

Groton Daily Independent

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Community Calendar

Wednesday, Aug. 26

Senior Menu: Roasted chicken breast, roasted potatoes, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, Aug. 27

Senior Menu: Cheeseburger casserole, sweet potatoes, corn, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Boys Soccer at Freeman/Marion/Parker/Viborg-Hurley, 4 p.m.

Girls Soccer at Garretson, 4:30 p.m.

Cross Country at Whetstone Creek Golf Course, Milbank, 5 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 28

Senior Menu: Ham and cheese sandwich, potato salad, fresh celery, fruit.

Football hosts Beresford, 7 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Aug. 29

Volleyball: C Match at Matchbox, Aberdeen, 9 a.m.

Volleyball: at Huron Aren (vs. Brandon Valley at 10 a.m.; vs. Brookings at noon; vs. Huron at 1 p.m., vs. Sturgis, 4 p.m.)

Boys Soccer hosts Dakota Valley, 1 p.m.

Airport Fly-In/Drive In at Groton Airport

Sunday, Aug. 30

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

Airport Fly-In/Drive In at Groton Airport

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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.

Dolly Parton Dies

Country music legend Dolly Parton died yesterday at age 80 after a battle with cancer. The singer-songwriter, actor, entrepreneur, and philanthropist published about 3,000 musical titles, including 25 No. 1 country hits like "Jolene" and "I Will Always Love You." See the stories behind some of her greatest hits.

Parton was born in 1946 in East Tennessee, the fourth of 12 children in a home without electricity or plumbing. She wrote her first song at age 5 and began singing on the radio and TV by age 10. In 1967, she was hired to sing on the country variety TV program "The Porter Wagoner Show," propelling her solo career. Parton was the top-ranked female country singer from 1967 to 1993 and starred in multiple films, including "9 to 5" (for which she wrote the theme song), "Steel Magnolias," and "Straight Talk."

She opened her theme park, Dollywood, in 1986 and launched the Imagination Library in 1995—delivering more than 200 million books to children across the US. Scroll to explore fascinating resources 1440 staff has collected about Parton.

Canadian Countertariffs

Canada yesterday announced retaliatory tariffs of up to 50% on roughly \$20B in US goods, including steel, cheese, and seafood. The tariffs take effect Sept. 8, straining one of the world's largest trading relationships, with more than \$2B in goods crossing the US-Canada border daily.

The move comes after the Trump administration imposed 50% tariffs on roughly \$20B in Canadian imports Saturday, following failed trade talks. Negotiators reportedly clashed over US tariffs on Canadian automobiles and Washington's demands to review Canada's trade deals with other countries, among other items. A prolonged dispute could raise costs for Americans, but experts say Canada is likely to feel a greater impact given that its economy is roughly one-twelfth the size of the US economy. Canadian officials have announced several measures to support domestic industries, including interest-free loans.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump said yesterday he was considering renaming Lake Ontario, one of the five official Great Lakes, "Lake America."

👉 Humankind: Firefighters rappel over 100 feet down a cliff to rescue a dog stranded for 17 hours.

NFL's CTE Risk

At least one in four former NFL players who died from 2016 to 2021 had chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, according to a study published yesterday, shedding new light on the degenerative brain disease's prevalence in professional football.

Researchers identified all 878 former players who died during the six-year period and had appeared in at least one league game, 235 of whom donated their brains for research. Of those donors, 215 (or 91%) had CTE, a disease associated with repeated head impacts that can only be definitively diagnosed after death. Researchers used the full group of deceased players to estimate prevalence, putting the minimum at 24.5% and the theoretical maximum at 97.7%, with the true prevalence likely falling somewhere between the two. CTE has also been found in athletes in hockey, soccer, rugby, boxing, and other contact sports.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Serena Williams returns to the US Open alongside No. 2 men's singles tennis player Carlos Alcaraz in mixed doubles, winning in the first round but falling in the quarterfinals.

Spouses Elina Svitolina and Gaël Monfils reach the semifinals.

Australia's music industry bars songs wholly generated by AI from official charts; comes after an AI cover of Madonna's "Like a Prayer" spent 16 weeks in the Australian top 20.

Saudi Arabia to fund \$7B theme park campus north of Paris, with one park inspired by popular Japanese anime series, "Dragon Ball Z".

Science & Technology

Two unvaccinated people die of measles in Pennsylvania, marking the first US deaths caused by the disease this year. National caseload has already surpassed the 2,289 documented in 2025.

Apple debuts the M5 Ultra, which it deems to be its most powerful chip yet, designed for 3D rendering, visual effects, and advanced AI workloads.

Loneliness appears to rewire male mice's brains to crave alcohol while reducing alcohol consumption in females; scientists believe a similar brain circuit may exist in humans.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.3%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq +0.7%) ahead of Nvidia earnings report today.

Consumer confidence index falls to lowest level in seven months, Conference Board survey reveals.

Dick's Sporting Goods shares drop 30.7% after second-quarter results missed expectations and prompted the company to cut its profit forecast.

Lego reports record first-half revenue of roughly \$6.5B, climbing 21% from a year ago as FIFA and F1 sets attract new customers.

Politics & World Affairs

Sen. Darline Graham (R-SC), sister of the late Sen. Lindsey Graham, defeats primary challenge to appear on November ballot, boosted by endorsement from President Donald Trump.

Federal watchdog report finds FEMA workers illegally skipped 11 homes with pro-Trump signs during recovery efforts for Hurricane Milton in 2024 (More, scroll to "latest reports")

CIA Director John Ratcliffe reportedly visits Moscow for unannounced meetings; purpose of talks is unclear.

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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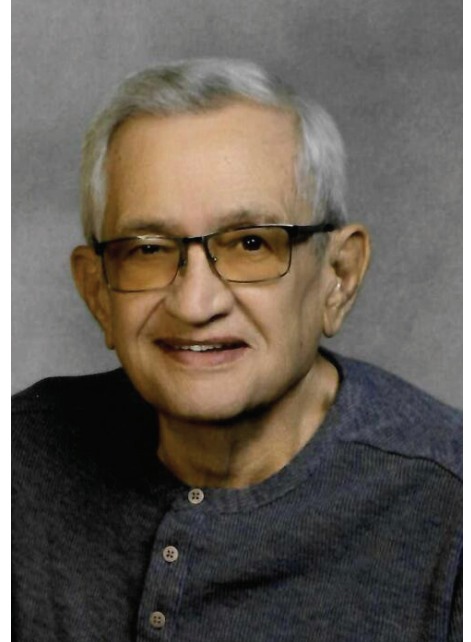
The Life of David Blackmun

Mass of Christian Burial for David Blackmun, 83, of Groton will be 10:30 a.m., Friday, August 28th at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton. Father Jordan Samson will officiate. Burial with military honors will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held on Thursday from 5-7 p.m. at the chapel with a wake service at 7:00 p.m.

Dave passed away Saturday, August 22, 2026 at Avantara Groton.

David George was born on May 7, 1943 in Groton to Earl and Phyllis Schoch. As a youth, he participated in Cub Scouts and later Boy Scouts, did odd jobs such as paper routes, setting bowling pins and mowing lawns. He attended school in Groton and graduated in 1961. David was active in all sports and excelled as an athlete in football, basketball, track, skating and baseball. Following graduation, David joined the South Dakota National Guard from 1964 to 1970. He was united in marriage with Mary Kay Schumacher at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Aberdeen on April 14, 1967 and to this union, two sons were born, Micheal and David. David managed the UBC lumberyards in both Groton and Aberdeen. In 1978 David joined Super 8 Motels and became the president of Midwest Motel Supply until the sale of Super 8 Motels in 1993. David was a partner in RGB Development Corp. that developed and owned motels.



David enjoyed fishing, hunting, bowling and riding Harley Davidson motorcycles. He was also a golfer and served on the board at Olive Grove Golf Course. He and Mary enjoyed 30 winters in Gold Canyon, Arizona and were members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Groton. One of his greatest joys was watching his sons and grandchildren participate in sports and music.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Mary Kay of Groton, sons, Mike (Stacy) Blackmun of Sioux Falls and Dave (Marcy) Blackmun of Groton, and his grandchildren: Rachel (Austin) Little, Korbin Blackmun, Logan Blackmun, Tyler Blackmun, Kaleb Blackmun and great grandson, Weston David Little. David is also survived by his sister, Laurel Sparks of Fargo and many nieces, nephews, in-laws and cousins.

Preceding him in death were his parents and his brother-in-law, Robert Sparks.

Honorary Casket bearers will be David's Grandchildren.

Casket bearers will be Steve Schaller, Les Hinds, Brad Larson, Rob Wanous, Brad Waage and Frank Gould.

Memorials may be directed to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Olive Grove Golf Course, or Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation

Tigers go the distance in season-opening thriller

HAMLIN — Groton Area and Hamlin made sure they got their money's worth in Tuesday night's volleyball season opener.

Every match went the distance, with the C and junior varsity teams each playing three sets before the varsity Tigers and Chargers battled through all five sets. Groton Area came up just short in the varsity match as Hamlin escaped with a 21-25, 25-17, 25-15, 18-25, 16-14 victory.

