militias that have long operated on their own even though they were nominally under state command.

Iraq is asking Iran to grant special status to Iraqi oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz because the country has been affected greatly by Iran's war with the U.S. and needs to guard its economic interests, according to a statement from Iraqi Parliament Speaker Haibet al-Halbousi.

Iraq relies on oil revenues for roughly 90% of its budget, and most of its oil is exported through the strait. Since the war erupted and Iran asserted control over the strait, halting most shipping traffic, Iraq has turned to alternate routes, including sending oil over land to Syria, which is less efficient and more expensive.

France and Iran expel diplomats

France announced it will expel two staff members of the Iranian Embassy in France, in response to what the French Foreign Ministry described as an assault by Iranian security forces against two French diplomatic staff in the Islamic Republic last month.

Iran accused the French pair of taking part in a secret meeting with "suspects in a major case involving foreign infiltration and interference," Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported. The French diplomats were expelled on Monday.

Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot slammed the Iranian authorities for not investigating what he called a "premeditated and deliberate attack." He called the allegations fabricated and said the two Iranians will leave Paris in the coming days.

A quiet channel between ICE and Iran shaped deportation flights, newly released emails show

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — U.S. immigration officials worked with Iran to deport Iranians in 2025, newly released emails show, revealing a working relationship between the U.S. and Iranian governments despite tensions mounting between the countries.

Hundreds of emails exchanged between U.S. immigration officials, which were obtained by the National Iranian American Council and made public Tuesday, offer the most transparent play by play yet of how the two countries worked together to arrange for more than 100 Iranians to be flown back to Iran on three separate immigration flights in September and December 2025 and January 2026.

The emails show that Iranian officials had some influence over which Iranian immigrants in the U.S. were sent back to their home country, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials apparently heeded some last-minute changes to deportation lists at the request of Iran.

"Per request from the Iran Embassy I added a few cases," one unnamed ICE official wrote in late August, a month before the first deportation flight in September. Just over a week later, someone with the same job title moved to make another, unspecified change to the deportation list after they said they met with the "Director at the Iranian Embassy."

"Iran has requested that I amend the previous manifest and expedite the removal process," the official wrote.

In a Sept. 26 email, just three days before the deportation flight left U.S. soil, an ICE official said in an email that the Iranian Embassy was still making requests for three additional Iranians on the flight. It's not clear who ended up on the flight, which ended up being much smaller than initially planned. Iranian officials were still making requests the day the flight departed, although one official wrote that those requests were denied.

Coordination of the flights remained a high priority even as ICE officials acknowledged internally that Iranians were fleeing Iran amid the deadly 12-day war with the U.S. and Israel in June 2025, emails show. The flights departed just months after the U.S. and Israel agreed to a ceasefire with Iran.

The new emails highlight a clear departure from a decades-long practice by the U.S. of welcoming Iranian dissidents, exiles and others since the 1979 Islamic Revolution forced a large number of Iranians to flee.

The deportation of Iranians to a country whose government has a pattern of violent persecution against women, religious minorities and political dissidents has drawn significant criticism from human rights activists.

The Department of Homeland Security did not offer comment in response to an emailed request sent Tuesday afternoon.

Some deportees were handpicked by Iranian officials, emails show

Iranian officials acknowledged in September 2025 that as many as 400 Iranians could be returned under an agreement with the Trump administration. They said most of the Iranians had crossed into the U.S. from Mexico illegally, while some faced other immigration issues.

It is not clear from the emails how frequently U.S. immigration officials had direct contact with the Iranian government. Sometimes messages were conveyed through Qatari officials, who helped charter the deportation flights through Doha, but other times officials reference regular meetings with the "Iranian delegation," the "Director at the Iranian Embassy" and other unnamed Iranian officials.

It is not clear whether the people Iran put on the list had volunteered to repatriate or if they were forced. Previous reporting from The New York Times revealed that asylum-seekers were among those deported to Iran, while others said they were deported against their will.

At least one person was deported who wasn't supposed to be, emails showed.

"An Iranian not included on the final manifest we sent to the Qatari MOI was boarded on the flight," an unnamed U.S. official wrote.

In response, another unnamed U.S. official wrote, "I have no idea how the case/person got through on

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the plane.”

US prioritized deportation efforts during war

Emails suggest that pressure to carry out the Iranian deportations came from the highest levels of the Trump administration, even when U.S. and Israel were exchanging strikes with Iran in a 12-day conflict between June 13 and June 24, 2025.

Just days after Trump’s June 16 warning on social media that “Everyone should immediately evacuate Tehran!” the former acting director of ICE, Todd Lyons, called the repatriation of Iranian immigrants a “priority” in an email sent to the agency’s head of removal operations Marcos Charles and a number of unnamed staff.

Shortly after Lyon’s email, Charles forwarded the message to a group of officials whose names are redacted. An unnamed ICE official responded, warning that “removal will prove difficult” amid the ongoing conflict because Iran wasn’t issuing the travel documents for Iranians eligible for deportation. On top of that, the Iranian airspace was closed to all flights during the bombings and Iranians were fleeing the country.

Charles was unfazed, telling staff in a subsequent email to make a plan to deport 58 Iranians with final removal orders in ICE custody at the time.

“We need a plan forward ASAP,” Charles wrote. Another official, whose name was redacted, urged colleagues to “identify a solution for this White House priority.”

Jamal Abdi, the president of the National Iranian American Council, said the emails undermine Trump’s assertions that the U.S. is at war with Iran to save ordinary Iranians from a repressive regime.

“It demonstrates that the top priority here was to kick out as many people as possible by whatever means necessary,” Abdi said.

Iranian officials had access to immigration detainees

On several occasions, the emails show ICE officials arranging for Iranian officials to meet for unspecified reasons with people detained in the U.S., echoing testimony from Iranian asylum-seekers in an unrelated lawsuit filed by an unaffiliated Iranian interest group in July.

Eleven Iranians in immigration detention said they were forced to meet with Iranian government officials while in ICE detention. Those Iranian authorities knew intimate details about their asylum claims, according to the sworn declarations filed in a Washington, D.C., court in July.

The lawsuit alleges that U.S. immigration agencies have been illegally sharing confidential information about Iranian asylum-seekers with the Iranian government.

The U.S. government is allowed to work with government officials of foreign countries to coordinate deportation logistics. However, federal regulations passed in the late 1990s prohibit the government from sharing information that could reveal that the person getting deported applied for asylum.

DHS vehemently disputed the lawsuit’s allegations.

“These allegations that ICE shared asylum application records with the Iranian government are FALSE,” DHS said in a statement in July.

Judge will consider new trial for Karmelo Anthony in Texas track meet killing

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

MCKINNEY, Texas (AP) — A judge on Thursday will consider whether to grant Texas teenager Karmelo Anthony a new trial following his murder conviction earlier this summer in the stabbing death of a 17-year-old athlete at a high school track meet.

In a legal victory for Anthony, the judge who presided over his trial was removed from the case Wednesday. Judge Michael Chitty was then assigned to consider the motion from Anthony’s attorneys asking for a retrial in killing of Austin Metcalf.

Anthony, now 19, was sentenced to 35 years in prison in the case. He attended Wednesday’s hearing wearing a green prison jumpsuit. His parents and Metcalf’s also attending the hearing.

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Anthony's attorneys had asked for state District Judge John Roach to be removed in part because of a TV interview in which Roach said jurors "got it right" when they delivered a guilty verdict.

In seeking a new trial, Anthony's attorneys have argued that the June proceedings were marred by strict courtroom rules and improper jury instructions. They have also said Anthony's decision to not testify came after a dispute with prosecutors over an agreement to focus the trial on the events leading up to the stabbing.

Jurors in the trial had rejected Anthony's claims he acted in self-defense during a confrontation with Metcalf in the stadium bleachers last year. Students who took the stand described a heated exchange over Anthony's refusal on a rainy spring day to leave a tent that belonged to Metcalf's team.

The case attracted national attention in part because of a flood of social media posts that amplified the killing in racial terms. Anthony is Black; Metcalf was white. Lawyers on both sides, however, told jurors the tragedy had nothing to do with race.

During the recusal hearing Wednesday, Anthony's legal team focused on comments Roach made to a Dallas TV station after the trial had ended. In the interview, which was played as the hearing began, Roach was asked if the jury got "it right."

"Yeah, they did," Roach said, adding: "Whatever they say, they got it right."

During the interview, Roach also defended his courtroom rules and spoke about the onslaught of online postings about the case.

As national attention on the killing intensified last year, the families of both Metcalf and Anthony said they had been targets of harassment.

Several schools were competing at the track event when Anthony sat under the Memorial High School tent that was perched in the bleachers. Metcalf and others had repeatedly told Anthony to leave, witnesses testified, leading to an escalating confrontation.

Prosecutors said Anthony provoked Metcalf, and witnesses testified that Anthony was the aggressor.

Anthony at one point reached inside a bag and replied: "Touch me and see what happens," according to a police report.

Metcalf pushed Anthony, according to witnesses, who said Anthony then pulled out a knife and stabbed him in the chest.

Former teacher, 93, among the deaths blamed on storm as Hawaii residents struggle to clean up

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and JOHN RABY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A beloved former kindergarten teacher who taught generations of residents in a small town on Hawaii's Big Island was among the two deaths authorities blamed on a hurricane that lashed the state over the weekend with heavy rain and strong winds.

May Doi, 93, was found dead Monday after she was reported missing, police said. Neighbors think she was escaping floodwaters in her home and trying to get to a nearby shelter, said 'Aina Akamu, a former student of Doi's who is now a vice principal at a local school.

She taught for so long at Naalehu Elementary on the island's southern tip that "Mrs. Doi was my dad's kindergarten teacher," Akamu said Wednesday.

"She taught grandkids of her students," he said. "She was a fixture in this community."

Akamu often saw her taking walks around the small, rural, sugar plantation-era town: "She was so strong."

He recalled how everyone looked forward to having Mrs. Doi as a teacher because she sometimes allowed students to have sleepovers in her classroom. Her deceased husband was a math teacher, Akamu said.

The body of a man in his 60s was located by residents in a pasture on Tuesday, a day after police were asked to conduct a welfare check, police said. Authorities said it was the second death attributed to the storm and have not yet released his identity.

Residents were struggling to clean up after Hurricane Lala tore roofs off houses, uprooted trees, covered roads in mud and rock and left many households without electricity for days. On top of all that, forecasters

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warned of the likelihood of another tropical cyclone forming southeast of the islands.

"We just ask the ancestors to protect us"

Akamu also lamented the destruction of two cemeteries, including one where Akamu's ancestors have been buried since 1850. Caskets were sticking out of the ground through the town, home to about 800 people, and headstones littered the roadway, he said.

"Our graveyard is now scattered all over the community and how do we heal from that?" he said.

He worries crews working to clear roads could inadvertently run over remains.

"Don't clear the road, my grandma could be in there," he said. "That's what makes me most emotional, it's like you lost them again."

Akamu was trying to focus on helping his community recover by setting up a hub where residents can get donated items. They are in most need of generators, gasoline and propane, he said.

"We just ask the ancestors to protect us," Akamu said of the threat of another storm.

Now well west of Hawaii's main islands, Lala has reached major Category 3 strength with top sustained winds of 115 mph (185 kph) on Wednesday in what the National Hurricane Center called the first major hurricane of 2026 in the Central Pacific Ocean. But Hawaii residents were put on notice for another storm system, located far to the east-southeast.

The hurricane center said conditions appeared conducive for a tropical depression to form within days.

It's too early to tell the exact location or potential wind, rain and storm surge impacts. However, "interests in the Hawaiian Islands should closely monitor the progress of this system," the hurricane center said, adding it could be a hurricane when it moves near or over the islands by the weekend.

Power repairs could take weeks

Work continued to clear away tons of mud and debris left behind by a torrent of water that inundated buildings, some of whose roofs were sheared off by the winds. Dozens of homes were washed from foundations, bridges were damaged and a collapsed section of a two-lane road had cut off access to the community of Pahala.

The U.S. Department of Transportation approved an initial \$6 million in emergency relief to help repair transportation infrastructure damaged by Lala, U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz of Hawaii said.

The heaviest recorded rainfall, 43.54 inches (1.1 meters), occurred in Laupahoehoe on the northeast coast of the Big Island, the National Weather Service said.

About 17,000 customers on the Big Island remained without power on Wednesday, the Hawaiian Electric utility said. Some customers on the islands of Oahu and Maui were still in the dark. Repairs in the heavily damaged areas of the Big Island, including the southern end, could take at least two weeks, the utility said.

Lala was moving to the northwest at 10 mph (17 kph) and was expected to turn toward the north early Thursday. It was bearing down on a remote area at the northwestern edge of the Hawaiian Archipelago. Hurricane warnings were posted for portions of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument from Lisianski Island to Maro Reef.

The weather service said the storm was forecast to veer east of the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. The population in one of the most remote places on Earth consists entirely of a few dozen U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff, volunteers and contractors. Forecasters said there were no tropical-related advisories for the Midway Atoll and any impact might include some elevated surf with a limited amount of rain.

Prince Harry and Meghan are returning to the UK with their children

By DANICA KIRKA and JAMES POLLARD Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, have decided to return to the United Kingdom for an extended stay starting this fall, but they won't resume their roles as working members of the royal family, The Associated Press learned Wednesday.

The couple's children, Prince Archie, 7, and Princess Lilibet, 5, have already enrolled at British schools

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and will start classes in September, according to a person close to the Sussexes who was not authorized to speak publicly. The family plans to live at a private, non-royal residence outside of London, but plans to maintain their home in Montecito, California, and their vacation property in Portugal.

The Daily Telegraph first reported the story. When asked to discuss the reports by the AP at a roundtable event with U.S. veterans in Washington Wednesday night, Harry replied, "Nothing to say."

Harry and Meghan gave up their royal duties and moved to California more than six years ago to earn their living through lucrative contracts with Netflix and Spotify. Although relations with the rest of the royal family have soured since then, Harry has recently expressed an interest in reconciliation so he could spend more time with his father, King Charles III, who is being treated for an undisclosed form of cancer.

Charles was informed of the couple's plans on Sunday. Harry and Meghan visited the U.K. last month.

Buckingham Palace has a policy of not commenting on speculation about non-working members of the royal family. A representative for Harry and Meghan declined to comment.