"It was exhausting," Groton Area coach Chelsea Hanson said. "What more can you possibly want on opening night? Battles."

Groton opened the varsity match with a 25-21 victory. The opening set was tied five times with three lead changes before the Tigers took control. Hamlin pulled even at 11, but Groton never trailed again.

The Chargers answered emphatically in the second set. After three early ties, Hamlin built an 18-8 advantage and went on to take the set, 25-17.

Hamlin carried the momentum into the third set, jumping out to a 4-0 lead. Groton could get no closer than two points before the Chargers scored the final six points for a 25-15 win and a 2-1 lead in the match.

Facing defeat, the Tigers responded.

The fourth set featured eight ties and four lead changes. The teams were deadlocked at 18 when Groton Area reeled off seven consecutive points to take the set, 25-18, and force a deciding fifth set.

"I thought when we went down 1-2, we were losing steam pretty fast," Hanson said. "I was happy to see us bounce back in the fourth because I didn't know that we quite had that in our tank."

The fifth set was tied at six and seven before Hamlin gained a slight advantage. The Chargers maintained a one- or two-point edge until Groton fought back to tie the set at 13 and again at 14.

With the match pushed into extra points, Hamlin scored the final two points for the 16-14 victory.

"We put people in different positions and were just kind of trying to find our groove," Hanson said. "It's tough when you have to come out and play a good team to start the season, but it's not going to get any easier from here. We're here to be battle tested. We got better today. We learned things about ourselves, and we have some things we need to work on, but overall you definitely can't be disappointed with the effort."

Hamlin's Addelyn Jensen proved to be the biggest obstacle for the Tigers, pounding down 28 kills while adding three assisted blocks, one solo block and 16 digs.

"She's such a great player," Hanson said. "We knew where the ball was going and still couldn't stop her. She hits over the block and she hits around it. She's a really good player. The fact that we could even take it five with a girl having a game like that is pretty remarkable."

Paxton Neuendorf added nine kills for the Chargers.

Groton Area recorded 10 ace serves, led by Abby Feldheim and Tevin Hansen with three apiece. Chesney Weber added two aces.

Weber handled the bulk of the setting duties, finishing with 30 of Groton's 38 assists. Sydney Locke had four assists and Hansen added two.

Hansen led the Tiger attack with 13 kills, while Weber and Kella Tracy finished with seven apiece.

Groton Area recorded nine blocks. Weber was involved in six assisted blocks. Libby Cole had five assisted blocks and one solo block, while Taryn Traphagen was credited with three assisted blocks.

The Tigers also totaled 81 digs. Locke and Hansen had 18 apiece, while Weber finished with 15.

Hanson said the heat inside the Hamlin gymnasium, combined with long rallies and a physical match, began to take a toll on both teams.

"Fatigue definitely set in, but this is how you get in shape," she said. "This is a really good start for us for the week. Hopefully we gain a little stamina and have a few days to rest before we go in and play four games that are going to be just as hard on Saturday."

Hanson said the difficult opening match was exactly the type of competition she wanted for the Tigers after last season.

"We came off last season frustrated that we weren't at the state tournament, and I felt like we needed

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to play a tougher schedule," she said. "If we could play games like this every single night, we're going to get better by the end of the year."

The junior varsity Tigers picked up a three-set victory.

Groton Area won the first set, 25-18, after breaking away from four early ties. Hamlin evened the match by winning the second set, 26-24. Groton had rallied from a 23-19 deficit to tie the set at 24 before the Chargers claimed the final two points.

The Tigers took control early in the deciding set, scoring four consecutive points to gain the advantage before finishing off a 15-8 victory.

Brooklyn Spanier led the JV Tigers with seven kills. Kinley Sandness had four kills and an ace serve. Abby Fjeldheim recorded three kills and two aces, while Neely Althoff had three kills, one block and an ace.

Brynlee Dunker and Maycee Moody each added three kills. Tori Schuster had a kill and two ace serves, while Makenna Krause added an ace.

Hamlin won the C match in three sets.

Groton Area opened with a 25-23 victory before Hamlin came back to take the second set, 26-24, in a set that was tied six times.

The Chargers jumped out to a 5-0 lead in the third set. Groton battled back to tie the score at six and seven, but Hamlin then scored six straight points on the way to a 15-9 victory.

Charli Jacobson led Groton with eight kills and an ace serve. Maycee Moody had seven kills and two aces, while Brynlee Dunker recorded two kills and two aces. Mya Moody added two kills, and Rowan Patterson and Rylee Stoltenberg each had one kill.

Groton Area will return to action Saturday at the Huron Tournament.

Varsity match sponsors on GDILIVE.COM were: Agtegra, Avantara-Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom Ts, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Farmers Union Insurance, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, Heartland Energy, Jacobson Electric, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Cafe, Locke Electric, Malpert Insurance, Poet, Rix Farms / R&M Farms, S & S Lumber, Spanier Harvesting and The Meat House of Andover.

Farmers Union Insurance was the sponsor for the JV and C matches.



**SOUTH DAKOTA
NEWS WATCH**

Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

How donors in De Smet are bringing new life to a historic town

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

DE SMET, S.D. – Even though it happened more than a decade ago, Rita Anderson can still recall the worry she felt as all her hard work, planning and fundraising to build a community and event center in De Smet appeared to be fizzling out at the very last minute.

Anderson was the director of the De Smet Economic Development Corp. (EDC) in 2013 and had raised most of the money in private local donations to pay for the building that would include a senior center, theater, kitchen, workout room, meeting spaces and a new lighted high school football field outside.

But while local donors had given their full-throated support — and opened their wallets to back it up — Anderson's efforts had come up just a bit short the day the De Smet City Council was meeting to consider approving the project.

Questions had arisen on social media about the need for the project and its cost, even though no taxpayer dollars were allocated, and some council members were reluctant to approve the \$3.8 million project.

"After the initial bids came in \$1 million higher than expected, the council gave us a month and said, 'If you don't have every cent raised, we're not going to approve it.' And they were serious," Anderson recalled. "And on the final day, we were about \$17,000 short."

That day, the owner of Warne's Appliance store called Anderson and promised to chip in \$10,000 more. And just as the council was about to vote, local cattle rancher and attorney Todd Wilkinson stood up and said his family would cover the final \$7,000.

"They had to approve it then," Anderson said in early June as she sat within the event center that was finished in 2015. "We were so excited, we were screaming and jumping up and down."

If Anderson had any questions about the devotion of residents and business owners to the continued growth and improvement of De Smet, they were answered that day.

And they've been answered many times since, to the tune of more than \$15 million in private donations raised over the past 15 years for medical, cultural and beautification projects in the town of 1,100 people.

"The passion people feel here is really remarkable," Anderson said of the central South Dakota place best known as the one-time home of famed children's author Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Using the recommendations from community surveys within a long-range master plan developed in 2019, the Beautiful De Smet Committee was formed to undertake fundraising needed to support a wide range of



Some of the donations collected to beautify De Smet, S.D., on June 11, 2026, that attempt to highlight the history of author Laura Ingalls Wilder, whose statue sits out front of a historic school she attended. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

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A big tourism draw in De Smet, S.D., are connections to author Laura Ingalls Wilder. The Ingalls Homestead, shown June 11, 2026, is one attraction focused on the author and her early life. (Photo:

Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

Brandon, S.D., a national leader in painting and repair of rail cars that has 175 employees.

Carmon has always retained a love for the town where he grew up, and his contributions – both financial and in terms of idea-generation – have helped expand the local hospital, build the event center and beautify the city and its downtown.

“People are always thinking outside the box, everybody has pride and they care and they want De Smet to do better, and be better, and that kind of gets infectious,” Carmon said.

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projects aimed at remaking downtown De Smet, said Grace Aughebaugh, now the director of the De Smet EDC.

Downtown is now home to an arch over Main Street, way-finding kiosks that promote walking tourism and a sculpture trail.

Another effort already underway is to build a system of trails from downtown that lead to Big Slough and Silver Lake, both water bodies featured prominently in books written by Ingalls Wilder.

A number of local businesses and individuals have played key roles in supporting the continued growth and development in De Smet, including Lyle Signs, American Bank & Trust, De Smet Farm Mutual, DesCo Manufacturing, Midstate Agronomy, Legend Seeds and Maynard’s grocery.

But perhaps no one has stepped up to help remake and strengthen De Smet as much as Greg Carmon.

Carmon, 72, grew up on his family’s ranch outside De Smet but left town then grew a highly successful business – Midwest Railcar Repair in



Grace Aughenbaugh, director of the De Smet Economic Development Corp., on June 11, 2026, under the new welcome arch paid for with donations in downtown De Smet, S.D. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News

Watch)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Average Black Hills Energy customer faces potential \$45 increase in monthly bill

Company is seeking permission from South Dakota regulators to increase rates and add a surcharge

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

The average Black Hills Energy residential electric customer in South Dakota faces a monthly bill that will be \$45 higher if state regulators approve a pending rate increase and surcharge.

The company's latest application this month seeks to add a monthly surcharge of \$19.70 for the average residential customer, to recoup costs for the \$320 million construction of the Lange II natural gas-powered electrical generation plant in northwestern Rapid City. The company has said the plant will meet growing power demands from current customers following the planned retirement of the 1960s-era Ben French plant, and is not in response to any proposals for data center construction.

"Our most important responsibility is providing safe, reliable energy to our customers and communities," said Wes Ashton, vice president of South Dakota and Wyoming utilities for Black Hills Energy, in an Aug. 5 news release. "Lange II will replace the Ben French units as a critical system resource to serve customers while enhancing the reliability of our Black Hills Energy electric system."

The company plans to start collecting the surcharge in December, when the new plant is expected to start delivering power. If the state Public Utilities Commission has not made a decision by then, the company could collect the surcharge on an interim basis, subject to refunds for customers later if the commission rejects or reduces the surcharge. The commission would then review the surcharge annually.

The surcharge would come on top of a general rate increase that Black Hills Energy is requesting of about \$25 per month for the average residential customer. That proposal would generate \$50.6 million in additional annual revenue for the company, which serves roughly 75,000 customers in western South Dakota and also serves customers in seven other states. The company has said the rate increase is justified by infrastructure investments, inflation and the lack of a rate increase since 2014.

"Our electric base rates have been unchanged for more than a decade, allowing our customers to experience rate stability, which is a priority for us," said Lynn Kendall, regional public affairs manager for Black Hills Energy. "We are requesting this rate review because it's necessary for us to update rates to account for the critical investments and improvements we've made to our system over the past 12 years, while also accounting for the increased operating costs to serve our customers."

The company began collecting the higher rate on an interim basis Aug. 18, because the Public Utilities Commission did not make a decision within a 180-day review period. Customers would receive refunds if state regulators ultimately reject the increase or approve a smaller increase.

Rapid City resident John McKee submitted comments to the commission about the proposed rate increase in March, writing that the increase would "directly and materially affect my household's financial obligations, energy access, and long-term cost stability." He warned that higher rates could impose "significant financial burdens" on residential customers.

Commission documents show that if both requests are approved at the proposed amounts, the average residential customer's monthly bill would rise from \$98.96 to \$143.70 — a 45% increase.

A group representing some of Black Hills Energy's largest South Dakota customers, including Monument Health, manufacturers, and mining and materials companies, has filed comments in both commission proceedings. The group wrote that the proposed surcharge would "greatly increase" its members' cost

of doing business.

In addition to its surcharge and rate request to the Public Utilities Commission, Black Hills Energy's parent company, Black Hills Corp., is pursuing a merger with Sioux Falls-based NorthWestern Energy. Among the states affected by the merger, Montana is the only one in which regulators have not yet approved it.

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.

Lawmakers discuss regionalization as a possible solution for local ambulance problems

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — State healthcare officials told South Dakota lawmakers this week that coordination among neighboring communities could strengthen local emergency medical services that are struggling with staffing and funding.

"This is truly critical to the transformation of EMS in South Dakota," said Emily Kiel, director of the state Department of Health's Division of Healthcare Access.

An 11-member task force of state lawmakers that met Monday is using the summer to consider ideas for legislation to support ambulance services across the state. Some services struggle with managing human resources or billing services, said Marty Link, deputy director of the Division of Healthcare Access, and regionalization could lighten the load of administrative tasks.

Regionalization involves sharing resources and functions among ambulance services across a specific geographical area, Link said. It also involves sharing recruitment and retention efforts such as training, continuing education and leadership development.

Kiel told lawmakers that regionalization could eventually lead to a stronger workforce.

"A strong workforce doesn't simply mean obtaining a magic number of people on a roster," she said. "A strong workforce understands a patient's needs and anticipates downstream care priorities."

Department officials plan to use a portion of South Dakota's funding over the next five years from the federal government's Rural Health Transformation Program to support regional emergency medical services hubs. South Dakota has received \$189.5 million from the program so far.

Congress included the program in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, in response to concerns that the bill's Medicaid cuts would hurt rural health providers. Medicaid is a federal-state program that provides health insurance for people with disabilities or low incomes.

The Department of Health consulted with the South Dakota Foundation for Medical Care to design a regional hub system, which could be supported over the coming years with federal funding. But the question lawmakers must answer is how to fund that system long-term, after the rural health program funding is spent.

"We will have to come up with funding," said Sen. Ernie Otten, R-Tea. "I think the citizens of South Dakota deserve something better than a conversation going on here in the Legislature for over 20 years, and the best that we've got is to come up with a model that is self-destructing in front of us."

Coordinated efforts could lead to faster response times

Link told lawmakers he hopes to achieve a goal of "15 minutes to life" through regionalization.

"It challenges every community and region to consider how they can help ensure that, regardless of where an emergency occurs, a person can receive meaningful care within that 15 minute timeframe or less," Link said.

An ambulance may not be able to immediately arrive at a rural emergency scene, Link said, and that isn't the goal.

"The goal here is to really design a system where the closest, appropriately trained resource can begin life-saving action early, connect with that patient, and then enter into that broader healthcare system

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through EMS," Link said. "Fifteen minutes to life is really an outcome. Regional infrastructure is what makes it possible."

In an example of regionalization, Spink County Ambulance Director Eric Schueth told lawmakers about a secondary crew spread across the northern part of the county, called Wildcat Rescue. It's a mix of EMTs, nurses and one paramedic.

Schueth's service responds to 911 calls across a 1,800-square-mile area in northeastern South Dakota. Last year, it responded to 565 calls.

Wildcat Rescue can often respond to emergencies in rural areas before the Spink County ambulance crew can arrive on scene. While Wildcat Rescue team members provide primary care, the Spink County ambulance is on its way to provide transport to a hospital if needed.

Spink County also collaborates with Clark, Hand and Faulk counties and with nearby towns such as Huron and Wolsey. After learning about the Department of Health's vision for regional collaboration, Schueth and leaders of neighboring ambulance crews began meeting in March to learn how each agency could support one another.

"What does everybody need?" Schueth said the service's leaders are asking. "How can we make each one of our services successful?"

For the coalition in northeastern South Dakota, the answer to that question is sharing resources such as staff, equipment and continuing education instructors. It also means operating under the same policies for patient care, Schueth said, so that "everybody functions as one."

Some lawmakers on the task force said the success in Spink County could be a sign that regionalization works.

Chief Don Rowland of Watertown Fire Rescue told lawmakers that collaboration is difficult in areas with few volunteer services.

"We do not have another volunteer service in our county, so I provide protection to more than 17 townships in our county," Rowland said.

Rowland said his department responds to more than 3,000 calls annually and provides service across about 730 square miles.

The task force plans to meet at least two more times over the next two months. Members hope to provide legislative proposals in November, to be considered during the 2027 legislative session that starts in January.

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

More extreme heat days are coming. Will states be ready?

BY STORIES FROM THE STATES

Chris Fitzsimon

This is Stories From The States. I'm Chris Fitzsimon. Here at States Newsroom, we know there's a lot going on around the country in every state capital. So thank you for being here. First, we're going to jump in with the news of the week from around the country. Quite a week it was. We're talking about the automated license plate reader called Flock cameras. You probably have heard of. In Wisconsin, a police officer was sentenced for misusing the technology for unlawful targeted surveillance. And that episode is raising more questions about transparency and control of this new technology. We'll also hear about the latest on data center legislation. As always, data centers continue to be a massive issue in almost every state in the country, and of course, this summer has felt very hot. The number of extreme heat days are becoming more frequent and are becoming more intense. So later in the show, we will chat with a researcher from the Pew Charitable Trust about how those hotter summers could affect communities across the country and how some states are responding, but first let's check in on the news with our States Newsroom newsletter author, Madyson Fitzgerald. Hi, Madyson. How are you?

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Madyson Fitzgerald

I'm doing well. How are you?

Chris Fitzsimon

I am well. As the I guess the dog days of summer continue, a lot of heat out there, but fall is in the air a little bit.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Yeah, I actually checked my Dunkin app this morning because I was thinking about going to get coffee, and they had their pumpkin drinks ready this morning, which I thought was strange because it's August.

Chris Fitzsimon

Uh oh.

Madyson Fitzgerald

and it is like cooling down. But I would not say it's pumpkin spice latte season yet. I was I was shocked.

Chris Fitzsimon

That's like Christmas vacation. I think Halloween and stuff is happening earlier and earlier, but I think it's because everybody's tired of the hot weather.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Yeah, for sure. Everyone's trying to move on.

Chris Fitzsimon

Well, a lot of a lot of stuff happening this week. Let's jump in and talk about the news. I think that I was a little, I'm a little behind on all the Flock camera controversy.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Yeah, it's been one of the most talked about issues this week in several different cities across the U.S. But one of the stories that caught my attention actually took place in Wisconsin, where a 32-year-old police officer was sentenced for misusing these Flock license plate reader cameras for unlawful targeted surveillance. And so, according to a criminal complaint, this officer actually conducted seven off-duty searches using between 15,000 and 92,000 individual cameras across Flock's Network. The officer was looking for a vehicle belonging to his ex-girlfriend, who reached out to the Appleton Police Department about her suspicions that she was being tracked, which is what triggered the investigation.