According to a source close to the Sussexes, Meghan will continue heading her As Ever company from the U.K., while Harry can spend more time working with his U.K.-based charities.

Harry and Meghan have had a stormy relationship with the royal family ever since they decamped to a mansion in the exclusive Southern California enclave of Montecito.

In a series of interviews and Harry's memoir "Spare," the couple said they left Britain to escape the restrictions of royal life and criticized palace officials for being insensitive to Meghan's mental health while alleging that at least one member of the royal family had expressed racist views when she was pregnant with their first child. Meghan describes herself as biracial.

Those tensions were exacerbated by Harry's long-running legal battle with Britain's tabloid newspapers, which he alleges illegally hacked his phones and invaded his privacy when he was younger. The prince has lost a series of lawsuits against the media, including one against the publisher of the Daily Mail, which concluded last month.

The latest trial has left Harry facing a potential bill for millions of pounds after the court ruled he and other plaintiffs in the case were liable for the publisher's legal fees. Associated Newspapers has filed documents showing that its legal costs amounted to 34.5 million pounds (\$47 million).

Harry has also been embroiled in a legal wrangle with the British government after a government committee refused to authorize police protection for the prince and his family when they are in the U.K. The prince says he and his family need armed police protection because they are at risk simply because they are members of the royal family, regardless of whether they are working royals.

After losing a court battle over the security issue last year, Harry said he hoped to rebuild relations with his family.

"I would love reconciliation with my family. There's no point in continuing to fight anymore," Harry told the BBC. "I don't know how much longer my father has."

Last month, Harry returned to the U.K. for a series of charity engagements. Meghan and the children joined Harry for part of the visit and they spent time with the king at his Highgrove estate in western England. It was the first time Archie and Lilibet had seen their grandfather since the late Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee in 2022.

While Harry has recently met with his father, there are no signs of a warming of relations with his brother, Prince William, the heir to the throne.

Peter Hunt, a former BBC royal correspondent, said the surprise announcement would make William "apoplectic."

"In the short term, Harry will be able to deepen his rapprochement with his father," Hunt told Britain's Press Association. "And his presence back home will make it harder for his brother to duck a reconciliation."

Trump says US and Canada have a trade deal, but key terms remain unclear

By ROB GILLIES, PAUL WISEMAN and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Canada and the United States moved closer Wednesday to finalizing a trade agreement that would avert threatened 50% U.S. tariffs, with a senior Canadian official calling the emerging terms “a very good deal for Canada” while cautioning that negotiations were not complete.

President Donald Trump said the agreement was “very fair” to both sides and predicted U.S. farmers and manufacturers would benefit. The tariffs on about \$20 billion worth of Canadian imports have been postponed until 12:01 a.m. Saturday.

The senior Canadian official said the emerging agreement would provide greater certainty, protect Canada’s dairy sector and jobs threatened by the new tariffs, and preserve what Ottawa considers favorable trade terms with the United States.

Prime Minister Mark Carney asked provincial premiers during a briefing to return U.S. alcohol to store shelves, Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston said, a step aimed at addressing one of the Trump administration’s key trade complaints. Houston and two other premiers voiced support for the direction of the talks, though Houston said whether Canadians would actually buy U.S. alcohol again “is a whole other discussion.”

The senior official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the negotiations publicly before an agreement is finalized.

Here’s what to know:

Trump’s tariff threat would hit 5% of Canadian exports

Last month, Trump invoked a never-before-used legal authority, dating back to the Great Depression, to announce that the United States would slap 50% tariffs on \$20 billion, or about 5%, of Canadian exports to the United States, ranging from hockey sticks to tongue depressors.

Trump claimed that Canada discriminates against American exports of autos, alcohol and cheese. The U.S. president is also furious that Canada and China were the only countries that punched back with retaliatory tariffs of their own when he slapped levies on their products.

Canada’s dairy market has been a persistent irritant

While details of the agreement emerging Wednesday remain vague, Trump claimed Canada had agreed to end tariffs on U.S. agricultural products. “The tariffs will be non-existent for our farmers. Our farmers were paying tremendous tariffs into Canada, and those tariffs are going to be totally eviscerated. Down to zero,” he said.

Canada currently allows a set amount of dairy imports at low tariffs. Once imports exceed that limit, much higher tariffs apply. The U.S. says Canada’s “supply management” system makes it harder for American dairy producers to get full access to the Canadian market.

Dominic LeBlanc, the minister responsible for Canada-U.S. trade, told reporters in Washington that Canada’s “agriculture sector will be well protected and we have maintained our tough line.”

The senior Canadian official was even more explicit, saying supply management was “not on the table” and Canada’s dairy system would remain protected.

That leaves another key question unresolved: how Canada can preserve supply management while giving U.S. farmers the additional access Trump says they will get.

What does Canada get?

Canada has not publicly detailed what tariff relief Washington has offered.

But the senior Canadian official said the emerging agreement would avert the new 50% tariffs, protect a significant number of jobs and preserve Canada’s favorable access to the U.S. market.

The official also said the agreement would allow Canada to focus more on its domestic economic agenda, including infrastructure projects, attracting foreign investment and diversifying exports beyond the United States.

Provincial leaders also signaled that a trade agreement would not mean returning to the previous Canada-U.S. economic relationship. Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe said “the old status quo is not possible,”

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while British Columbia Premier David Eby said, agreement or not, “we will not go back to the way things were before.”

Trump raised the prospect of reviving Keystone XL

In announcing the tariff pause, Trump said the long-canceled Keystone XL pipeline “may be awoken from the grave,” though he did not say it was part of the agreement. The project, designed to carry Canadian crude to U.S. refineries, was rejected by Barack Obama, revived by Trump and canceled again by Joe Biden.

Carney had already raised reviving Keystone XL with Trump at the White House in October 2025, and Trump was receptive, according to a Canadian government official familiar with the discussion. A revival would align with a longstanding Canadian goal rather than amount to a new U.S. concession.

Both sides wrangle over American alcohol imports

Eight of Canada’s 10 provinces restrict or ban U.S. alcohol — measures imposed in retaliation for Trump’s previous tariffs on a number of Canadian goods last year and amid anger over his repeated talk of making Canada the 51st U.S. state. The Distilled Spirits Council says U.S. spirits exports to Canada have fallen more than 70%.

Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, is especially important. Its government-run LCBO, one of the world’s largest alcohol purchasers, sold nearly \$1 billion Canadian dollars (\$723 million) in U.S. products annually before pulling them from shelves.

The White House says the emerging deal includes a Canadian commitment to address the restrictions. But Carney cannot order provinces to restore sales.

The backlash extends beyond liquor stores, with Canadian travel to the United States falling sharply. Even if U.S. alcohol returns, sales could take time to recover.

An agreement could clear the way for a broader trade deal

The U.S. is renegotiating a North American trade pact — the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement — that Trump strong-armed America’s neighbors into accepting in his first term. The U.S. has begun formal USMCA negotiations with Mexico but not with Canada.

The senior Canadian official said resolving the immediate tariff dispute would provide a path toward broader USMCA negotiations.

If the threat of 50% tariffs is cleared, it “should help pave the way for formal U.S.-Canada negotiations,” said Wendy Cutler, a former U.S. trade negotiator who is now senior vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

Both countries had incentives to head off an escalation in trade tensions.

Nearly 72% of Canada’s goods exports last year went to the United States. And the Trump administration might be wary of imposing a hefty new tariff — paid by U.S. importers who try to pass along the cost to consumers via higher prices — ahead of November’s midterm elections. American voters are already frustrated with the high cost of living.

ICC slams US decision to sanction the court’s president and a senior prosecution lawyer

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The International Criminal Court on Wednesday slammed the latest U.S. sanctions targeting senior ICC staff, including its president, as a “flagrant attack” on the global tribunal’s independence and vowed to continue seeking justice for atrocities around the world.

The State Department announced Tuesday that it had hit ICC president Tomoko Akane, a Japanese national, and ICC senior trial lawyer Abdoulaye Seye, who is from Senegal, with sanctions that freeze any assets they have in U.S. jurisdictions or come into contact with the U.S. financial system.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi called the move “very unfortunate” when asked about the sanctions by a reporter. “Japan will respond as we continue to maintain communication with related countries including the United States,” she added.

The Trump administration has now slapped sanctions on nine of the ICC’s 18 judges, both of its deputy

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prosecutors, its former chief prosecutor and one other prosecution office staffer, the court said. The U.S. accuses the court of overstepping its mandate by investigating and seeking to prosecute senior military and political officials from countries, such as Israel and the United States, that are not members of the court.

In a statement, the court said that when "judicial actors are threatened for applying the law, it is the international legal order itself that is placed at risk." It said the court "will continue to fully discharge its mandate with independence and impartiality."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Tuesday branded the ICC "a corrupt and fatally politicized supranational court that has maliciously abused its authority and exceeded its mandate."

The move came weeks after Rubio announced that the U.S. was launching a "sweeping campaign to dismantle the threat posed by the International Criminal Court to U.S. sovereignty."

Rubio said he will pressure the court's 125 member states to withdraw from the institution, sanction organizations that work with the court and ban staff from traveling to the United States.

Since then, Venezuela and Chad have announced they plan to leave the court, bringing the number of countries to pull out of the court in the past year to five. It takes a year for a country's decision to quit the court to be formalized.

The sanctions can impact the daily lives of court officials. They prevent the ICC officials and their families from entering the United States, block their access to even basic financial services making even going to a grocery store difficult.

Canadian judge Kimberly Prost, who was sanctioned last year, lost access to her credit cards, and Amazon's Alexa stopped responding to her. "Your whole world is restricted," she told The Associated Press after she was targeted.

The court's oversight body, the Assembly of States Parties, called the sanctions an "escalation" that "risks undermining ongoing investigations and impeding global efforts" to ensure justice reaches victims of global atrocities.

While Japan calls its alliance with the United States the cornerstone of its postwar foreign and security policies, Tokyo has had difficulty managing the relationship under Trump's trade and security policies. Takaichi has been portrayed as weak for avoiding any criticism of Trump as her administration navigates weakened U.S. commitment in the region and deteriorating ties with China.

Yuichiro Tamaki, leader of the Japanese opposition Democratic Party for the People, wrote on X that Trump's sanctions were "outrageous and intolerable." He urged Takaichi's government to show its support for the ICC and reach out to the U.S. government to "have it retract this unjust sanction."

ICC host nation the Netherlands and European powerhouse Germany both threw their weight behind the court.

German foreign office spokesman Martin Giese told reporters in Berlin that the ICC is "fulfilling its mission exactly as intended," by holding to account perpetrators of grave crimes. Dutch Foreign Minister Tom Berendsen said he had invited Akane for talks "to discuss our continued support."

Balkees Jarrah, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, called the sanctions "the latest example of the Trump administration's utter contempt for international law and a naked attempt to shield American and Israeli officials implicated in serious crimes from justice."

Human Rights Watch and three other advocacy groups sued the Trump administration in a New York court last week to challenge its campaign against the ICC.

'No serious dispute' that Comey's seashell post could be read as a Trump threat, prosecutors say

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Department of Justice is defending its prosecution of former FBI Director James Comey, saying "there is no serious dispute" that a social media post of seashells he made last year could be understood as a threat against President Donald Trump.

Prosecutors also called into question Comey's account that he had found the seashells in the numerical

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arrangement of "86 47" while walking on a beach in North Carolina and suggested that his May 2025 post on Instagram was an effort to generate attention for a forthcoming novel about a social media personality whose words inspire his fans to attack his foes.

The arguments in motions late Tuesday represent the government's most detailed explanation of its indictment and were filed in response to wide-ranging defense efforts to dismiss the case on grounds including that it constitutes a vindictive prosecution and that Comey's post did not amount to a true threat. Comey's lawyers contend that investigators in the case misled judges, submitted documents containing false statements, withheld key facts and repeatedly came up empty in their efforts to prove that Comey intended a physical threat or knew that the number 86 could suggest violence.

The entry for "86" from Merriam-Webster, the dictionary used by The Associated Press, says its meaning is "to throw out," "to get rid of" or "to refuse service to." Trump, a Republican, is the 47th president.

The Justice Department maintains that the post constituted a real threat

Federal prosecutors maintain that the photo of the seashells, which Comey said he found on the beach, constituted a threat against Trump. Comey deleted the post shortly after he put it up, saying he did not know that anyone interpreted the numbers as a call to violence. His lawyers have said that the slogan has long meant to "get rid of" or "eject" and has been featured on thousands of items sold online and regularly displayed at protests.

But the department sought in its filings to place the post against the backdrop of assassination plots or attempts against Trump in the months before and after Comey's post. Prosecutors say that two minutes before the post was made, Comey's wife texted him a screenshot of a definition of "86" that said "to get rid of or refuse service."

"There is no serious dispute that an objective viewer of Comey's post could read it to mean 'Kill President Trump,'" prosecutors wrote.

The photo was posted days before Comey was set to release a novel he wrote titled "FDR Drive," in which a prosecutor pursues a far-right social media personality who has called out his adversaries by name and inspired violence against them by his fans, the department said.

After the Instagram post provoked an outcry, according to the government's filings, Comey's publishing agent observed in a text message to him that he had "gone viral." Comey responded that that was "not my intention, but I'll be OK if it sells books." The agent replied, "Music to an agent's ears."

Prosecutors also asserted there was "reason to doubt" Comey's account of having come upon the seashells while on a walk, saying they were located 4 miles (6 kilometers) "down from the beach from beachfront property where Comey was staying, in an area separated from the ocean by a sand dune." They said there was "no evidence that anyone else arranged, photographed, or even saw the shells."

Comey has called the case vindictive, but prosecutors deny that

Comey's lawyers have called the indictment, which was filed months after an earlier and unrelated case against him was dismissed, part of a Trump retribution campaign targeting one of the president's vocal critics. Trump fired Comey as head of the FBI in 2017 as Comey was overseeing an investigation into potential ties between Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and Russia. Trump since then has called for him and other perceived adversaries to be jailed.

But the Justice Department denied allegations of vindictiveness, saying the decision to indict Comey was made by the U.S. attorney in the area and did not stem from a directive from the president or the attorney general.