Chris Fitzsimon

That is just creepy.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Terrifying, and you know it's you never. I I personally wonder how she was able to find out that she was being tracked, but anyways, his sentencing comes as Wisconsin and communities across the country are really pushing back against these flock cameras, and they're calling for more transparency and control over police surveillance technologies. And so, earlier this week, you know, Rhode Island Governor Dan McKee actually ordered a pause on the installation of new flock cameras for 60 days, and residents of Huntington, West Virginia, they were angered over their city council's approval of a contract with Flock Safety, and are organizing a weekend-long canvassing campaign later this month to collect signatures for their "Get the Flock Out" ballot initiative. Creative.

Chris Fitzsimon

Well, that's a good name. It is interesting how like this collision of technology, law enforcement, surveillance. My wife and I actually got a... We were seeing some relatives on the eastern shore of Maryland, and got a notice that we had exceeded slightly the speed limit in a small town on the eastern shore of Maryland. It was all based on a camera that nobody knew was there.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Interesting.

Chris Fitzsimon

And then you start wondering, is this even real? You know, because it like it feels like it's all it's not only an invasion of privacy, but it feels like it's open to spamming and all sorts of things.

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Madyson Fitzgerald

For sure. And then not always are they actually looking at like information regarding the driving itself. Sometimes they're looking at there was I think there was I can't remember where the story was. There was a person who drove over state lines to get marijuana from one state and bring it back to his own state, and they were tracking him for that. And as soon as he got home, they ended up arresting him. And so it's it's becoming a lot more. It's becoming a bit more of an invasion of privacy than maybe people had imagined to begin with, and that's why they're calling for more transparency.

Chris Fitzsimon

Yeah, it's interesting that politicians of both parties, or just in general, are starting to respond to all this.

Madyson Fitzgerald

For sure.

Chris Fitzsimon

Well, let's talk. Let's talk about the the rights of the voters, which is to change their laws in their own states. That's also been a big issue this week.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Yeah, and I think it will continue to be a big issue as November gets ever closer. But this week, two states really faced a lot of court decisions regarding proposed constitutional amendments that voters would have the chance to decide on. And so, starting with two significant measures in Arizona that caught my attention, one ballot measure that would have asked voters to institute sweeping regulations to the state's billion-dollar universal school voucher program, Another very popular topic that measure is actually dead after the state supreme court ruled against the backers of the proposal, and basically that decision disqualified a number of voter signatures, meaning that it was below the threshold to make the ballot. And the Arizona Supreme Court also ruled that another proposal that was Republican-backed that would amend the state's constitution to make sweeping changes to how elections are conducted can remain on the November ballot. So, lots of ballot measures. If you head to our website or visit the Arizona Mirror, you'll be able to see all eight measures that are going to be on the ballot this November.

Chris Fitzsimon

And then Missouri. This is one that the whole battle in Missouri about what the the whole idea of initiative and referendum and voters and it feels like the legislators are trying hard not to have the will of the voters rule the day.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Yeah, it's it's a really interesting story, a tad confusing, but very interesting. And a count, so a county judge in Missouri basically decided that a proposal to limit the legislature's power to alter repeal measures passed by initiative should not be on the November ballot because, in that way, would basically it would impermissibly constricts the legislative freedom to make new laws reflecting new views, which I think is the whole point of ballot initiatives and having these kind of citizen-led pushes to be able to make changes within their state.

Chris Fitzsimon

Right, and it used to be, I think, if I'm right, the Missouri has they had a ballot initiative and referendum process, and then the General Assembly there wanted to change it to make it so that the ballot measure had to pass in every congressional district, not just statewide, which is really does seem to go against the spirit of the idea. But...

Madyson Fitzgerald

Right, that was a very interesting one. I'll just say that much, and they definitely have a lot more ballot initiatives that they'll probably be considering as, like I said, November gets closer and closer.

Chris Fitzsimon

Yeah, and what would a week be without talk about data centers? Everywhere I turn, I feel like I'm reading about data centers, hearing about data centers. People are upset about data centers, and this week was no exception.

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Madyson Fitzgerald

Yeah, and I try to, I almost try to avoid talking about data centers because I don't want to to beat a dead horse, but it's it's remained a very very popular topic. And in specifically this week, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro signed an executive order that issues stricter guardrails on data centers. And while the governor used fiery language such as greedy and predatory to describe the companies that were quote unquote recklessly pushing data centers, critics are saying that the order falls short, especially when you consider that New York actually just issued a moratorium on data centers earlier this year, and so the first-term governor is up for re-election, and both his opponent and grassroots campaigns have criticized him for not doing more to limit data centers and also not doing it earlier because this is an issue that they've been talking about for months when it comes to Governor Shapiro.

Chris Fitzsimon

And this is another one of those issues, like the surveillance topic we talked about a minute ago, that really is not so much a partisan thing. Because I certainly hear Republicans and Democrats, supporters of President Trump, opponents of President Trump, a lot of people are upset about this, regardless of their political affiliation.

Madyson Fitzgerald

For sure, on both sides, people are really, really upset, and also when it comes to paying your own way in terms of making sure data centers are paying for their own energy, the water usage, there's just so much that's involved in these data centers, and for how fast they're developing and how fast they're spreading. I think that legislators will have a lot of work to do in terms of catching up. But in other states and localities across the country, there was a lot more conversations about data centers, and so a similar situation was actually brought up in Kentucky after the the governor signed an executive order seeking to limit the effects of data centers. And in Nevada, a gubernatorial candidate said as governor that he will pause the state's tax breaks on data centers. And then in Wisconsin, data centers are also becoming a focal point in the race for governor, and so it's definitely going to stay a topic of conversation at the dinner table.

Chris Fitzsimon

Yeah, absolutely, and I know we talked to we had a podcast recently talking about the industry trying to fight back and have a sort of a PR campaign, which feels like whatever you think of them, that was it's a little late. I think people sort of already made up their minds, but the good news is we have a fascinating one last thing this week. I think

Madyson Fitzgerald

Yes, and I I would say it's the cutest story that I've read this summer because I'm a very big fan of this of this particular endangered species actually. But the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is once again asking residents to look out for one of Maine's most elusive native species, the rusty patched bumblebee.

Chris Fitzsimon

That sounds like a cartoon character to me, but go ahead.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Oh, it does, and you can. I literally was struggling to say it. Try saying it five times fast. It's one of two native species of bumblebees that hasn't been seen in years, and it's considered a rare species of special concern by the state, and fun fact, it was the first bumblebee species to be added to the U.S. Endangered Species List. So the search for the rusty patched bumblebee actually started in earnest in 2015 when the department began work on the Maine bumblebee atlas. And over several years, volunteers with the Community Science Project took photos of bumblebees around the. And submitted them to the department in their quest to save the bees.

Chris Fitzsimon

So, what do we? Where is it now? What do we do? What What are people in Maine? They're supposed to look out for them.

Madyson Fitzgerald

You know, that's what I thought was interesting. I think they're actually just running around taking photos

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of bees, and hopefully, the scientists that actually study this will be able to identify where you know the if they can catch the rusty patch bumblebee eventually.

Chris Fitzsimon

Well, it's fascinating stuff, Madyson. As always, thanks for keeping us up to date with the news. Thanks for being with us.

Madyson Fitzgerald

Yeah, thanks for having me.

Chris Fitzsimon

To stay up to date on the latest news happening in all the states, subscribe to Daybreak and Evening Wrap. You can subscribe at newsfromthestates.com/subscribe. This summer has felt like the hottest it's ever been. States like Colorado and New Jersey reported that heat-related illnesses spiked when temperatures soared to record highs, while farmers in North Dakota and Wyoming are facing droughts. Many researchers are predicting that the number of extreme heat days could actually grow over the next few decades and get even more intense. Some state policymakers are trying to figure out how to plan for it. It could strain public health, agriculture, and infrastructure. In a moment, we're going to talk with a Pew researcher about how you could be affected and if your state is planning for what's going to happen. We'll be right back.

Moses Esheit

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Clayton Henkel

Hi, it's Clayton Henkel, deputy editor at NC Newsline, at States Newsroom, we believe journalism should be fair, fearless, and free. With reporters working on the ground in all 50 states and Washington D.C. we provide nonpartisan coverage of the state issues that matter most to you. You can subscribe to our work by going to statesnewsroom.com/subscribe.

Nelle Dunlap

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Madyson Fitzgerald

What's your morning routine? Maybe it sounds like turning off your alarm clock, then shuffling into the kitchen to brew a cup of coffee and checking your phone for the latest news in your email. What's mine? It's waking up early and sending you that email. Hi, I'm Madyson Fitzgerald. I write Daybreak. It's a daily national newsletter for people who want to start each morning informed about how state news fits into the national news cycle. Start your day informed with our 50-state snapshot, subscribe now at newsfromthestates.com/subscribe.

Chris Fitzsimon

Daily news, especially these days, can get overwhelming. At times, it's hard to keep up with how it all could impact you, your family, and your community. Hi, I'm Chris Fitzsimon. I host a podcast called Stories from the States to help make the top stories a bit more digestible. It's a weekly news podcast that explores one issue happening in the states that could shape the entire country with the help of local journalists.

Sherman Smith

There's no evidence that anybody can find really where somebody was really bothered by who was in the bathroom with them.

Chris Fitzsimon

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Experts.

Dr. Kristin Lyerly

They had an ultrasound picture of what they were told was their pregnancy, but what it actually was was a full bladder.

Chris Fitzsimon

And community members.

Max Moran

Money isn't everything, and the real value when it comes to the land is being able to pass it down.

Chris Fitzsimon

We've got you covered. Subscribe now to Stories From The States, a podcast from States Newsroom.

Chris Fitzsimon

Andrea Snyder is an associate manager at the Pew Charitable Trusts. Well, Andrea, thank you very much for being with us. We appreciate your time.

Andrea Snyder

Yeah, I'm happy to be here.

Chris Fitzsimon

I have a feeling that most people listening to this are hot, regardless of where they live. I know it's certainly been a very hot summer in North Carolina on the East Coast. It's interesting that that's happening all over the country. Is it true that the summers are getting hotter?

Andrea Snyder

It is true that the summers are getting hotter, and the U.S. is experiencing more high. Than average temperatures. That's how we discuss it in the piece. And as you noted, many of those regions, including those that are typically cooler, are experiencing this trend. And in the piece, we talk about how in 2025, the National Weather Service issued heat advisories for every region in the U.S. including the first time in Alaska. And this year in July, it was recorded that as that hottest year on record.

Chris Fitzsimon

Yeah, I was really struck by the. I mean, it's hard not to see Alaska jump out for those of us who are so far away. It always feels like we have colleagues in Alaska. I'm always jealous, but this year, I guess it's even reached that far. Let's talk about the what that means. I know for for state governments, for federal governments, for money, for expenditures-not just effects on our human lives. I know our outlet in Colorado recently reported that heat-related illnesses has spiked. Is that a one of the things that we have to worry about? Is actually the effect on not only individuals' health care but the cost of providing the care for those folks.

Andrea Snyder

Yeah. So, as you noted, extreme heat is harming people's health, and as a result, governments are facing higher costs for medical care and preventive services. Prolonged heat or exposure to heat can lead to heat-related illnesses like heat stroke or or other heat related illnesses, which could drive demand for medical services, and that requires states to fund emergency services, hospitalizations, emergency response, and including assistance for uninsured and insured residents. There's a study, a 2023 study in Virginia on the summers between 2016 and 2020, that found, on average, extreme heat led to 59 more emergency care visits and 25 additional hospitalizations compared with other days.

Chris Fitzsimon

I guess a lot of that that strain and stress on on governments and finances is based on whether or not folks have health care, obviously, and whether or not they show up. We had a case in in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, a few weeks ago where a family's power was cut off. The power was managed by the city, and three people actually died because of the heat. I think they were elderly. So there's there's I guess a lot of states or local governments have struggles trying to make sure that people have who don't have enough resources can actually stay cool.

Andrea Snyder

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Yeah, that's absolutely true, and I'm sorry to hear that news. And I think, as you pointed out, Chris, extreme heat is also damaging property and infrastructure, including to including power outages, and and that can really strain the grid.

Chris Fitzsimon

Another, I think one thing people have probably noticed is the wildfires. It feels like every summer there are wildfires somewhere in the country. We had a lot of publicity about the ones in Canada, the smoke coming over, but there's been a lot in our in our country as well in the Midwest and the West. How how important or how big a deal is this the rising temperature on these fires?

Andrea Snyder

So the rising temperature on these fires isn't something that we particularly looked at in this piece. Pew does have some existing research on on wildfires and their impact on state budgets, but it's not a cross section that we necessarily visited or looked at for this.

Chris Fitzsimon

I guess the the drought would be one part of that.

Andrea Snyder

Yeah, definitely. And so, drought and extreme heat together can cause strain. What comes up in this piece is related to agriculture. So, extreme heat is damaging agriculture, and as a result, governments are spending more to assist affected producers. Like the tangible effects are are that crop production can reduce, and reducing agriculture revenues, for instance, can put pressure on states. So, actually, a North Carolina analysis by the by Duke University found that heat related crop insurance payments have steadily increased over the last two decades, and they found that in some states that could cost millions to hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Chris Fitzsimon

Right, and I guess this seems to follow that if there's a a big problem with food production because of the heat and/or the drought, that then food is more scarce, prices rise, and in a time when folks are already worried about making ends meet, it just feels like another way that would sort of strain a budget.

Andrea Snyder

Right. Yeah.

Chris Fitzsimon

What about what about infrastructure and how do states handle what what sort of impact does this extreme heat have on state infrastructure.

Andrea Snyder

Yeah, that the impact on infrastructure is is varied. Most infrastructure is not designed to withstand prolonged extreme heat, so in some cases it can cause materials to soften or crack or expand, which can lead to mechanical failures, and these stresses increase. Likelihood that a state will have to pay for costly repairs and additional maintenance means.

Chris Fitzsimon

Who bears the brunt of most of this financial strain? I guess is it shared? Traditionally, states would would pay or would absorb the cost, but the federal government would step in, whether it's with a disaster declaration or other federal programs. But even those are sort of feel like have been curtailed, and I know folks have probably read a lot about the changing structure and what the Trump administration believes about how much the federal government should pay and what role states should play.

Andrea Snyder

Yeah. So although states do play a role in responding to heat-related impacts, the costs are shared across federal and local government as well as individuals, but it's not well understood how much of this cost gets placed onto individuals and local governments.

Chris Fitzsimon

Yeah, it's it's such an interesting topic, and thank you for doing the the story. I guess when most people just think of the heat, they understandably think of themselves and sort of what they're going through without realizing how much it has an impact on sort of all levels of government, I wonder why this doesn't

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get more publicity. Is it because it's sort of diffuse, or because there's so many other things going on?

Andrea Snyder

Well, that's why I'm really grateful that you all have decided to cover this story. And what I would say to that is that the impacts of heat are already visible. I think people are experiencing them, and I think people see this in their neighbors or friends having to visit the hospital due to heat-related illness, or maybe on their commute they're experiencing train delays from heat, or farmers and agricultural workers might be affected by crop yields, so yeah, our aim with this piece was really to underscore that governments have a role to play in managing and responding to those impacts. And effective response requires planning, data, and resources. So we are encouraging governments to prepare for extreme heat now, so that they can respond effectively when the events occur, and also reduce long term risks.

Chris Fitzsimon

Did you get a sense of how states are, or governments in general? But we focus obviously primarily on the states. Do you get a sense overall how states are responding? Are they planning enough?

Andrea Snyder

So we highlight a number of state actions in the piece. Some states are starting to evaluate their physical and fiscal exposure to extreme heat, and also identify risk reduction strategies. So, for example, Wisconsin's Department of Health Services has a heat vulnerability data explorer, and that calculates the heat vulnerability index statewide to pinpoint areas of greatest risk or negative health impacts, and that's an example of how states are using data and mapping tools to analyze their vulnerabilities. Some states are starting to quantify the economic impact of heat on key revenue streams and services. Examples of that are in Delaware and California, who have both commissioned detailed studies of the costs of extreme heat, including costs for transportation, for emergency services, for preventative measures like cooling centers and or wellness checks, and then finally, states are also, or some states are also developing and implementing heat action plans, which outline risk reduction measures. North Carolina is one of those states, and some others that have done that include Arizona, California, New Jersey, and New York.

Chris Fitzsimon

Did anything surprise you when you were writing this?

Andrea Snyder

I think the thing that surprised me is the extent of the budgetary impact of extreme heat. So while statewide costs remain rare, as I was just mentioning, there are a handful of states that have started to quantify these impacts. California analyzed seven extreme heat events between 2013 and 2022, and some of the numbers that came out of that include cost of road repairs to states, which ranged from 2 million to 11 million per event.

Chris Fitzsimon

Wow!

Andrea Snyder

Yeah, and so I was mentioning before that we don't have comprehensive comparable data, but the scale of those costs certainly stood out to me.

Chris Fitzsimon

Well, thank you so much for writing that and focusing attention on it, and we really appreciate you being with us. Thank you very much.

Andrea Snyder

Thank you so much, Chris.

Chris Fitzsimon : Thanks for listening to Stories From The States. I'm Chris Fitzsimon. Mallory Cheng produced and edited the podcast. David Singer produced our theme music. If you liked what you've heard, please share it with someone you think might enjoy it, and leave a rating and review if you can. It means a lot to know what you think about the podcast, and it helps other people find us. To stay up to date on the latest episodes, subscribe now to Stories From The States. A podcast from State's Newsroom, available wherever you listen to podcasts. We'll talk to you soon.

Pennsylvania reports nation's first confirmed measles-related deaths in 2026

BY IAN KARBAL

The Pennsylvania Department of Health confirmed two measles-related deaths in Lancaster County. Both people, who lived in the county, were unvaccinated. No other personal details were provided in order to protect their families' privacy.