To bolster their claims that Comey was unjustly targeted, the defense team argued that investigators struggled to develop compelling evidence from witnesses that Comey had intended the post as a threat, but they concealed that from federal magistrates as they applied for warrants to search digital accounts associated with Comey and his wife

For instance, defense lawyers have said that the FBI searched an internal database of information about open and closed investigations for any indication of an association between Comey and the term "86" but found inconclusive results. An FBI agent also requested a review of the FBI file for the case against reputed mobster John Gambino, which Comey worked on as a young prosecutor, but found no references

to the term "86."

Investigators also interviewed a key government cooperator in the case, Salvatore "Sammy the Bull" Gravano, who said he did not recall ever discussing the term "86" with Comey or hearing it in connection with the trial.

The latest filings made clear that the administration was standing behind the premise of the case.

"No Government theory was disproved at that time, or now. No intentionally false omission exists, much less one made with reckless disregard for the truth," prosecutors wrote.

"The evidence still supports that Defendant acted at least recklessly by consciously disregarding a substantial risk that his coded message of '8647' that he sent to his 200,000 or so Instagram followers, and the millions of secondary social media users who would view this as threatening violence against the President of the United States," they added.

Missouri court allows new Trump-backed US House districts to be used in November election

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — A Missouri judge has allowed new U.S. House districts backed by President Donald Trump to be used in the November elections, rejecting a bid by to put the Republican-friendly districts to a statewide vote of the people.

The ruling Wednesday by Cole County Circuit Judge Daniel Green is a victory for Republicans seeking to hold onto their slim majority in the U.S. House. But the case is likely to end up in the state Supreme Court.

Missouri's new districts already were used in the August primaries. On that same day, Republican Secretary of State Denny Hoskins rejected a petition with thousands of signatures seeking to force a November referendum on the map. Hoskins asserted that Missouri's Constitution doesn't allow a referendum on congressional redistricting.

The judge agreed with Hoskins and other Republicans, who joined in defense of the new map.

"The Missouri Constitution does not supply any statement — let alone a clear one — reallocating authority over congressional redistricting away from the General Assembly to a referendum process," Green wrote in the ruling.

Opponents of the redistricting plan quickly announced an appeal.

"Everyone knows that Cole County is not the final decision here," said Richard von Glahn, executive director of People Not Politicians, who sued to try to place the new map on the ballot. "After months of delay, we are pleased to be moving forward to the Missouri Supreme Court to enforce our constitutional rights."

Missouri's redistricting targeted Democratic congressman

Missouri's current U.S. House delegation is made up of six Republicans and two Democrats who were elected from districts with boundaries drawn after the 2020 census.

But Republican Gov. Mike Kehoe called the Legislature into a special session on redistricting last year after Trump urged Republican-led states to redraw congressional boundaries to their advantage ahead of the midterms.

Missouri's revised map is designed to help Republicans defeat Democratic U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver of Kansas City. It reassigns portions of Kansas City to two neighboring districts represented by Republicans and stretches the remainder of Cleaver's 5th Congressional District far eastward into Republican-heavy rural areas. About 59% of its voters are new to the 5th District, according to an Associated Press estimate.

State Sen. Rick Brattin won a Republican primary in the reshaped district in early August. Cleaver was unopposed for the Democratic nomination.

Republicans had argued that the new districts should be used in the November elections even if a voter referendum on the map was allowed to occur at the same time.

Lawsuit highlights dispute about referendum rights

The Missouri Constitution does not specifically say that a referendum can be used to decide congressional redistricting, nor does it forbid it, which is why the issue ended up in court.

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Republican Attorney General Catherine Hanaway's office, which represented the secretary of state in court, argued that congressional redistricting is a legislative duty not subject to referendum without specific constitutional permission.

The attorney general and the Republican Party also argued it was too late to switch district boundaries before the November election. Changing districts after the primary would cause "widespread voter confusion" and an "erosion in confidence in the integrity of the state's elections," said John Gore, an attorney for national, congressional and state Republican committees.

The judge agreed, ruling that a district swap after the primary would violate federal law.

It's been more than 100 years since a Missouri redistricting plan faced a referendum. In 1922, voters rejected a new congressional map passed by the Republican-led Legislature. The legitimacy of that referendum petition was not challenged in court.

Redistricting battle spread to numerous states

Missouri's mid-decade redistricting effort has been among the most litigated nationally, triggering about a dozen lawsuits over the past year.

The Republican-led state was the second, after Texas, to respond to Trump's call to redraw congressional districts. Several other states followed. All told, Republicans hope to win as many as 16 additional seats from new House maps enacted in eight states: Texas, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana and Alabama. Democrats, whose counterattack faced several setbacks, think they could win up to six additional seats from new districts in California and Utah.

It remains to be seen whether the redistricting works as intended for Republicans. The president's party historically has lost congressional seats in the midterms, and Trump's poor approval ratings could provide an extra hurdle for Republican candidates.

Judge removed from Texas track meet killing case as Karmelo Anthony seeks new trial

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

MCKINNEY, Texas (AP) — The judge who presided over Texas teenager Karmelo Anthony's murder conviction was removed from the case Wednesday ahead of a key hearing to decide whether to grant a new trial in the fatal stabbing of a 17-year-old athlete at a high school track meet.

The removal was a legal victory for Anthony, now 19, whose attorneys wanted the judge off the case following the June trial, in part because of a TV interview in which the judge said jurors "got it right" when they delivered a guilty verdict in the killing of Austin Metcalf.

Anthony, who was sentenced to 35 years in prison, wore a green prison jumpsuit in a suburban Dallas courtroom when a visiting judge ordered state District Judge John Roach's recusal. Judge Michael Chitty was later assigned to the case.

Outside the courtroom in McKinney, cheers erupted in the hallway while some Anthony supporters chanted "Free Karmelo!" in the parking lot.

"Today's ruling answers a fundamental question: whether a reasonable fully informed observer would see Judge Roach's conduct and believe that he could fairly and impartially consider a motion for new trial," Anthony's lawyers said in a statement.

On Thursday, Anthony was expected back in court for a hearing that will determine whether a retrial is warranted.

Jurors this summer had rejected Anthony's claims of self-defense during a confrontation with Metcalf in the stadium bleachers last year. Anthony did not testify during the trial. Other students who took the stand described a heated exchange over Anthony's refusal on a rainy spring day to leave a tent that belonged to Metcalf's team.

The case attracted national attention in part because of a flood of social media posts that amplified the killing in racial terms. Anthony is Black; Metcalf was white. Lawyers on both sides, however, told jurors

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the tragedy had nothing to do with race.

Anthony's legal team has argued that a retrial is needed, in part, because Roach enforced strict courtroom rules that they said limited the public's access to the proceedings. They also zeroed in Wednesday on comments Roach made to a Dallas TV station after the trial ended.

In the interview, which was played as the hearing began, Roach was asked if the jury got "it right." "Yeah, they did," Roach said, adding: "Whatever they say, they got it right."

During the interview, Roach also defended his courtroom rules and spoke about the onslaught of online postings about the case.

Visiting Judge Sid Harle said he did not know Roach and he believed Roach would be fair in a hearing for a retrial, but was granting the defense's request for a recusal because of how it might look to others. In his written order, Harle said the evidence was such that the judge's "impartiality might reasonably be questioned" and ordered another judge to "preside over all further proceedings."

Roach did not immediately respond to a request for comment following the ruling.

Prosecutor Bill Wirskye had urged the court to keep Roach. He said the judge "didn't do anything wrong" and that his courtroom rules were meant to protect the integrity of the trial, which brought demonstrators outside the courthouse. Wirskye did not immediately respond to a request for comment following the ruling.

As national attention on the killing intensified last year, the families of both Metcalf and Anthony said they had been targets of harassment.

"We were all getting death threats," Wirskye said.

Several schools were competing when Anthony sat under the Memorial High School tent that was perched in the bleachers. Metcalf and others had repeatedly told Anthony to leave, witnesses testified, leading to an escalating confrontation.

Prosecutors said Anthony provoked Metcalf, and witnesses testified that Anthony was the aggressor.

Anthony at one point reached inside a bag and replied: "Touch me and see what happens," according to a police report.

Metcalf pushed Anthony, according to witnesses, who said Anthony then pulled out a knife and stabbed him in the chest.

The US national debt now stands at \$40 trillion

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The national debt surpassed a record \$40 trillion on Wednesday, a staggering milestone as defense costs, social programs like Social Security and Medicare and interest on the burgeoning deficit make up an enormous share of federal spending.

The milestone figure was recorded just five months after the U.S. hit a record \$39 trillion debt in March. It reached \$38 trillion five months before that, in October.

The unprecedented \$40 trillion figure highlights competing administration priorities, from boosting defense spending that the U.S. relies on to carry out President Donald Trump's almost-6-month-old war in Iran to lowering the cost of gas and groceries.

Kush Desai, a White House spokesman, said the Trump administration "has been focused on slashing waste, fraud, and abuse in federal spending while accelerating economic growth to get America's debt-to-GDP ratio trending in the right direction."

However, experts say the exploding debt and the latest record milestone are already affecting Americans' pocketbooks by raising borrowing costs for things like mortgages and cars, lowering wages from businesses that have less money available to invest, and creating more expensive goods and services.

"If we want to improve our living standards, today and for the next generation, now is the time for lawmakers to put our nation on a more affordable and sustainable path," says Michael A. Peterson, CEO of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a think tank focused on U.S. fiscal challenges.

The debt has exploded over several presidential administrations, as the nation's leaders spend more money than it collects in taxes. In recent memory, the multi-year COVID-19 pandemic shut down much

of the U.S. economy, where the federal government borrowed heavily during President Trump's first term and under former President Joe Biden to stabilize the economy and support a recovery.

More government spending was approved after Trump signed Republicans' tax cut and spending legislation into law last year.

Advocates for a balanced budget also warn that the long-term trend of borrowing more and paying more in interest will force Americans to face tougher fiscal tradeoffs ahead.

"The federal debt is already raising the cost of living and choking out other spending and investment, threatening our economy and Americans' long-term prosperity," said Margaret Spellings, president and CEO of the Bipartisan Policy Center.

"Our current fiscal trajectory is plainly unsustainable, and that's the best-case scenario. AI disruption, a recession, global war, or any number of other events could quickly push us over the edge from a challenge into a full-blown crisis," Spellings said in a statement.

The U.S. is subject to a statutory debt limit, or a limit to federal borrowing, which Congress has the authority to set, adjust or abolish. The Bipartisan Policy Center estimates that the U.S. will most likely reach the \$41.1 trillion debt limit sometime between late winter and mid-summer of 2027, requiring Congress to again vote on whether to raise or suspend it.

The U.S.' fiscal position stands as the worst among other developed countries, according to recent data analysis from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

Trump picks Dr. Heidi Overton, a top White House aide, to lead the Food and Drug Administration

By ALI SWENSON and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Heidi Overton, a top White House aide, has been picked to lead the Food and Drug Administration, President Donald Trump announced Wednesday.

Overton is a medical doctor and deputy director of the White House Domestic Policy Council who has worked on several of Trump's second-term health initiatives. She has become a trusted administration figure and a champion of the Republican president's goals.

If confirmed by the Senate, she would have to balance a raft of competing priorities, including Trump's fixations, the anti-regulatory interests of traditional Republicans and the anti-corporate posture of Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Those challenges dogged the tenure of the previous FDA head, Dr. Marty Makary. He resigned in May, leaving behind unfinished projects such as work on ultraprocessed foods, antidepressants and COVID-19 shots.

Referring to her as "Dr. Heidi" in a Truth Social post, Trump said Overton was a smart and respected "rockstar" who would deliver on his priorities of faster cures, innovation, lower drug prices and more wins for Kennedy's "Make America Healthy Again" movement.

Kennedy posted on X that Overton has "exceptional judgment, professionalism, discipline and an unwavering commitment to the American people."

Overton has promoted Trump's health priorities

Overton attended medical school at the University of New Mexico and has a doctoral degree in clinical investigation from Johns Hopkins University, according to her LinkedIn profile. Before joining Trump's second administration, she was the chief policy officer at the America First Policy Institute, a conservative think tank.

In recent months, she has appeared with the president to announce major projects, including some of his "most favored nation" deals with drug companies to lower prices to those of other developed countries and his recent vaccine order that sought to split the combined measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine into three separate immunizations — against the advice of medical groups.

At an Oval Office event to promote that order, she stood by Trump as he falsely suggested the number or timing of vaccines could play a role in rising rates of autism spectrum disorder. Scientific consensus

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and decades of studies have firmly concluded there is no link.

Overton has been critical of abortion pills and, if confirmed, would be positioned to roll back FDA rules that made them more accessible. U.S. abortion opponents have expressed frustration that the administration has not acted to stem the flow of such pills prescribed online, a situation they view as undermining state abortion bans.

Mifepristone is typically used with misoprostol in medication abortions that make up close to two-thirds of abortions in the U.S. Medical professionals call it "among the safest medications" ever approved by the FDA.

To be confirmed, Overton must seek approval from a narrowly Republican-led Senate and face questions from the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. Its chair, Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, a physician from Louisiana, has been a vocal critic of some of Trump's actions to sow doubt in vaccinations, including the MMR order.

Cassidy posted Wednesday that while he respects Overton's medical background, he has "strong concerns" about the nomination, mentioning her lack of managerial experience and her participation in the recent vaccine order, which he called "almost disqualifying."

Democratic senators slammed the nomination.

"Heidi Overton is a far-right, anti-abortion extremist who has no business leading the FDA," posted Washington Sen. Patty Murray, a committee member.

Makary's replacement will face challenges he left behind

Before he left the FDA, Makary had drawn complaints from health industry executives and anti-abortion activists. The frustration with him came to a head over the agency's lack of movement on flavored e-cigarettes. Companies such as R.J. Reynolds are seeking to market to adult smokers, but sweet-flavored vapes have long been blamed for the trend of teenage vaping. FDA scientists have hesitated to endorse those products to curb adult smoking.

Days before Makary's departure, the agency opened the door to allowing more unauthorized electronic cigarettes and nicotine pouches onto the U.S. market, in a policy change that essentially bypassed FDA experts.

Pharmaceutical companies will be looking for changes at the agency, too, after rejections or reversals of biotech drugs intended for rare diseases. Complaints from biotech companies, investors and patient groups have grown and been taken up by conservative lawmakers.

Makary tried to assuage industry grievances, in part by announcing new programs designed to streamline or accelerate drug approvals. Some of those initiatives, however, have meant new headaches for the agency.

Several of Makary's deputies also exited the agency.

Dr. Vinay Prasad, the vaccine and biotech chief, stepped down in April following intense criticism from drugmakers, patients and investors. Dr. Tracy Beth Hoeg, who was involved in scrutinizing the safety of antidepressants, COVID-19 vaccines and other widely used therapies, was replaced as FDA's acting drug center director.

MAHA has high expectations of FDA's next head

Overton would also need to tend to the priorities of Kennedy's health movement, some members of which are already skeptical of her.

Kelly Ryerson, an activist critical of pesticides who is known to her supporters as "Glyphosate Girl," told The Associated Press that Overton parroted pesticide manufacturer Bayer's talking points in a MAHA roundtable at the White House in April.

"I was stunned by the blatant, undisguised corruption," Ryerson said.

One major decision for the next commissioner is what to do about peptide regulation. A panel of federal health advisers selected by Kennedy recently recommended easing access to several peptides that are popular with wellness influencers and celebrities, despite warnings from FDA scientists that the chemicals have not been shown to be safe or effective.

The agency recently proposed a rule change that would require food manufacturers to notify regulators before introducing new ingredients or additives into processed or packaged foods. But it is still working

with the White House to finalize a first-of-its-kind definition of ultraprocessed foods, which Kennedy blames for elevated rates of diabetes, obesity and other chronic conditions.

Under Kennedy, the FDA has set up extra hurdles for vaccine testing and blocked the publication of research into the effectiveness of COVID-19 shots. Kennedy stood by Trump recently as the president signed the executive order aimed at upending childhood vaccinations in the U.S. despite unprecedented financial and logistical challenges.

The FDA also has an ongoing review of widely used antidepressants, including whether they may increase the risk of autism and other disorders when used during pregnancy. The medicines have long been a target of Kennedy, who was a leader in the anti-vaccine movement before joining the government.

In recent weeks, the agency has been investigating two summertime foodborne illness outbreaks: a cyclospora outbreak linked to tainted iceberg lettuce that has sickened thousands of people and a multi-state salmonella outbreak linked to jalapeño peppers.

Former Meta engineer says Instagram took a 'don't ask, don't tell' approach on kids under 13

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

OAKLAND, California (AP) — A former engineering director at Meta who has testified before Congress about child safety on Instagram told jurors Wednesday at a landmark trial that the company took a "don't ask, don't tell" approach on kids under 13 on its platforms.

During his second day of testimony, Arturo Béjar said Meta consistently prioritized profits over safety in designing its products, focusing on how often and for how long people used them, even if it was detrimental to their mental well-being.

"If you step away from the product, they are not going to make any money," he said.

The trial that began Tuesday in federal court in Oakland, California, pits Meta against the states of California, Colorado, Kentucky and New Jersey and is expected to last about six weeks. The four states were among 29 that sued the tech giant in 2023 over child safety and privacy — the other 25 will go to trial later. The company also faces lawsuits in state courts, including one underway in Tennessee.

The lawsuit accuses Meta of contributing to the youth mental health crisis by knowingly and deliberately designing features that addict children to its platforms and hide these harms from the public. It also argues that Meta routinely collects data on children under 13 without their parents' consent, in violation of federal law.

Meta says users must be at least 13 years old to create an account, in line with the law, called the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA.

"The attitude in particular on Instagram was 'Don't ask, don't tell,'" Béjar said in response to a question about his perception of the company's attitude towards users under 13.

The company has rejected the claims and said evidence at the trial will show its commitment to safety.

"You will hear over the course of this case a lot of important issues, issues like teen mental health, issues like social media, issues like how teens use social media," Meta lawyer Paul Schmidt said Tuesday. "Those are important issues, and they're issues where Meta believes that it has a responsibility. It has a responsibility to act on its own. It has a responsibility to try to work with teens and parents in partnership to try to address those questions."

Plaintiffs' witness says safety was an 'afterthought'

Béjar worked at Facebook from 2009 to 2015, attracting wide attention for his work to combat cyberbullying. He returned from 2019 to 2021 as a contractor to work on safety issues. He testified before Congress in 2023 about social media and the teen mental health crisis, saying that Meta executives, including CEO Mark Zuckerberg, knew about harms Instagram was causing but chose not to make meaningful changes to address them.

In his testimony Wednesday, Béjar said employee performance reviews and compensation for those who worked on user-facing products were mostly focused on user numbers and how long they spend

with those products.

"In that context, safety was an afterthought," he said.

The states are seeking changes to user experiences for Facebook and Instagram as well as financial damages, which could include billions of dollars in penalties. In a written statement, the office of California's attorney general said if Meta loses, the amount of any damages would be set by the court.

"This case is about stopping Meta from offering a dangerous product to teens, and from lying to teens, families, and the public about the dangerousness of their platforms. The primary remedy under our state consumer protection law is an injunction," the statement said.

Béjar walked through Meta features he said were designed for adults and are "inherently unsafe for teenagers."

This includes video autoplay, which can mean teens see videos that may cause them harm even if they don't click on them; as well as various counters that track how many people liked, viewed or commented on your content or how many followers you have.

Child development experts have noted teenagers are more susceptible to social comparison than adults, so products that reward popularity can be more harmful to their mental health.

Age verification has been criticized for not going far enough

Despite Meta's statements that it works to find kids under 13 on its platforms and ban them, Béjar testified that he found "tens of thousands" of kids under 13 on Instagram through his research. He said it was "common knowledge" at the company that such young children were on Instagram.

"Meta has one of the most sophisticated infrastructures in the world to detect fake accounts," he said. But despite that, he added, there were "no goals, no metrics" to detect and check kids' ages who were suspected to be under 13.

Over the years, Meta has introduced features it says are designed to make the experience safer for young people. But Béjar said these did not work.

For instance, a tool called "Take a Break," introduced in 2021, is a feature that is "designed to fail," he said. First, it is a setting that people have to turn on if they want to use it. Béjar said that in his experience building settings, very few users actually go through the trouble of turning them on. He compared it to an airbag that drivers have to turn on every time they get in a car.

"A safety tool has to be on by default," he said.

The feature can also be dismissed with a tap of a finger. If Meta was serious about wanting users to take a break, Béjar said, it would not be so easily swiped away.

Psychologist testifies Lindsay Clancy was not criminally responsible in killing of her 3 children

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — Lindsay Clancy didn't appreciate the "wrongfulness" of killing her three children because of her mental health issues, a psychologist testifying for the defense said at her murder trial Wednesday.

The testimony of Paul Zeisel is the strongest evidence yet to support the defense contentions that Clancy should not be held legally responsible for murder because she has bipolar disorder and was in the grip of a rare mental illness called postpartum psychosis when she killed her three children before trying to kill herself. Zeisel began seeing Clancy as a patient at a hospital after the deaths.

"She was unable to conform her behavior to the rule of law. She had no appreciation for the wrongfulness of her act," Zeisel said, adding that she had "a mental disease or a defect."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988.

Clancy, 36, has pleaded not guilty to murder charges in the deaths of Callan, Dawson and Cora Clancy,

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who ranged from 8 months to 5 years old. Postpartum psychosis is linked to the stress, sleep deprivation and hormonal changes that follow childbirth. Researchers estimate that the condition — which is more serious and less common than postpartum depression — afflicts 1 to 2 per 1,000 women after delivery.

Prosecutors say the former labor and delivery nurse planned the January 2023 killings and contrived to get her husband out of the house by sending him to pick up medicine for one of their children and dinner for the family.

Clancy was not getting better

Zeizel, who said he spent more than 35 hours with Clancy over dozens of visits and reviewed her medical records, said she went to a perinatal clinic in December 2022 because she felt her “brain was damaged,” “she should kill herself” and that she “is never going to get any better.” She also showed signs of psychosis, was paranoid and feared that people could hear her thoughts and that she would lose her children.

“She was worried that her children would be removed from her and that she would never see them again,” he said.

But just because she was in a psychotic state, Zeizel said, that didn’t mean she couldn’t do “everyday tasks of living” like driving and searching the internet, a reference to the fact that the day of the killings she took her daughter to the doctor, played with the children in the snow and searched online for a pharmacy and a restaurant.

“So the fact she is not talking about the unicorns in the corner, she is not slurring her words and she is not unable to walk, to your opinion to a degree of medical certainty, does that mean she is not in a psychotic state?” Clancy’s attorney Kevin Reddington asked.

Zeizel responded: “It does not.”

Prosecution challenges Zeizel’s credibility

On cross-examination, prosecutors pointed out mistakes Zeizel made in his report about Clancy and questioned whether he could be objective about her diagnosis when he was seeing her as a patient and working with the defense including appearing with Reddington at a news conference.

Zeizel acknowledged that there was nothing in Clancy’s medical records in which she reports hearing voices telling her to kill herself, only that she told her caregivers that “she wanted to die.”

Prosecutors have questioned the seriousness of Clancy’s suicide attempt. After strangling her children, Clancy jumped from a second-story window and remains paralyzed from the waist down.

Prosecution brings up the children’s birthdays

Prosecutor Shanan Buckingham also read from daily reports from Tewksbury Hospital, the state psychiatric hospital where Clancy stays, that included the anniversary of the killings and what would have been her children’s birthdays. Those reports mentioned her parents sometimes visiting or her talking with other patients. But they never mentioned anything she did to remember her children.

Reddington asked Zeizel if he saw anything in the record from the hospital about her “laughing, and partying and having a good time” while in the hospital.

“Lindsay Clancy has bad days and worse days,” Zeizel said.

Zeizel also said Clancy often talks about her children, aiming to dispel prosecutors’ contention that she never mentions them. “She really loves them and misses them and thinks of them every single day, almost every moment of the day,” Zeizel said.

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

US stocks halt their slide after the Treasury Department moves to ease pressure from the bond market

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks rose Wednesday after the U.S. Treasury Department announced a move that could ease pressure coming from the bond market. Strong profit reports for the spring from Estee Lauder, Target and other U.S. companies also helped support Wall Street.

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The S&P 500 climbed 0.2% for its first gain in four days after setting its all-time high last week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 119 points, or 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite ticked 0.2% higher.

Financial markets have come under growing strain as Treasury yields charged higher through the summer on worries about inflation, big government debts and other factors. That makes borrowing money more expensive for everyone, which slows the economy and undercuts prices for stocks and other investments.

But Treasury yields fell in the morning after the U.S. Treasury Department said it will at least double the size of its planned purchases of longer-term Treasuries from Sept. 9 through Nov. 4. The department said it's doing so "to provide greater liquidity support in longer-dated nominal sectors where there is consistent strong sponsorship from market participants."

These longer-term 10- and 30-year Treasuries are less beholden to the Federal Reserve, which can raise or lower very short-term interest rates for overnight loans. President Donald Trump has lobbied for the Fed to lower interest rates to help the economy.

Longer-term yields are set instead by investors in the bond market, who decide how much interest they need to get paid by the U.S. government in exchange for lending it money. And recently, they have been demanding more in interest to make up for the growing risks of high inflation, continued government deficits and other factors.

After the Treasury department's announcement, the yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.64% from 4.71% late Tuesday. It, though, remains well above its 3.97% level from before the war with Iran sent oil prices and worries about inflation much higher.

The 30-year Treasury yield, which recently touched its highest level since 2007, fell more sharply to 5.18% from 5.28% late Tuesday.

The relief could be short lived, some analysts warn. The amount of bonds the U.S. Treasury is proposing to repurchase is a fraction of the overall total.

"The boost to buybacks is also happening in a world of challenged Fed credibility," according to strategists at BNP Paribas. Investors are questioning whether the Federal Reserve will raise the federal funds rate soon to match the tough talk its chairman, Kevin Warsh, has been offering on getting inflation down toward its 2% target.

"We do not believe buybacks will be enough to offset a continued loss in Fed credibility," the BNP Paribas strategists wrote in a report, calling them "necessary, but not sufficient."

On Wall Street, Moderna and Merck helped lead the market after they announced encouraging initial results from a study of a cancer vaccine they co-developed. The new drug showed better recurrence-free survival in melanoma patients who had a combination of it and Keytruda, a prescription immunotherapy drug made by Merck, than with Keytruda alone.

Moderna soared 177%, while Merck jumped 12.6%.

The continuing parade of U.S. companies reporting bigger profits for the spring than analysts expected, meanwhile, continues to support stocks.

Estee Lauder rallied 16.3% after CEO Stéphane de La Faverie said a key measure of its revenue growth accelerated for a fourth straight quarter. It reported growth in revenue around the world, with the strongest in mainland China.

The skin care company reported earnings per share of 39 cents, after excluding some restructuring and other one-time expenses. That's up from just 9 cents a year earlier and was better than the 32 cents that analysts expected, according to FactSet.

Such growth is imperative because stock prices tend to follow the path of corporate profits over the long term. And strong growth helps allay criticism that stock prices shot too high in their runs to records.

Target rose 4.3%, Lowe's added 2% and homebuilder Toll Brothers climbed 4% after they all reported better profits for the latest quarter than expected.

They helped offset drops for some Big Tech stocks, which restrained the overall market.

Broadcom fell 4.6% and was the heaviest weight on the S&P 500. It and other winners of the artificial-intelligence boom have been swinging sharply through the summer on worries that their stocks may have

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shot too high and that the AI frenzy may not be sustainable if it doesn't produce big-enough profits.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 16.22 points to 7,707.98. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 119.65 to 53,463.05, and the Nasdaq composite added 41.38 to 26,331.09.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mostly lower in Asia and mixed in Europe.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 sank 3.2%. South Korea's Kospi, which has been home to some of the world's sharp-est swings because of its heavy reliance on AI stocks, slumped 5.8%.

Trump plays White House tour guide to show off work on his helipad and ballroom

By WILL WEISSERT and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump played White House tour guide on Wednesday, showing off the helipad he is building on the lawn before leaning over to autograph a piece of it and bragging about the ballroom he's rushing to complete despite legal challenges.

Trump gushed for several uninterrupted minutes about granite being laid and said the chopper landing area would leave visiting foreign leaders "very impressed" — including Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is coming next month.

At times, he sounded almost like a construction manager, singing the praises of granite over asphalt in painstaking detail and noting for reporters he brought out for the show that the stone could withstand 35,000 pounds per square inch of pressure.