They are the first confirmed measles-related deaths in the nation this year, and come amid the country's largest outbreak of measles in decades.

"My deepest sympathies are with the loved ones who are facing this unimaginable loss," said Pennsylvania Health Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen. "Because measles was largely eliminated in the Commonwealth for more than three decades, people are not familiar with this disease and don't fully understand the potential severity of the illness. We want to ensure every Pennsylvanian has the information they need to protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities. As a physician, I want to make sure that people understand that the MMR vaccine is safe and provides the best protection we have against measles."

The United States declared measles eliminated in 2000, due to the success of a widespread vaccination campaign. But the country's measles-free status is now at risk, with 2,777 cases confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control this year so far.

That's more than all of last year, which saw 2,289 cases and three deaths. Until this year, it was the highest known annual case count in more than three decades.

Pennsylvania has so far reported 393 cases in 29 counties in 2026. Eighty-six cases were reported in the last week, and 70 have resulted in hospitalization. Nearly half of them this year have been in Lancaster County.

Measles is a highly contagious disease that spreads through infected people breathing, coughing or sneezing. Individuals with measles develop high fevers, coughs and red, watery eyes. That's followed by a characteristic rash three to five days after symptoms begin. 20% of cases end with hospitalization.

Following the announcement of the two deaths, Gov. Josh Shapiro said the state will continue to host pop-up vaccination clinics in affected areas. This past July, 35,000 Pennsylvanians received vaccinations. For context, that's 10,000 more than typical.

"As a father of four children, I know every parent wants what's best for their kids – but right now, there's a barrage of information thrown at us online, on TV, and in our daily lives," he said. "I want every Pennsylvanian to know this: measles does not care about your county, your faith, or your social circle. It's vital for every parent to know that if you or your kids are unvaccinated, you are at an increased risk for contracting this highly-contagious virus."

The Trump administration has come under scrutiny for spreading misinformation and fear around vaccines.

Weeks ago, President Donald Trump signed an executive order calling for the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine to be split into three separate shots. At a press conference announcing the order, he claimed the combined vaccination could be "lethal," despite no evidence.

The Centers for Medicaid Services administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz, a former Pennsylvania U.S. Senate candidate, later refuted Trump's claim.

Medical professionals say the shot is safe and effective as is, and warn splitting it into three has no safety benefits and will only make it more likely for people to miss doses.

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy also has a long history of casting doubt on the effectiveness of vaccines generally, and making unfounded claims linking jabs to autism and exaggerating the potential for harm.

Before helming the U.S. Health Department, he was the chair of an anti-vaccine nonprofit called the Children's Health Defense. In that role, he advocated for alternative treatments for vaccine-curable diseases and spread misinformation about vaccine safety.

He has also left his mark on U.S. vaccine policy. Last year, he replaced a 17-person vaccine advisory

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council at the CDC. He has also hired vaccine skeptics at the Department of Health and Human Services as the department cut funding to vaccine research.

The moves have led Pennsylvania's state Board of Pharmacy to accept vaccination guidelines from non-government groups like American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Last year, Pennsylvania joined the Northeast Public Health Collaborative to develop public health and vaccination guidelines with nearby states, amid concerns of politicization at federal agencies.

However, as the measles outbreak has grown, Kennedy has called the MMR vaccine safe and encouraged people to get it.

"HHS and CDC extend their condolences to the families and communities affected by two measles-associated deaths in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania," a spokesperson for the Centers for Disease Control said in a statement. "CDC is working closely with state and local health departments to strengthen response efforts, rapidly support affected communities across the state, and communicate the steps people can take to slow the spread of measles. The MMR vaccine provides the most effective protection against measles and helps prevent its spread. CDC will continue to follow Pennsylvania's lead and provide resources to support the state's response."

This story was originally produced by Pennsylvania Capital-Star, 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.

Ian Karbal covers state government for the Pennsylvania Capital-Star. He's particularly interested in the influence of money in politics and how arcane policies affect Pennsylvanians across the state.

Active court order still blocking Trump effort to restrict vote-by-mail

BY SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday handed a procedural victory to President Donald Trump on an executive order to curb mail-in voting, but the administration is still fighting a separate ruling that limits a portion of the order and remains in effect — complicating the administration's temporary win.

In light of the ruling in the nation's highest court, the administration late Monday asked U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani in Massachusetts to vacate her decision from earlier in August that blocks the U.S. Postal Service from carrying out aspects of Trump's executive order, while the voting rights groups that brought that challenge argued Tuesday the block should remain in place.

Monday's decision from the Supreme Court also drew the ire of Democrats, who argued that Trump's executive order ran afoul of the Constitution and threatens democracy.

Under the Constitution, states are responsible for administering elections. Many Democrats have said Trump's order seeks to unlawfully grab that power for the executive branch.

The Supreme Court's ruling halted a June decision from Talwani in a case brought by more than 20 Democratic-led states and Washington, D.C.

But that ruling does not apply in a separate case, filed in the same Massachusetts federal court, by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts and several other voting rights groups challenging Trump's executive order.

In its emergency motion in the voting rights groups case, the administration wrote that "the Supreme Court's order leaves no room for any further dispute: this Court lacked jurisdiction to issue the preliminary injunction in this case, just as it lacked jurisdiction to enter summary judgment in the (states') case, because there is no justiciable controversy over a proposed rule until it is actually finalized by an agency."

Final rule published

Further complicating the matter, the U.S. Postal Service on Friday issued a final rule that details how the agency would execute Trump's order.

The voting rights groups on Saturday asked Talwani to enforce her August order as a result of the Postal

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Service issuing the regulation.

Regarding that request, Talwani on Tuesday afternoon said the rule violated her order because she specifically said the administration could not take steps to implement the executive order. However, she declined to take action "other than identifying the violation."

The groups redoubled their request earlier Tuesday, writing that the Supreme Court's decision was based on the lack of a USPS final rule.

"That decision addressed a materially different record and did not consider the critical development that occurred last Friday: The USPS Defendants promulgated a Final Rule, transforming the posture of this case and supplying a final agency action that was not before the Supreme Court," they wrote.

Talwani's order on the administration's request was still pending Tuesday afternoon.

Democratic blowback

Meanwhile, Democrats were quick to blast the Supreme Court's decision, including the top Democrats in the U.S. Senate and House.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said it's "a disgrace that the highest court in the nation is allowing Trump to put a dagger into the heart of our democracy," in a Monday statement.

The New York Democrat noted that "Trump's effort to turn the Postal Service into a voter suppression machine is blatantly unconstitutional – yet his MAGA Supreme Court is refusing to stop it from going forward," while adding that "Senate Democrats will fight every attempt to hijack mail-in voting and rig the rules before voters have their say this November."

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries also blasted the decision and vowed to continue fighting, saying "the sycophantic Supreme Court majority's decision in the vote-by-mail case is sowing chaos in service to Donald Trump's effort to undermine our free and fair elections."

Jeffries, also of New York, added that "the Trump-aligned justices on the Supreme Court did not and cannot give the President the power to decide how states run elections or who gets to vote by mail."

The respective heads of the Democratic National Committee, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and Democratic Governors Association also pushed back against Trump's executive order.

"This is the latest attempt from Trump to rig the midterms because Republicans know their corrupt, cost-hiking policies are deeply unpopular and hurting people every day," DNC Chair Ken Martin, DCCC Chair Suzan DelBene, DSCC Chair Kirsten Gillibrand, and DGA Chair Andy Beshear said in a statement.

"Democrats will not let them get away with it, and we are confident the American people will reject these Republican schemes in November," they wrote. "We're going to fight every day until Trump's illegal executive order, and all of his other attempts to undermine our free and fair elections, are completely thrown out."

A spokesperson for the National Republican Congressional Committee, the party's U.S. House campaign arm, did not return a message Tuesday.