"That's stone that, if you took a hammer and you started hammering right now — all day long — you wouldn't see a mark on it, literally, that's the kind of power it is," Trump said, at times straining to be heard over the thrum of ongoing work behind him.

The president also revealed for the first time that he has replaced the walkway from the White House's diplomatic entrance along with a portion of the asphalt driveway around the South Lawn with white granite.

"One thing I know how to do is build," he said, asserting that asphalt is "not appropriate for a great house, or a great place like the White House." He said that, had he instead merely used "really powerful concrete," it would have supported "just a tiny fraction of that in terms of strength."

Trump relishes being the builder-in-chief

The president is called upon to fill many roles as president, but embraces none with as much zeal as managing various building projects to mold the White House and large swatches of Washington in his own image, seeming happiest recalling his days as a real estate developer.

Trump also likes to show off his handiwork and having the White House press pool on hand at all times gives him a readymade audience. Last year, he made an appearance on the roof of the briefing room to survey a future work site, and earlier this summer, he took reporters for a closer look at the ballroom construction site.

It suggests Trump remains focused on such projects, even as his war in Iran nears the six-month mark, his approval ratings sink with just 2 1/2 months to go before critical midterm elections, and as voters are increasingly worried about a weakening economy.

Trump drove home just how important the construction projects are to him, calling the work "very exciting."

"This will be here long after we're gone," Trump said of the projects. "No matter what happens with the world."

But whether it will endure after he leaves office remains to be seen. Trump once suggested that his refurbishing of the Lincoln Memorial's Reflecting Pool would last a century, only for the paint to fade and its liner to peel away in chunks just days after it was laid.

Trump again says his ballroom will have security value

The president has increasingly insisted that the \$400 million ballroom will add security to the White House and include things like anti-drone technology. His administration even unsuccessfully sought \$1 billion in congressional funding to make military improvements to the structure.

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"This will be the greatest military complex slash ballroom anywhere in the world," he said.

Trump also scoffed at court orders seeking to block its construction without congressional approval, saying work is continuing regardless and predicting that the Supreme Court will eventually side with him and allow the project to be completed.

The president found time to talk again about one of his favorite subjects of late — grass — and praised at length Scotts-Miracle Gro. The company's former CEO is a Trump supporter, and it donated \$1 million to repair the grass on the White House lawn after it was damaged by Trump's UFC fight marking his 80th birthday in June and by the helipad construction.

At one point on Wednesday, Trump signed the back of one of the granite stones that was marked "Donald Trump 45-47 president" for the occasion. Its front is shaped like an eagle and will be laid into the helipad's presidential seal once work is completed.

"I thought this would be a little different kind of a news conference," the president said. "We were going to sign this privately and just put it in. I said, 'This is something I think the press should see,' and I hope you liked it."

Trump had some of the construction workers sign the granite, too, and joked about leaving it upside-down so that his signature would be visible for future generations.

"Nice job, fellas," he told the workers. "Does anybody know the word media?"

Trump also confirmed Wednesday that he'd delayed ongoing work on the helipad to ensure the project could be regraded to lay flatter.

He said that the granite used "has a million-year life" and predicted that it "will never break. It will never leak. It will never do anything" — which would mark a departure from the problem-plagued Reflecting Pool project.

"Nature is stronger than what the human can produce," Trump said of the granite. "It's really pretty amazing."

Rescue mission is called off for NASA's aging Swift space telescope

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The mission to save NASA's sinking Swift Observatory was called off Wednesday, dooming the telescope to a fiery reentry later this year.

NASA and Katalyst Space Technologies announced the news more than a month after the startup's Link spacecraft rocketed away to the telescope's rescue.

Katalyst said Link will not attempt to capture Swift and boost it to a higher orbit because of problems with controlling the spacecraft. NASA said this means the telescope will plunge through the atmosphere after more than 20 years of tracking some of the biggest explosions in the universe like gamma ray bursts and exploding stars. Its demise is not expected before October.

NASA paid \$30 million to Katalyst in an attempt to raise the telescope to a safer, longer-lasting orbit. Intense solar activity caused it to lose altitude faster than expected. The rescue spacecraft went into an uncontrollable spin a few weeks after its liftoff in early July. While flight controllers managed to slow Link's tumble, issues continued to plague its pointing and positioning in orbit.

"This is not the outcome we were working toward, but it does not change why this mission was worth attempting," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said in a statement.

As a consolation prize, Katalyst will continue to operate Link in proximity with the telescope to demonstrate capabilities for future rescue operations.

Katalyst CEO Ghonhee Lee said it was an ambitious mission on an aggressive timeline that was thrown together in under a year.

"We took on this high-risk, high-reward challenge and are proud of the milestones we reached along the way," Lee said in a statement. "We have already learned a tremendous amount."

Launched in 2004, Swift's science instruments were turned off earlier this year to slow its descent. It was orbiting 214 miles (345 kilometers) high as of Wednesday. Katalyst had hoped to lift the telescope back

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to its original orbit of 373 miles (600 kilometers), allowing for many more years of cosmic observations.

NASA's Hubble Space Telescope could benefit from an orbital boost and had been next in line for a rescue attempt had this mission gone well. The 36-year-old Hubble is also dropping in orbit because of all the sun's recent outbursts. It wasn't immediately known whether Hubble is now out of luck.

Amazon set to expand drone delivery of lightweight packages to 500 US cities

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

Millions more people may be able to get smaller, lightweight Amazon packages delivered by drones by the end of the year under a plan the company announced Wednesday to expand the airborne shipping to suburban areas in nearly 500 U.S. cities.

Customers could receive the drone deliveries in as fast as 30 minutes, Amazon said in a news release. The drones can carry packages up to 5 pounds.

The plan will intensify the battle between Amazon and Walmart to provide consumers with the fastest delivery times. Both giants rely on a mix of drones and drivers to deliver everything consumers have ordered.

The goal is not necessarily about cutting costs by replacing drivers and trucks — and drones that can only carry one package at a time would have a hard time doing that. But instead, these companies are using drones as one tool to help keep customers happy with quicker deliveries, banking on a faster delivery system attracting more shoppers.

Amazon's plan would expand its drone delivery operation more than sixfold nationwide into hundreds of new communities, including the Chicago, Atlanta, Cleveland and Boise metro areas. The drones will primarily fly in the suburbs well away from skyscrapers and major airports that could cause problems. Each drone site serves multiple cities in a metro area, and Amazon would not say exactly how many new sites it is planning to begin flying from.

Drone delivery is growing fast but remains a small factor

Hundreds of thousands of packages have already been delivered by Amazon drones this year, but even after this expansion drones will still only handle a fraction of the hundreds of millions of package deliveries each year. In addition to only being able to carry 5 pounds, the drones Amazon builds face countless challenges from tree cover to landscaping and inflatable pools that can make it hard to find a good drop zone.

There are also regulatory hurdles to overcome in every community where Amazon wants to set up operations. Noise concerns also pose a potential challenge.

"It's still an experiment. It's still in test and learn mode," said Sucharita Kodali, who is a retail analyst with Forrester.

More than two decades have passed since Amazon founder Jeff Bezos first described his vision for drone deliveries in an interview on "60 Minutes," which shows how hard it has been to develop the service, get all the needed approvals and prove the concept works.

Kodali said Amazon's expansion plan "does seem aggressive but remember that lots of the 500 may be small towns located close to one another. The coming soon list is actually only a handful of metro areas. Also 'launching' in a town doesn't mean they are getting any meaningful sales."

Walmart already offers drone delivery at more than 75 stores across Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Georgia and Texas, but the core part of its network relies on drivers to bring orders directly from its stores to customers. The retail giant said earlier this year that it planned to expand drone delivery service to 150 more stores in partnership with Wing, a division of Alphabet, to give it 270 drone delivery locations by 2027.

Walmart declined to comment on Amazon's announcement Wednesday because it came one day before the company was scheduled to report earnings.

The novelty of drone delivery may attract orders at first

Initially, consumers might order something delivered by drone because they are curious about it, but it's not clear how often they will continue to use the service, and Amazon is still working out the economics, Kodali said.

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The service will be free for Amazon Prime members who are ordering more than \$50 worth of goods, but smaller orders will cost members \$2.99. Non-members will pay \$4.99 for drone delivery.

Prime members get free deliveries while non-members pay a flat fee if the shipment is under \$35 for standard delivery or up to \$12.99 for same-day shipments when available.

Kodali said drones could prove more useful for certain lightweight deliveries that are needed urgently like prescription medications.

DoorDash and other delivery companies also are experimenting with using drones to deliver foods and other goods.

Amazon CEO believes drone delivery will be part of the mix

Amazon's CEO Andy Jassy told shareholders in his annual letter in April that the company has learned a great deal by flying drones in 11 sites across Arizona, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska, and Texas. In each location, the drones launch from an Amazon warehouse and cover about 175 square miles, so it takes multiple drone launching locations to serve a large metro area.

"Prime Air now has a design that'll scale, plans to serve communities with 30 million customers by year-end, and expects to deliver half a billion packages by the end of this decade (with an aim to deliver inside 30 minutes)," Jassy wrote.

Amazon is also continuing to invest in its warehouses, smaller fulfillment centers closer to customers and its fleet of trucks as the company competes to deliver packages within minutes or hours instead of just days.

It's not clear that drone delivery is cheaper than trucks at this point because a team of people is needed to make drone delivery possible and those people might even earn more than a truck driver since they may have to be licensed drone pilots.

Amazon is already certified by the Federal Aviation Administration and the company has been awarded waivers to fly drones beyond the line of sight of the pilots. Amazon has invested in safety measures to help drones avoid collisions with anything else in the sky while they are making deliveries.

The federal government has proposed a rule that would allow more drone operators to fly beyond the horizon, but that hasn't been finalized yet.

Colombian president asks Trump to suspend tariffs to help earthquake recovery

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Colombia's President Abelardo de la Espriella has asked his ally U.S. President Donald Trump to suspend tariffs to help the South American nation recover from a powerful earthquake that killed at least 289 people.

De la Espriella took office earlier this month just days before the 7.4 magnitude quake struck. He was backed by Trump in Colombia's closely contested presidential election, which was decided in a runoff on June 21, and has sought to emphasize his connections with the U.S. leader.

On Saturday night, de la Espriella wrote on X that he spoke with Trump and thanked him for aid sent by the U.S. in response to the earthquake. He added that he "asked him to consider the temporary suspension of the high tariffs that affect Colombian products, in order to provide relief to our businesspeople, who are facing very difficult times due to the effects of the earthquake."

There has been no immediate response from the Trump administration to de la Espriella's request. The U.S. has offered a total of \$26.5 million in earthquake aid, including food, shelters and health supplies, according to the U.S. State Department.

The earthquake that struck Monday morning devastated parts of western Colombia, hitting cities including Pereira, Cali and Quibdó. Cities along the country's Pacific coast were hit particularly hard. The president declared the quake a national disaster.

The government has said that 143 people are missing, while other civilian-run databases put the number in the thousands.

The natural disaster, whose epicenter was in one of the poorest regions of the country, Choco, has so

far left 3,937 people injured, according to the government. In addition, it destroyed 14,705 homes and damaged another 81,536.

In Cali, Colombia's third biggest city, workers searched for the more than 70 people reported missing in that city. Hope remained alive even after the key 48 to 72 hour window to find survivors beneath the rubble has long passed.

"Miracles do happen" even though more than 120 hours have passed since the earthquake struck, said Cali Mayor Alejandro Eder from the unified command post. "We are working where we know there are still victims; we are working in the hope of rescuing people alive."

Kennedy Center tells court it won't try to restore Trump's name to the building before Sept. 8

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Kennedy Center has told a federal court that it would not attempt to return President Donald Trump's name to the building's facade before at least Sept. 8 as another legal battle over the performing arts venue's future takes shape.

In a status report filed late Tuesday, opponents of the move said members of the Kennedy Center's Trump-aligned board "seem intent" on defying an earlier court order requiring the Republican president's name to be removed from the building. The Kennedy Center said it would not move forward with the plans until after Labor Day "at the earliest" to allow time for legal arguments.

Lawyers for Rep. Joyce Beatty, an Ohio Democrat who is an ex officio member of the board, pressed U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper for an earlier ruling, arguing there is "every reason to believe that Defendants will attempt to effectuate some or part of this latest unlawful resolution at the earliest opportunity after September 8."

A board meeting this month that was expected to largely focus on options to close the Kennedy Center for renovations instead transformed into another push to attach Trump's name to the building, part of a broader move by the president and his supporters to leave a physical mark on the nation's capital.

The board passed a resolution to name the plaza in front of the building after Trump and add his name to the venue's facade so it would read "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Restored and Renovated By President Donald J. Trump." In the filing, Beatty said the board also agreed to add an additional reference to the president if the Trump Kennedy Center Fund reached \$100 million.

In that event, the facade would read "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Restored and Renovated By President Donald J. Trump Endowed by the Trump Kennedy Center Fund."

The board also voted to back a two-year closure for renovations, while some of the institution's signature programming, including the Kennedy Center Honors and the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, would take place at off-site locations. The National Symphony Orchestra announced this week it would split its upcoming season between six venues in and around Washington.

Cooper ruled in May that letters affixed to the building spelling out Trump's name were added illegally and he ordered their removal, a decision that the administration failed to persuade courts to overturn. Since then, a tarp has covered the area where the letters were once installed, frustrating those who sought to remove the president's name from the building.

Kennedy Center makes no commitment to removing tarp

In the latest filing, the Kennedy Center made no commitment to remove the tarp, saying the covering was in place to facilitate the removal of Trump's name and is part of a broader system needed for "water testing and structural repairs to the roof overhang."

More broadly, Beatty's lawyers, Norm Eisen and Nathaniel Zelinsky, questioned the integrity of the board's vote this month, echoing concerns Cooper raised when he called a March vote to shutter the building "ill-informed and seemingly preordained."

Heading into the August meeting, the Kennedy Center's management said it would provide the board

with three options, including 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 Tuesday’s filing, the Kennedy Center said a Delta Consulting Group analyst concluded that a partial closure that would play out over four years “would increase the length and cost of construction and lead to substantial safety concerns.”

The analyst “recommended that the Board proceed with a full closure for two years, which would minimize total cost, minimize the amount of time that programming would be subject to disruptions from construction, and best preserve the Center’s reputation as world-class performing-arts venue,” the Kennedy Center said.

Eisen and Zelinsky, however, noted that materials were provided to the board just two days before the meeting. They said some documents appeared to have been created before Cooper’s May ruling and referred to the Kennedy Center’s closure that was initially set to take effect on July 6.

The August vote to close the Kennedy Center, Beatty’s lawyers argued, “exhibits the same flaws as the first vote.”

A triple crisis: Earthquake takes a heavy toll on Colombia’s impoverished and neglected region

By MANUEL RUEDA and ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Ismael Arias was headed to the market when the devastating 7.4 magnitude earthquake hit western Colombia last week, sowing death and destruction. His home region of Choco was the epicenter.

Leaving home early that day likely saved his life, he says — the two-story home he had spent years building with his modest wages collapsed during the quake.

“The house is completely destroyed,” said the 66-year-old math teacher in Quibdó, the regional capital.

At least 312 people were killed by the Aug. 10 quake, according to figures published Wednesday by the central government, and 29,000 homes were destroyed.

Recovery will be particularly challenging for Choco, which was already struggling with high poverty rates, poor infrastructure and underfunded health and education services.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 69,000 people in Choco were affected or displaced by the earthquake — about 10% of its population.

The regional government says more than 200 schools were damaged, and poor internet access will make it difficult for children to take online lessons. With around 600,000 inhabitants, mostly Afro-Colombian or Indigenous people, Choco has long been one of the country’s most neglected regions.

Largely covered by mountains and rainforests, only two precarious roads connect Choco to the rest of Colombia. Many towns are only reachable by plane or boats, and the rivers can be dangerous. There are no roads linking communities along the more than 650 kilometers (406 miles) of Choco’s coastline hugging the Pacific Ocean to the interior.

In large swaths of the region, rebel groups fight over the control of illegal mines and drug trafficking routes, displacing civilians or imposing lockdowns that prevent villagers from working their fields for days at a time.

“We are facing a triple crisis,” said Luis Mora, the United Nations Population Fund’s representative in Colombia. “You have the humanitarian crisis caused by the earthquake, now joining the under development crisis and the crisis caused by armed conflict in this territory.”

The agency has been supplying kits with personal hygiene products to women affected by the earthquake and working to create safe spaces for women within shelters.

The regional capital’s only public hospital is ill-equipped for the disaster

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Cristian Maturana, a doctor at Quibdo's only public hospital, said that after the earthquake hit, the emergency room overflowed with patients with broken bones and other injuries.

In the days that followed, 36 patients with multiple fractures were flown to a hospital in the city of Medellin, in the neighboring region of Antioquia — because his hospital lacked enough personnel and equipment to treat them, Maturana said.

The hospital's only refrigerator capable of storing blood donations was also damaged by a power surge following the quake, rendering transfusions impossible. It was replaced over the weekend with a fridge donated by a group of oncologists in Bogota, the country's capital.

"These have been tough days," Maturana said, adding that support from elsewhere in Colombia and abroad "has been crucial."

The emergency room is currently operating at twice its capacity, with patients being treated in chairs or on stretchers in the hospital's hallways, Maturana said.

Donations of antibiotics, bandages, blood pressure monitors and other equipment have been helpful, but the hospital still needs wheelchairs and more beds.

"These seem like basic things," Maturana said. "But they are items we have long had shortages of."

Camilo Prieto, a doctor with the Colombian Environmental Movement, a humanitarian group, said his organization brought in more than 2 tons of medical supplies, including electrocardiogram and ultrasound machines last week. The group also flew some of the aid to remote towns with helicopters and small planes.

"By land it would be very difficult," Prieto said. "But some companies and owners of private planes have given us flight hours."

The region has a history of neglect

Wiston Mosquera, the Roman Catholic bishop of the Quibdo diocese, said he hopes the quake brings attention to many of Choco's structural problems, like poor healthcare facilities, the lack of roads or the permanent problems with the power supply.

"We are decades behind the rest of Colombia's regions," said Mosquera, who was born and raised in Choco.

Colombian President Abelardo de la Espriella has visited Choco twice since the earthquake, and promised a plan that will include billions of dollars in infrastructure investment and programs to generate jobs.

Choco's unemployment rate was the highest in Colombia last year, according to DANE, the nation's statistics agency. The region's GDP per capita was 14.3 million Colombian pesos in 2025, or about \$3,500 dollars, a quarter of Bogota's per capita income.

De la Espriella said he will designate a government official to oversee Choco's recovery, and provide subsidies to families left homeless by the earthquake so that they can rent new homes.

Arias, the math teacher who lost his home, said he's skeptical of such promises because of the region's history of neglect. He said he spent around \$32,000 building his home, taking out loans from banks, and will be hard pressed to raise those kinds of funds with his current teacher's salary.

"Even if I am helped, I don't think I will get enough," Arias said. He and his partner are for now staying at a relative's home.

"It's not the same," he says. "You don't have the freedom there that you get in your own house."

Americans have elected only 3 Black governors. This year, 8 major party candidates are on the ballot

By BILL BARROW and STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Across 250 years, only three elected governors out of thousands have been Black — all Democrats and all men, including current Maryland Gov. Wes Moore.

But Moore could soon have company.

With Florida Republicans nominating U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds on Tuesday, there are seven Black major party gubernatorial nominees in addition to Moore — men and women, Democrats and Republicans — on November ballots.

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"We do have a unique moment here," said Moore, who recently became chair of the National Governors Association. He often says that his historic status is "not an applause line" but instead represents a bigger challenge that this country is still looking to overcome.

The Black nominees typically do not focus on the history at stake, instead emphasizing their experience and policy proposals.

"Florida is a great meritocracy in America," Donalds told reporters Tuesday night after not mentioning his race at all in his victory speech. "I'll let you guys write about that," he added.

But many said that more reflective representation matters given the nation's history, from slavery to Jim Crow and the lingering effects.

"It's not a secret that some issues in the African American community get ignored and don't have a voice," said Aaron Ford, Nevada's first Black attorney general and now the Democratic nominee for governor. Ford said he brings a focus to issues ranging from voting rights and civil rights to the economy.

Republican Lisa Demuth said she "has never led with any type of identity politics" as Minnesota's first Black House speaker and now her party's nominee for governor. "But I recognize the historic state we are in right now," she said. Michigan Republicans also chose U.S. Rep. John James, who is Black, as their gubernatorial nominee.

Former New York Gov. David Paterson, a Democrat who was not elected but ascended when Eliot Spitzer resigned in 2008, celebrated that the slate crosses party lines. "This is one day when maybe the Democrats and Republicans could stand in front of a statue of George Washington and let him know that we're finally getting it right," he said.

Democrats, meanwhile, emphasized that their Black candidates – who also include Keisha Lance Bottoms in Georgia, Jermaine Johnson in South Carolina and David Crowley in Wisconsin – are especially important after the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way for states to redraw legislative districts that are majority or plurality nonwhite. That was compounded by President Donald Trump's attacks on diversity initiatives and push to rewrite how the U.S. tells its history of the slave trade and Jim Crow segregation.

"Governors, in many ways, are becoming the last lines of defense against what we're seeing in Washington," Moore said.

A challenge for Black politicians, even more so than reaching the US Senate

Karen Finney, who helped push Democrat Joe Biden to select a Black woman as his vice presidential running mate, said Black politicians often are the first and loudest advocates on issues that acutely affect Black constituents. She and others cited health disparities such as maternal and infant mortality and sickle cell disease, and Finney noted that an inflationary economy hits harder in Black communities that, on average, have lower income and net worth than the wider population.

She said it is important for legislators to raise those matters and even more impactful when it is an executive.

"These are people who have the power to shape our lives, and they shape the agenda," Finney said.

But the governor's seat has been notoriously hard for Black politicians to reach, even more difficult than the U.S. Senate. Democrat Douglas Wilder of Virginia took office in 1990 as the nation's first elected Black governor.

"I didn't become Maryland's first Black governor because the Democratic Party said, 'I think it's time for us to put Wes Moore up in the seat,'" Moore said. "I had to run against the party."

"I don't think that the party is doing enough," Moore added, specifically bemoaning a "negligence" in Southern states where Black voters anchor Democrats' base.

Stacey Abrams, who lost two Georgia governor's races, recalled white Democratic power players raising money for her primary opponent in 2018, although she disputed that explicit racism was the issue.

"We do what we've done because it's what we did," she said. "Black women have not been executives, and the absence of that proof point becomes a self-reinforcing philosophy."

This time, she noted, Bottoms already has been an executive as mayor of Atlanta.

Democrats and Republicans talk about 'identity politics' differently

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In Minnesota, history will be made in November when the state elects its first female governor as Demuth competes against Democrat Amy Klobuchar, a U.S. senator. Demuth said she looks forward to a day when such distinctions seem less notable.

"One of the things that I really do look forward to is where it's already done, where it no longer makes history," she said. "So I think of young women, little girls that are looking at you, could I ever be governor of Minnesota? I hope when I win, they're able to look at, point to that and say she's already done it."

In Georgia, Bottoms told the National Association of Black Journalists last week that she does not "give a lot of talk ... about the historical nature" of her campaign. Yet she notes her family's Georgia ties go "back at least five generations through a plantation in Crawfordville" and that her grandfather had to "walk through these back doors" when he moved to Atlanta. She never mentioned slavery or segregation but said her ancestry "is always present with me."

Abrams, who has campaigned for Bottoms and other Democrats this year, was more direct, arguing that all politics is identity politics of some kind — and that Republicans' version is simply more coded.

"When your Constitution specifically strips a race of its humanity, you cannot then later on say identity doesn't matter and has no effect, and we've spent 250 years trying to reckon with that identity" with social, political and legal fights, she continued. "So, it's deeply disingenuous, if not woefully naive, to say that identity does not matter."

Race shapes many decisions, but not all of them

Deval Patrick, whose tenure in Massachusetts overlapped with Paterson's in New York, said his race mattered especially to his Black constituents and what they wanted from him. It was "just different than the expectations of my predecessors," he said, recalling criticism after he did not visit a Boston neighborhood where a teenager had been killed by gun violence.

"His mother was on the news grieving, and at some point she said while the cameras were rolling, where is Gov. Patrick?" he said. "Nobody had ever asked one of my predecessors to come to a crime scene in a neighborhood. Never."

In Nevada, Ford said being governor still means recognizing how many core issues — jobs, housing and healthcare — cross demographic lines.

"It could be a white man, a Latino woman. It could be a person urban, suburban or rural Nevada. It could be someone from northern Nevada, southern Nevada. These are the issues that are important to them," he said.

Patrick, who talks regularly with Ford and Moore, agreed, saying that is not just how a governor does the job, but how a candidate wins it in the first place.

"The successful candidates are the ones who present themselves as candidates for everyone," he said, "and not candidates for just some."

A left tackle can make \$4M in college football, not the NFL. Is this pay for play?

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

Left tackle Dan Moore of the Tennessee Titans can list all the sponsorship deals he has done as a pro on one hand: A few meet and greet opportunities when he was with the Steelers, a grill company that gave him some barbecue tools in exchange for his endorsement.

Million-dollar deals? No such thing, especially for someone playing his position. If he were in college — a talented offensive lineman with a chance to make his team a national contender — that might be different.

"It's only been five years since NIL started," said Moore, who heads into his sixth year in the NFL this season. "Another five years, and we could see college football becoming semi-pro."

And that, in short, is the not-so-hidden secret driving a new era in college sports. It is a business rebuilt to allow players to cash in on their name, image and likeness fame, one that pays exorbitant prices to athletes under the guise that the money isn't a salary, but rather a payment for services the athletes provide through sponsorship deals.

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That's the way many of the headline-grabbing six- and seven-figure payments that go to college players for so-called "third party NIL" can truly comport with the NCAA rulebook. And that rulebook — for all its rapid changes in recent years — refuses to do away with the fading notion that college athletes aren't pros who can be paid merely to show up and play.

One of these things is not like the other ... or is it?

Mike McGlinchey, a ninth-year NFL right tackle with the Denver Broncos, has a contract worth \$52 million in guaranteed money but he doesn't have a sponsorship deal. That puts him in the majority of NFL offensive linemen, who either don't need to work extra for more income or aren't well-known enough to grab much more than a local deal or two.

Of the 20 biggest NFL endorsement deals listed by Sportico — a list that starts with Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce at \$32 million — not a single one belongs to a lineman.

But in college, there's Jordan Seaton, the five-star left tackle who was one of Deion Sanders' biggest signings at Colorado, then left the Buffs to play at LSU. There, in the heart of SEC country, Seaton reportedly makes \$4 million for pitching a national chain pharmacy, a fast-food restaurant, a personal finance firm and others.

It's a far cry from what McGlinchey envisioned when NIL arrived five years ago; he graduated from Notre Dame long before the era of paying college players began.

"What I thought NIL was supposed to mean was a local Ford dealership in South Bend puts the offensive line on a billboard and gives us a truck to drive around for six months," he said. "Now, NIL means, 'We have collectives of money and the one with the biggest checkbook is going to win.' They've used name-image-likeness to open the floodgates to say, 'We're going to pay the most to get this kid.'"

Among the 20 highest-paid NFL endorsers are quarterbacks Geno Smith (\$1.5 million), Sam Darnold (\$1 million) and Deshaun Watson (\$750,000).

All of those amounts are less than what the top 10 college players make in sponsorships, according to On3, which tracks college NIL deals, none of which are disclosed by schools. It's a list that includes Seaton but does not include college football's most widely recognizable name: Arch Manning, who reportedly took a pay cut this year to \$2.5 million to help Texas beef up its roster.

Niklas Myhr, an associate professor at Chapman University and an expert in digital marketing, acknowledges the nod-nod, wink-wink element to all these NIL deals, but also thinks some of the numbers are the product of what he calls an "immature market."

"Basically, there is no mature market for 20-year-old amateur athletes the way there is for sneakers," he said. "So it's basically reverse engineering a market."

College Sports Commission tries to rein in the 'wild wild West'

There is an agency in charge of enforcing the rules with the objective of putting guardrails around a spending spree exacerbated by a transfer portal that encourages players to seek better offers from different schools.

Among the 14-month-old College Sports Commission's top missions is making sure companies partnered with schools — "associated entities" — are paying players an amount within a "fair range of compensation" compared to what others might receive for the same services. The CSC also verifies that those companies are using the athlete's NIL for a "valid business purpose" — i.e., to promote goods and services provided to the general public for profit, as opposed to hanging onto, or "warehousing," the NIL rights for future use or having the player simply show up to an event to shake hands.