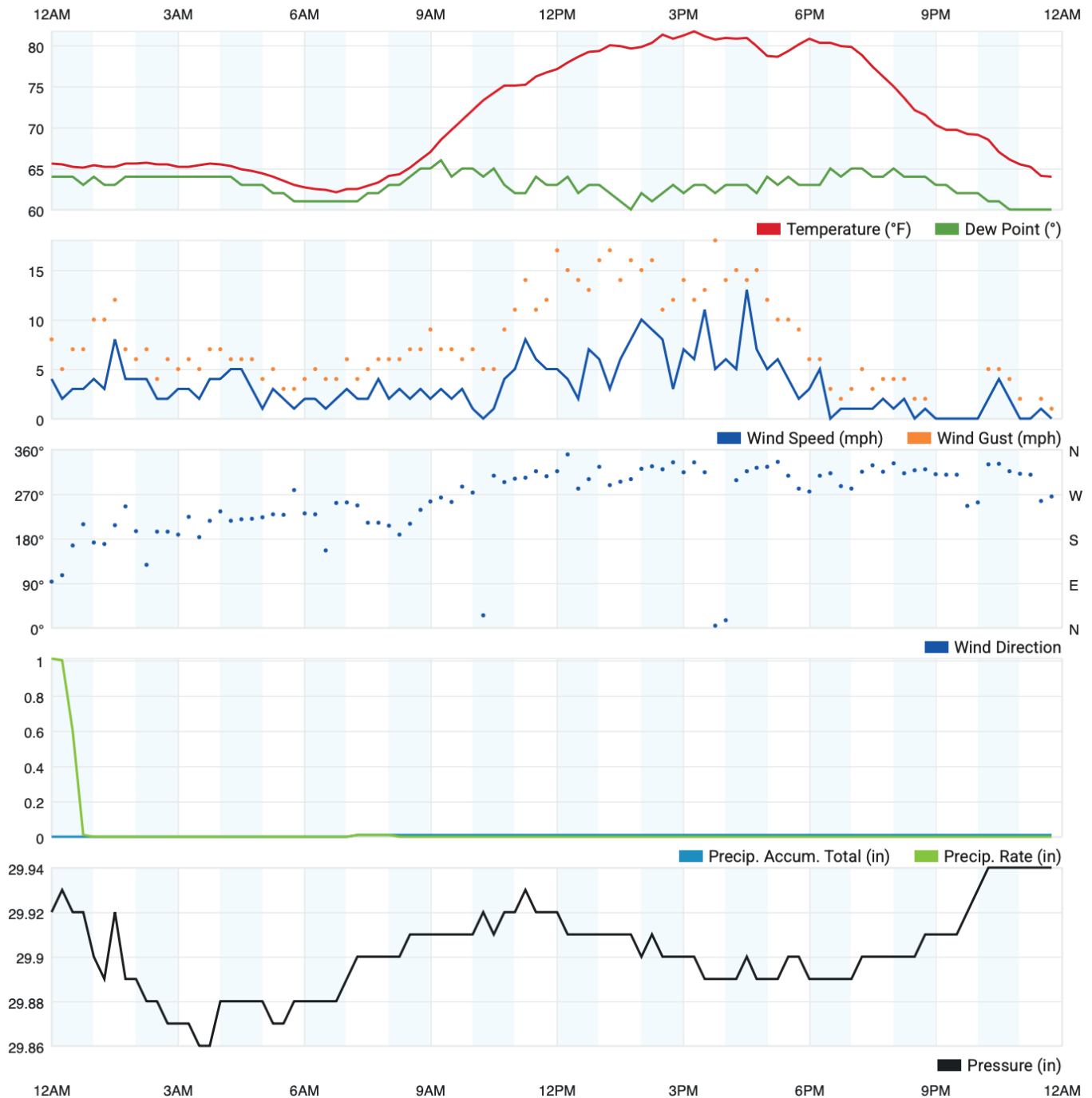
Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 25, 2026



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Today



High: 81 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 51 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 81 °F

Sunny

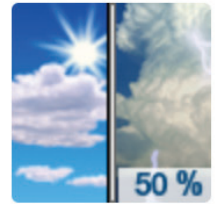
Thursday
Night



Low: 55 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 84 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Chance
T-storms

Midweek Outlook



weather.gov/aberdean

Today

Aug 26th, 2026



77-84°

Warmest across central SD



A sunny start to the day, then increasing high clouds during the late afternoon and evening

Thursday

Aug 27th, 2026



78-86°

Warmest across central SD



Mostly sunny during the day, then increasing clouds and a chance for thunderstorms in south central SD late Thursday night

August 26, 2026 2:25 AM

High pressure will keep the region dry with seasonable temperatures through most of the day Thursday. Chances for showers and thunderstorms return to central SD late Thursday night before spreading east Friday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 82 °F at 3:15 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 6:41 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 1:18 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1991

Record Low: 34 in 1914

Average High: 81

Average Low: 54

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.89

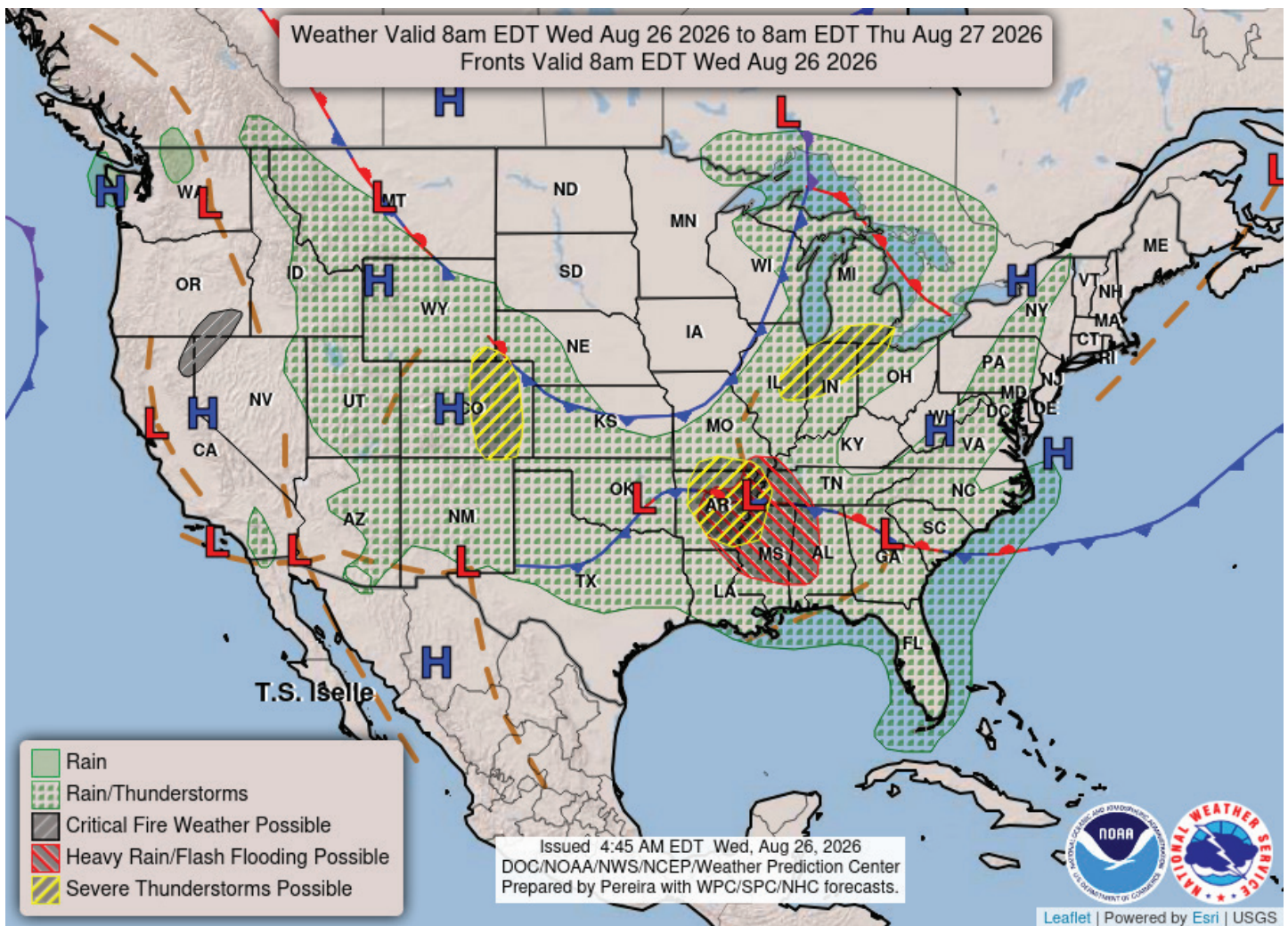
Precip to date in Aug.: 10.52

Average Precip to date: 15.99

Precip Year to Date: 19.99

Sunset Tonight: 8:22 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:47 am



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Today in Weather History

August 26, 1983: Heavy rainfall up to four and a half inches fell in the town of Mahto, Corson County, flooding basements. Hail, up to three inches in diameter, caused significant damage to roofs and broke numerous windows.

August 26, 1998: Massive rainfall of 3 to over 6 inches fell across far eastern Corson, most of Campbell and Walworth counties during the evening hours of the 26th. The heavy rain caused flooding on many roads along with some highways through the night and into the morning hours on the 27th. Near Selby, high winds, heavy rain, and some hail caused damage to sunflowers and moved a barn three feet off the foundation. In Selby, wind-driven rain pushed water through some ceilings and into basements. An old barn near Glenham was also blown down by the strong winds. Some rainfall amounts include 3.50 inches at Herried, 3.80 inches at Java, 4.20 inches at Selby, 4.50 inches 3N of Selby and just southeast of McLaughlin, 5 inches at Glenham, 5.75 inches 8N of Mobridge, and 6.35 inches 1.5 miles southeast of Glenham.

1864: A train running from Cincinnati to Chicago was derailed by a tornado in Dearborn County, Indiana, or 75 miles southeast of Indianapolis. Two passenger cars were lifted from the tracks and dropped in a ravine which injured 30 people.