"The valid business purpose, proper range of compensation evaluation is a key part of answering that question," said Greg Sankey, the commissioner of the SEC, when asked if players were really being paid for anything beyond just showing up and playing. "And, in fact, it's those who are signing those deals who need to answer those questions."

Million-dollar deals for selling chicken, watches

Deals cut with non-associated entities — the definition of which has been disputed — aren't subject to the same scrutiny. In theory, those deals, if truly between an athlete and a business with no connection to the school, are only limited by what the market will bear.

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"I believe they're arguing that coming to this high-profile college as a star player will warrant their NIL to become valuable just by brute force," Myhr said, when asked how a brand justifies spending so much on a relatively unknown pitchman. "They believe they can predict the future value of this athlete is worth \$1 million, or \$4 million. That's a stretch when it comes to transferring that (NIL) into captivating storytelling."

While a good chunk of Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes' \$30 million in endorsements comes from his hard-to-miss State Farm TV commercials, it would be harder to spot most of college's best-paid pitchmen.

Quarterback Darian Mensah's featured NIL deal with Miami — his third school in three years — is with a luxury watch company. Mensah's NIL is believed worth \$6.5 million, which is more than what all but nine current NFL players earn in endorsements, according to Sportico.

Among Seaton's handful of NIL deals is one in which he goes on social media to tell his 77,000 Instagram followers of his love for Raising Cane's — a chicken joint with roots in the Baton Rouge area that has strong connections to LSU. It helps explain how Seaton's haul rose to about the same as that brought in by Livvy Dunne, the former LSU gymnast who has 5.1 million followers and is considered the highest female earner in the short history of third-party NIL.

Steve Denton, the CEO at Opendorse, which helps players find third-party NIL deals, argues the market is accurate because "college athletes have so much influence in their community that they actually perform better than influencers or creators."

"Brands are clamoring to work with college athletes because sports is one of those things that slows people down and gets your attention," Denton said.

Could a federal law solve the problem?

Well aware of runaway costs of third-party NIL, college sports leaders are working in Washington on a solution that could address some of the transparency issues involved in NIL. A provision in the Protect College Sports Act awaiting a vote in the Senate would more than double the revenue-sharing amount schools can pay annually to athletes to nearly \$49 million.

What's different about that pool of money is that, because it's not considered third-party NIL, it is excluded from scrutiny by the CSC. Under NCAA rules, that money couldn't technically be considered a salary, but by removing it from the third-party NIL rules, it would do away with needing to justify the payments as legitimate NIL.

What would remain, according to industry leaders, would be a tranche of "organic" third-party NIL deals like Seaton's agreement with Raising Cane's. The deals presumably would not be related to any existing arrangement with multimedia rights (MMR) partners hired by the schools that currently broker deals with players.

Jon Bishop of Playfly Sports, an MMR company that looks to find deals for players and schools, sees the bill not so much imposing a cap on spending, but creating a new, and welcome lane for that organic NIL.

"There were certain brands ... that leaned in early, but many who set out thinking, 'I don't want be in the headlines because I paid someone on the side' and all that stuff," Bishop said. "So all of these things are just going to start to make a marketplace that actually will function, and I think function well."

Lindsay Clancy was 'begging for help' before killing her children, former mother-in-law testifies

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Lindsay Clancy was "begging for help" in the months leading up to killing her three children and attempting to end her own life, Clancy's former mother-in-law testified for the defense Tuesday in the fourth week of her murder trial.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988.

"Lindsay was struggling — we were all concerned," said Susan Clancy. Her son, Patrick Clancy, found the

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Massachusetts couple's children after they had been strangled in the family basement in January 2023. Lindsay Clancy also attempted to take her own life that night and was left paralyzed. Lindsay and Patrick Clancy are now divorced.

The trial centers not on whether Lindsay Clancy killed her children on Jan. 24, 2023, which her lawyers do not dispute, but on her state of mind at the time. Her attorney argues she should not be held criminally responsible because she was suffering from postpartum psychosis, a rare mental illness linked to the stress, sleep deprivation and hormonal changes that follow childbirth.

Former mother-in-law says Lindsay was open about her struggles

Susan Clancy's testimony echoed emotional accounts the day before from Lindsay Clancy's mother and sister, who recounted for jurors how they saw her become increasingly anxious, paranoid and suicidal starting in the fall of 2022.

Susan Clancy, who, like Lindsay, worked as a labor and delivery nurse, said in Plymouth Superior Court that she and her former daughter-in-law were close and described Lindsay as a "wonderful mother" who was "very nurturing, very loving."

Susan Clancy said that Lindsay was open with her about struggling and asked for her mother-in-law's support. The jury was shown texts between Lindsay and Susan Clancy in which Lindsay spoke about fears that she had developed a dependence on benzodiazepines, but couldn't sleep without taking them.

"I'm not okay and I'm terrified of taking meds tonight," Lindsay texted her mother-in-law on Nov. 30, 2022, two months before the killings.

On Monday, Lindsay Clancy's mother, Paula Musgrove, said her daughter was scared of sleeping alone, became increasingly paranoid and believed the medications she was taking "were destroying her mind."

That December, Lindsay Clancy told her mother and her then-husband, Patrick Clancy, that "she had thoughts of harming the children," Musgrove said. Lindsay Clancy's sister Allison Ozga testified that at the end of December, Lindsay told her she had experienced suicidal thoughts every day for a month.

Psychologist who visited Lindsay in the hospital said there's no evidence she's lying

Prosecutors argue that Lindsay Clancy planned the killings and contrived to get her husband out of the house by sending him out on errands. They have pointed to normal activities she performed that day, including taking her children to the doctor and playing with them in the snow.

Lindsay Clancy's attorney, Kevin Reddington, has argued that in addition to suffering from postpartum psychosis, she had bipolar disorder and that antidepressants prescribed after the birth of her third child worsened her condition.

Dr. Paul Zeisel, a clinical and forensic psychologist who visited Lindsay Clancy in the hospital in early February 2023, described seeing her handcuffed to a hospital bed and unable to move below her sternum. Her memory of what had happened was "fuzzy and foggy," he said, and she was taking medication for significant pain following surgery.

Zeisel said Clancy knew who she was but didn't know where she was and wasn't sure of the time. She asked about Patrick, how he was doing and whether she could speak to him. Two days later, she spoke to Patrick using Zeisel's cellphone.

"She told Patrick that she loved him very much," Zeisel testified. He said Lindsay Clancy then told Patrick "that she heard a male voice ordering her," telling her she had no choice but to kill her children and then herself.

Zeisel has met with Lindsay Clancy dozens of times since then. He testified that psychological testing administered by a government doctor found no evidence she was faking or exaggerating psychiatric symptoms.

Zeisel also testified that before the killings, Lindsay Clancy described having "horrible thoughts" and believing her thoughts were so loud other people could hear them.

He testified that psychotic symptoms can come and go, and that a person experiencing psychosis can still perform ordinary activities such as making a phone call or driving a car.

If convicted of murder, Lindsay faces life without parole

Clancy's livestreamed trial has generated intense public interest. Over the prior weeks, jurors visited the

home where she killed her children, and heard emotional testimony from Patrick Clancy.

At the start of the trial, Patrick Clancy described the horror of returning home to find his dead children. Prosecutors played a seven-minute 911 call in which he can be heard finding the bodies and telling a dispatcher, "She killed the kids!"

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

United Arab Emirates suspends trade with Iran after coming under renewed missile fire

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United Arab Emirates suspended all trade with Iran on Wednesday after the UAE said it had come under renewed fire from the country — a move that will further isolate the Islamic Republic, which is suffering under U.S. sanctions and a blockade.

Incoming ballistic missile fire triggered nationwide warnings Tuesday night for UAE residents to seek shelter, the first time in weeks such an alarm had sounded.

Early in the conflict, the UAE regularly came under intense fire from Iran, and most trade between the countries, which had once been important trading partners, ground to a halt. In late June, as hostilities eased, some maritime trade resumed, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported.

Beyond the trade in domestically produced goods, "the UAE has been very important for Iran as a re-export hub and has helped the country absorb some of the shocks caused by sanctions," Mohammad Farzanegan, a professor of Middle Eastern economics at Germany's University of Marburg, told The Associated Press.

"Iran therefore depends heavily on the UAE, not because the UAE itself produces one-third of Iran's imports, but because it serves as a major gateway for Iran to access third-country goods and commercial infrastructure."

The UAE accuses Iran of firing missiles. Tehran denies it.

Following the announcement that two ballistic missiles had been fired toward the UAE, both of which splashed down in the Persian Gulf late Tuesday, the Emirati Foreign Ministry said it decided to impose the punitive measures, while also saying it remained committed to "dialogue, cooperation and regional integration."

The step halted all trade and financial transactions "until further notice," the ministry said in a statement.

The UAE Defense Ministry said assessments showed that the missiles targeted maritime traffic. It was not clear whether they targeted Emirati ships or the country's territorial waters.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei denied that Iran had launched any missiles toward the UAE.

As part of Iran's efforts to maintain a stranglehold over the Strait of Hormuz, it has regularly attacked ships attempting to use the waterway, including four tankers owned by Abu Dhabi's state-owned ADNOC oil and gas company over the past two weeks. None of the attacks caused injuries, but they brought harsh condemnation from the UAE and others in the region, including Kuwait and Bahrain.

Since the beginning of the conflict, nearly 20 ADNOC vessels have been attacked by missiles and drones in the Strait of Hormuz, killing one person and wounding another 20.

Iran's ability to control traffic through the strait, through which a fifth of traded oil and natural gas passed during peacetime, has proved its biggest strategic advantage in the war. While the U.S. and Israel — which launched the war on Feb. 28 — have given various aims, including toppling Tehran's government and ending its nuclear program, the conflict has devolved into a fight over the strait.

U.S. President Donald Trump insisted Tuesday that the strait was "open and operating" and posted a map depicting it as a U.S. territory. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi called him a "deluded man."

Ten vessels transited the strait Tuesday, according to the MarineTraffic website, fewer than a tenth the

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number that typically sailed through before the war began, when there were no restrictions.

During the war, Iran has launched hundreds of ballistic missiles and thousands of drones in strikes that Tehran said were targeting U.S. assets but hit buildings in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Dubai's commercial airport, ports and energy infrastructure.

Iran has accused the UAE and other U.S. allies in the Gulf of facilitating American military attacks on Iran, and Iran's chief of staff, Gen. Ali Abdollahi, issued a new warning Wednesday to "countries on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf."

"Any assistance or facilitation provided to the aggressor U.S. military amounts to participation alongside U.S. military forces," he said in a statement distributed by Iran's semiofficial Fars news agency.

The UAE embargo could put new pressure on Iran

Before the war, the UAE was one of Iran's biggest trade partners, providing more than 30% of its imports valued at some \$21 billion, according to the World Trade Organization's latest figures from 2024. It was the destination for nearly 13% of its exports worth some \$7 billion.

The embargo carries its own risks, however, Farzanegan said.

"As a relatively small country seeking to remain a regional hub for business and finance while attracting tourists and investors, the UAE depends heavily on regional stability," he said. "Any major conflict with Iran can therefore cause substantial damage to its economy."

The Emirati announcement comes as the U.S. prepares to apply new economic pressure on Iran. Speaking last week, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the measures would be a combination of economic isolation and the continued blockade of Iranian ports.

The economic pressure follows the intense bombing campaign that targeted industrial and civilian infrastructure in addition to military targets. Already the International Monetary Fund forecasts inflation of nearly 70% this year in Iran and an economic contraction of 5.4%. Meanwhile, its rial currency has hit record lows.

What to know about the outbreak of a rare kind of Ebola

By CHINEDU ASADU, MOGOMOTSI MAGOME and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — An Ebola outbreak in Congo has surpassed 5,000 confirmed cases, making it one of the largest outbreaks of the deadly disease ever recorded.

The outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, a rare type of Ebola that has no approved vaccine or treatment. Congo's Ministry of Health had recorded 5,021 cases, including 2,378 deaths, as of Sunday.

The outbreak is already the worst ever caused by the Bundibugyo virus and the deadliest Ebola outbreak in Congo's history. The World Health Organization has warned that it could eventually surpass the devastating 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa, which killed more than 11,000 people.

Here's what to know about Ebola and the outbreak:

How Ebola spreads

Ebola is a rare but often deadly disease caused by a group of viruses that are believed to originate in animals.

People can become infected through contact with infected animals, and the virus can then spread between people through direct contact with the blood or other bodily fluids of someone who is sick with or has died from Ebola. It can also spread through objects contaminated with those fluids.

Unlike respiratory diseases such as COVID-19, Ebola isn't generally spread through the air.

People infected with Ebola don't spread the virus before developing symptoms, according to WHO. Symptoms can appear between two and 21 days after infection.

They often begin with fever, fatigue, headache, muscle pain and sore throat, followed by vomiting and diarrhea. Some patients develop internal or external bleeding.

Ebola can be difficult to distinguish from other infectious diseases without laboratory testing, because many of its early symptoms are similar to those of illnesses such as malaria and typhoid.

Outbreak linked to rare virus

The outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, one of several viruses that can cause Ebola disease.

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It's much rarer than the Zaire virus, which has caused many of Congo's previous Ebola outbreaks and the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa.

Bundibugyo virus was first identified during an outbreak in western Uganda in 2007. That outbreak killed 37 people. The only other known outbreak occurred in Congo in 2012.

Both were far smaller than the current epidemic.

The vaccines and antibody treatments developed for the more common Ebola virus aren't approved for the Bundibugyo virus. Clinical trials are underway, but patients currently rely largely on supportive care, such as fluids and treatment of symptoms and complications.

Where the outbreak started

The first detected patient developed symptoms in late April and died in Bunia, the capital of Congo's northeastern Ituri province, an area plagued by insecurity, displacement and intense population movements.

Health officials were alerted in early May to a cluster of unexplained illnesses around Mongbwalu, a busy gold-mining area near Bunia. Laboratory tests later identified Bundibugyo virus, and Congo declared the outbreak on May 15.

But officials believe the virus may have been spreading months before the outbreak was declared.

Most cases have been reported in Ituri, but the virus has spread beyond the province as infected people have traveled to other areas.

The outbreak also crossed into neighboring Uganda, which has since stopped transmission, according to WHO. A confirmed case was also reported in France in June in a doctor returning from Congo, who later recovered and was discharged from the hospital.

Nearly half of confirmed patients have died

Ebola is one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases, but the proportion of patients who die can vary widely between outbreaks and depending on how quickly people receive care.

WHO says fatality rates in previous Ebola outbreaks have ranged from about 25% to 90%.

Nearly half of the people confirmed to have Ebola in Congo's current outbreak have died.

The situation also varies across the six affected provinces. While the case fatality rate is so far 47.4%, it's far worse in some places where response efforts are more challenging, such as in North Kivu province where the fatality rate is 70%.

Second-largest Ebola outbreak on record

The current outbreak is already the largest known outbreak caused by Bundibugyo virus by a wide margin. It also has surpassed Congo's 2018-2020 Ebola outbreak, which infected nearly 3,500 people and killed more than 2,200.

But the largest Ebola epidemic on record remains the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa. More than 28,000 cases and 11,000 deaths were recorded, mainly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

That outbreak was caused by Ebola virus, not Bundibugyo virus.

The current outbreak has accumulated cases much more quickly from the time the first known patient became sick. WHO officials have warned that, if transmission continues, it could eventually surpass the West Africa outbreak.

Stopping Ebola depends on breaking transmission chains

Ebola outbreaks have repeatedly been brought under control, including in Congo, which has decades of experience responding to the disease.

The basic strategy is to find infected people quickly, isolate and treat them, identify and monitor people they have been in contact with, and prevent further infections in health facilities and during burials.

But contact tracing has been especially difficult, with 60% to 70% of new cases detected among people who weren't already being monitored, meaning infected people can spread the virus before health workers know to follow them.

WHO has said the risk of further spread within Congo and internationally remains high.

The agency declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern in May, its highest level of global health alert under international health regulations.

That designation doesn't mean Ebola is spreading globally like COVID-19 did. Instead, it signals that the

outbreak poses a serious international health risk requiring a coordinated response.

WHO has advised against broad travel or trade restrictions, saying they can disrupt supply chains and make it harder to move health workers, medical supplies and other resources needed to fight the outbreak.

Telescope spies the fastest star in the Milky Way zipping around a black hole

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A telescope has spied the fastest known star in our galaxy, racing around the supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way.

The star is zipping around the black hole, reaching speeds of about 15,534 miles per second (25,000 kilometers per second). That's 100,000 times faster than a commercial plane.

"That star is really, extremely fast," said astronomer Stefan Gillessen with the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics.

The newly discovered star also orbits the black hole at closer range than scientists have ever seen before, taking just 8.7 years to complete a revolution. It harnesses the black hole's gravity to fly faster without falling in.

Gillessen and colleagues uncovered the star in data collected by the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile's Atacama Desert. Their findings were published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

There are several hundred stars that closely orbit this giant black hole and are sensitive to its gravity. Scientists have mapped the orbits of around 50 of them. The new star is 10 times closer than the previous record holder, meaning that it also feels the effects of the black hole's rotation.

There are supermassive black holes lurking in the center of almost every large galaxy. But nothing can escape them — not even light — so it's notoriously difficult for scientists to figure out what's going on inside.

Studying stars like this one could help scientists measure those mysterious properties, including how fast the supermassive black hole spins. Advanced telescopes are helping to pinpoint fainter stars that previously eluded detection, so there could be even speedier ones waiting to be found.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg," said astronomer Tuan Do with the University of California, Los Angeles, who had no role in the study. "As we get fainter, there should be many more stars like this."

Ukrainian man arrested over 2022 Nord Stream pipeline explosions

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — A Ukrainian man wanted in Germany in connection with the 2022 undersea explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines was arrested on a European warrant in Croatia on Wednesday, Germany's federal prosecutor said.

The German prosecutors said that the suspect was a "trained scuba diver" who belonged to a group of people who "planted explosives" on the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea near the Danish island of Bornholm.

The undersea explosions on Sept. 26, 2022, damaged the pipelines, which had been built to carry Russian natural gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea. The damage added to tensions over the war in Ukraine as European countries moved to wean themselves off Russian energy sources after the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

The suspect was "strongly suspected of jointly causing explosions, anti-constitutional sabotage, and destruction of buildings and structures," the prosecutors' statement said. It said he was arrested in the Croatian seaside city of Pula and would be brought before an investigating judge at Germany's federal court of justice after his extradition.

The German prosecutor's office identified the suspect only as Vladimir Z. in its statement announcing

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his arrest. A spokesperson, however, confirmed to The Associated Press that it was the same man who was arrested in Poland last year but was later released when a Polish court refused to extradite him to Germany. Polish authorities identified him as Volodymyr Zhuravlov.

Poland has long opposed the Nord Stream pipelines, viewing them as an attempt by Russia to use its vast energy resources to gain leverage across Europe. Prime Minister Donald Tusk said at the time of Zhuravlov's extradition hearing that it would not be in Poland's interest to hand him over.

It was not immediately clear why Zhuravlov left Poland given the arrest warrant that was out for him.

"Volodymyr knew that the ruling applies only on the territory of Poland," his Polish lawyer, Tymoteusz Paprocki, told the AP, adding that Zhuravlov's wife was also surprised that her husband was detained in Croatia.

The German government welcomed the arrest on Wednesday.

"We're simply glad that the federal prosecutor's office is making progress in these investigations, because it's important that the bombing of the pipelines be clarified as well," Justice Ministry spokesman Nicholas Limmer told reporters in Berlin.

Last month, German federal prosecutors filed charges against a former Ukrainian army officer in connection with the same explosions.

The suspect, identified only as Serhii K., faces charges of causing an explosion, damaging property, disrupting public service and being an "accomplice to war crimes" by attacking civilian objects.

Serhii K. was detained in August 2025 in an Italian village, where officers raided a bungalow where he was staying with his family. Police said he surrendered without resistance. He was extradited to Germany in November.

The suspects allegedly used a yacht that set off from the German port of Rostock. The yacht had been rented from a German company using forged IDs and intermediaries.

The explosions ruptured the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which was Russia's main natural gas supply route to Germany until Moscow cut off supplies in August 2022. They also damaged Nord Stream 2, which never entered service because Germany suspended its certification process shortly before Russia's invasion.

Initially some officials in the West suspected that Russia might have carried out the explosions. But German investigators later pointed to suspected Ukrainian involvement.

Russia has accused the U.S. of staging the explosions, a charge Washington has denied. The pipelines were long a target of criticism by the U.S. and some of its allies, which warned that they increased dependence on Russian gas.

Frank Beard, drummer of boogie-rock trio ZZ Top, dies at 77

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Frank Beard, the drummer for the Texas boogie-rock trio ZZ Top who kept the tempo for the band's biggest hits like "Sharp Dressed Man," "Gimme All Your Lovin'" and "Legs," has died. He was 77.

Beard was in hospice care when he died Tuesday at his ranch in Richmond, Texas, with family members at his side, according to publicist Bob Merlis. Band co-founder and guitarist Billy Gibbons, on tour with bassist Elwood Francis, hailed Beard in a statement.

"Today, Elwood and I lost a great friend and collaborator, and the world lost one of the most naturally innovative drummers and a great and true son of Texas. His signature backbeat was key to keeping ZZ on top. The band of which he was part for six decades is going to keep on keeping on as he had wished," Gibbons said.

ZZ Top sold more than 50 million records and had six singles that reached No. 1 on Billboard's Mainstream Rock Airplay chart. Seven of their albums have been in the Billboard 200's Top 10 and they earned three Grammy Award nominations.

"I've found the people I was meant to play with," Beard says in the 2019 documentary "ZZ Top: That Little Ol' Band from Texas." "I never wanted to quit, and never wanted to get fired."

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Drummers went to social media to pay tribute to Beard's influence, including Rage Against the Machine's Brad Wilk, who wrote his mind was blown seeing Beard's two-hand shuffle live in high school. Former Guns N' Roses drummer Matt Sorum called Beard "a very special and unique man behind the kit."

How the band came together

Beard, from Frankston, Texas, met Gibbons in a band called The Moving Sidewalks and later introduced bassist and vocalist Dusty Hill who had been in several bands with Beard.

The trio formed ZZ Top in 1969, naming themselves in part after blues singer Z.Z. Hill and influenced by the British power trio Cream and Jimmy Reed. They maintained their original lineup for more than five decades. Their signature look — long, bushy beards on Gibbons and Hill, and dark sunglasses for all — didn't change much, either.

When Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards helped induct the trio into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2004, he joked: "These cats know their blues and they know how to dress it up. When I first saw them, I thought, 'I hope these guys are not on the run, because that disguise is not going to work.'"

ZZ Top songs — with their sly and humorous lyrics — were popular in Hollywood, which used "Gimme All Your Lovin'" in "Happy Feet," "Sharp Dressed Man" in "Evan Almighty," "Legs" in "Air," "Sleeping Bag" in "I, Tonya," "Tush" in "Dazed and Confused," "Mexican Blackbird" in "From Dusk Till Dawn" and "La Grange" in "Armageddon."

"The best way to describe ZZ Top is we're interpreters of a great American art form," Gibbons told The Dallas Morning News.

Their debut release, "ZZ Top's First Album," came out in 1970. Their sound was described as a hybrid mixing elements of rock, blues and funk into a steaming-hot Houston stew. They called themselves a "Little Ol' Band From Texas."

Breaking through

Three years later, they broke through commercially with "La Grange," a funky blues song on the album "Tres Hombres" that paid tribute to the Chicken Ranch, a brothel outside of the Texas town of La Grange that operated from 1905 until 1973 and was immortalized in the Broadway show and the film "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas." Gibbons has ascribed the power of "La Grange" to its simplicity — just two chords and a Robert Johnson-inspired guitar solo.

The band went on to have such hits as "Tush" and "Cheap Sunglasses." But their 1983 "Eliminator" — named after one of Gibbons' custom cars — added more production elements, synthesizers and drum machines to their stripped-down sound and yielded the hits "Gimme All Your Lovin'," "Legs" and "Sharp-Dressed Man." The band toured with a Texas-shaped stage, live rattlesnakes and a longhorn steer.

Long beards weren't always part of the band's look. Gibbons said it happened by accident: In 1976, the trio took a long break and scattered. Beard went to Jamaica, Hill went to Mexico and Gibbons went to France.

"Although we were speaking by phone, this was pre-video phone. And Dusty and I did not know that we had gotten so lazy that we had decided to forget to shave," Gibbons told The Tribune in San Luis Obispo in 2010. "So after three years we returned and showed up, and lo and behold here was this sort of wacky-looking image. And it just kind of stuck with us."

A boost from MTV

The band's rock-chic cool played well on the nascent MTV crowd and their videos, featuring models in short skirts emerging from one of Gibbons' custom roadsters, became a mainstay.

They kept the beards, hats and cheap sunglasses in the video trilogy of "Gimme All Your Lovin'," "Sharp Dressed Man," and "Legs," made with director Tim Newman.

"ZZ Top reveled in the humor and ridiculousness of it all, busting their synchronized dance moves and spinning their white-fur guitars. These guys always got the joke, at a time when other bands were still just nervously lip-syncing in front of brick walls," Rolling Stone said in 2021.

In 2012, superstar producer Rick Rubin helped update the trio's sound with the band's comeback album, "La Futura." The album landed at No. 6 on the Billboard chart, their highest position since 1990's "Recycler," some 22 years previously.

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Hill died in 2021.

In March 2025, the band announced via Instagram that Beard would temporarily step away from the band's tour to tend to foot and ankle problems. Beard died weeks after ZZ Top called off its Aug. 5 concert at the Hollywood Bowl due to his health issues.

Beard is survived by his wife, Debbie Meredith, and three children.

Today in History: August 20, Soviets invade Czechoslovakia

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Aug. 20, the 232nd day of 2026. There are 133 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 20, 1968, the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact nations invaded Czechoslovakia to crush the "Prague Spring" liberalization movement.

Also on this date:

In 1858, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was first published in the "Journal of the Proceedings of the Linnean Society."

In 1862, the New York Tribune published an open letter by editor Horace Greeley calling on President Abraham Lincoln to take more aggressive measures to free enslaved people and end the South's rebellion.

In 1866, President Andrew Johnson declared the official end of the Civil War.

In 1882, Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" had its premiere in Moscow.

In 1910, a series of wildfires swept through parts of Idaho, Montana and Washington, killing at least 85 people and burning more than 4,600 square miles.

In 1920, the American Professional Football Conference was established by representatives of four professional football teams; two years later, with 18 teams, it would be renamed the National Football League.

In 1940, exiled Communist revolutionary Leon Trotsky was attacked in Coyoacan, Mexico by assassin Ramon Mercader. (Trotsky died the next day.)

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Economic Opportunity Act, a nearly \$1 billion anti-poverty measure.

In 1986, postal employee Patrick Henry Sherrill went on a deadly rampage at a post office in Edmond, Oklahoma, shooting 14 fellow workers to death before killing himself.

In 1989, 51 people died when the pleasure boat Marchioness sank in the River Thames in London after being struck by a dredger.

In 2012, after 80 years in existence, Georgia's Augusta National Golf Club (home to the Masters Tournament) invited former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and South Carolina financier Darla Moore to become its first female members; both accepted.

In 2023, Tropical Storm Hilary struck Baja California, killing three and causing \$15 million in damage.

Today's Birthdays: Boxing promoter Don King is 95. Former U.S. Senator and diplomat George Mitchell is 93. Rock singer Robert Plant is 78. Country singer Rudy Gatlin is 74. Singer-songwriter John Hiatt is 74. Actor-director Peter Horton is 73. Actor Joan Allen is 70. Movie director David O. Russell is 68. Rapper KRS-One (Boogie Down Productions) is 61. Actor Colin Cunningham is 59. Actor Billy Gardell is 57. Rock singer Fred Durst (Limp Bizkit) is 56. Baseball Hall of Famer Todd Helton is 53. Actor Amy Adams is 52. Actor Misha Collins (TV: "Supernatural") is 52. Actor Ben Barnes is 45. Actor Andrew Garfield is 43. Actor-singer Demi Lovato is 34. Actor Fátima Ptacek is 26.