1883 — Krakatoa Volcano exploded in the East Indies. The explosion was heard more than 2500 miles away, and every barograph around the world recorded the passage of the air wave, up to seven times. Giant waves, 125 feet high and traveling 300 mph, devastated everything in their path, hurling ashore coral blocks weighing up to 900 tons, and killing more than 36,000 persons. Volcanic ash was carried around the globe in thirteen days producing blue and green suns in the tropics, and then vivid red sunsets in higher latitudes. The temperature of the earth was lowered one degree for the next two years, finally recovering to normal by 1888. (David Ludlum)

1949 — A hurricane made landfall at Delray Beach. Winds reached 153 mph at the Jupiter Lighthouse before the anemometer failed. The hurricane caused 45 million dollars damage to crops, and also caught the Georgia and South Carolina coast resulting in another two million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1965 — Late night severe thunderstorms associated with an unusually strong late summer cold front produced 100 mph winds straight line winds in the Chicago area and northwest Indiana. In Lake County IND, high winds derailed a train near Crown Point, and left a canoe suspended among telephone lines. Two nights later the temperature at Midway Airport in Chicago dipped to 43 degrees, establishing a record for the month of August. (Storm Data) (Hugh Crowther)

1976 — A weak tornado touched down briefly in the Hockley Hills near Kiana, AK, about 29 miles north of the Arctic Circle. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Showers and thunderstorms drenched northern Illinois during the morning and afternoon hours pushing August rainfall totals for Chicago, Moline and Peoria to new all-time highs for any month of the year. By the end of August, Chicago had received 17.10 inches of rain, which easily surpassed the previous record of 14.17 inches established in September 1961. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — A dozen cities in Texas, Colorado and California reported record high temperatures for the date, including readings of 100 degrees at Pueblo CO, 106 degrees at Wichita Falls TX, and 109 degrees at Redding CA. Afternoon thunderstorms in Utah deluged the town of Beaver with more than an inch of rain in twenty minutes. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Anchorage, AK, was soaked with a steady rain, and the 24 hour total of 4.12 inches smashed their previous 24 hour precipitation total of 2.10 inches. It also pushed their rainfall total for the month past their previous record for August. (The National Weather Summary)

1992 — Hurricane Andrew made a second landfall near Burns Point, LA as a Category 3 hurricane. Morgan City, LA recorded sustained winds of 92 mph with a peak gust of 108 mph. Hammond, LA was deluged with 11.92 inches of rain. As Andrew moved inland and weakened, it spawned 47 tornadoes from this date through the 28th from the South to the Mid-Atlantic States.

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Daily Devotion

The Truth Will Set You Free

God's Word reminds us of the joy and freedom of belonging to Jesus.

Ephesians 1:3-6: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

What does it mean to belong to Jesus? This question gets at the heart of our identity as believers—and understanding the answer brings profound joy and peace.

God made a way for us to be part of His family. Before the foundation of the world, He planned our redemption so that we who were far from Him could be brought near through Christ. This reality defines our identity as God's children. It stands as a rock that stabilizes us when fears and anxieties threaten to overwhelm us.

In spite of this, many believers become unsettled when they think about their sin nature. Knowing that the Lord opposes sin, they become fearful and ashamed. We need to remind ourselves of God's Word, which assures us there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

Keep in mind that the Father has welcomed you as one of His own. And that means you are somebody very special to God. In fact, you are so dear to Him that He sent His only Son into a sinful world to die on the cross so you could be near to Him. This is pure, unadulterated grace—God's love poured out for us.

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:
08.25.26

24 45 50 53 57 3

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 35 Mins 13
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.25.26

7 10 47 48 50 14

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$145,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 20
Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.24.26

7 13 23 35 44 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,930,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 35 Mins 14
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.22.26

5 7 11 23 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$36,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 50 Mins 14
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.24.26

5 6 34 38 39 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 19 Mins 14
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.24.26

3 16 33 38 68 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$96,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 19 Mins 14
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Centerville def. Viborg-Hurley
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Miller def. Kimball-White Lake, 25-18, 25-13, 25-22

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Federal judge blocks enforcement of Ohio proof-of-citizenship requirement for voter registration

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday temporarily blocked enforcement of an Ohio requirement that voters show proof of citizenship when registering to vote at a motor vehicle bureau, a rule that took effect for the first time this year.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose, a Republican, said he would immediately appeal.

In a lawsuit brought on behalf of the Ohio Alliance of Retired Americans and the progressive group Red Wine & Blue by the Democrat-aligned Elias Law Group, U.S. District Court Judge Solomon Oliver Jr. in Cleveland ruled that the requirement appears to conflict with the National Voter Registration Act, which he said takes precedence.

His injunction suspends the practice of requiring such documentation ahead of the Oct. 5 registration deadline for this fall's midterm elections.

It comes as President Donald Trump pushes Congress to pass a bill that would, among other election changes, require documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote.

Ohio is among a handful of states with proof-of-citizenship laws in place for the first time this year. South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming also put similar requirements on the books for this year's midterms. Arizona had one already in force for state and local elections.

In South Dakota on Tuesday, the League of Women Voters and a Sioux Falls voter filed a lawsuit over that state's new proof-of-citizenship requirement for voter registration. Among their requests is that a judge force the state to accept photocopies of eligible ID forms and also to rescind guidance requiring people using certain ID types to register in person.

Ohio's requirement was added last year to its motor voter law. In his ruling, Solomon wrote that the requirement "is more than the signed attestation to U.S. citizenship that Ohio's other voter registration methods accept. Therefore, (the challenged provision) likely conflicts with the NVRA, because it is more than 'the minimum amount of information necessary.'"

He further found that Ohio's overall "motor voter" registration process has illegally been limiting the option to sign up to vote to those who successfully obtain a driver's license, rather than offering it to everyone who submits an application for one, as federal law requires.

Ben Stafford, a partner at Elias Law, said in a statement that Ohio voters would now be able to register at the BMV without the requirement to show citizenship paperwork. He described the regulation as "exactly the type of government-imposed barrier that the NVRA exists to prevent."

The judge's order prevents Ohio from requiring any driver's license applicant to produce proof-of-citizenship documents before being offered the chance to register to vote, even those applicants turned away for lack of the proper paperwork. It doesn't cover applicants who indicate they are not U.S. citizens.

LaRose criticized the ruling and pointed to a case in Franklin County, which includes Columbus, that he said proves the process Solomon has required doesn't work. The case involved a lawful permanent resident of the U.S. who was ineligible to vote but did so in 2018 after she said a clerk at the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles mistakenly led her to believe she was allowed to do so. The woman was found not guilty by reason of entrapment.

"Under this order, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles would be required to offer a voter registration form to a person who is applying for a driver's license, even if that person can't verify that they're a citizen," LaRose said in a statement. "We strongly disagree with that decision, and I've asked our legal team to file an immediate appeal."

Solomon's decision aligned with court decisions elsewhere.

In May, in the first major legal test of Trump's citizenship-related election demands, a federal judge in New Hampshire ruled that the state must make voter registration easier by letting applicants attest to their U.S. citizenship if they don't have the documents to prove it.

When New Hampshire's law took effect for the first time, for local elections in 2025, some election clerks said they knew of would-be voters who couldn't produce the necessary documents and were turned away — for example, women who had changed their last names when they married.

In June, a federal judge permanently barred the Trump administration from implementing most of the president's first executive order on elections, including a requirement that people show documentary proof of citizenship when they register to vote. The ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Denise Casper in Boston effectively converted what was a preliminary injunction blocking much of the attempted overhaul into a permanent one.

A 2025 University of Maryland study estimates that 21.3 million Americans eligible to vote do not have documents or have easy access to the documents required to prove citizenship.

FBI sets \$25,000 minimum reward for dozens of unsolved Indian Country cases

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Federal Bureau of Investigation has established a minimum reward of \$25,000 in cases where people went missing or were killed in Indian Country, part of a broader effort to address high rates of violence affecting Native American communities.

The new minimum applies to more than 50 unsolved homicides and missing-person cases in tribal communities. Most of the cases are less than 10 years old, though a dozen have been unsolved for more than two decades, an AP analysis found.

Victims' families and experts are unsure the higher amounts will be enough to get tipsters to come forward, citing people's fears and distrust of the federal government.

"Everybody's scared in Oglala," said Lisa Carlow, whose father Patrick Carlow Sr. was found dead in his Pine Ridge Reservation home in 2023. "So to me it's like, OK, what do you guys know that you're not saying?"

The FBI investigates federal crimes on nearly 200 Native American reservations, along with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. At the end of 2025, the FBI's National Crime Information Center recorded just under 1,500 active cases involving missing Native Americans, though not all become federal cases. There isn't a minimum reward that applies across all FBI cases.

The FBI cited several cases in its recent announcement, including that of 8-year-old Maleeka Boone, who it said was likely struck by a vehicle on the Navajo Nation, and San Carlos Apache teenager Emily Pike, whose body was found after she disappeared from an Arizona group home.

Higher rewards could stir new interest

Mary Kathryn Nagle, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and an attorney who advocates for families of missing Native Americans, said federal investigators often "parachute in" to investigate crimes in tight-knit communities where witnesses may stay silent because of distrust and fear of retribution.

Still, she said, larger rewards could provide an incentive for people to talk, and show families their loved ones' cases are being taken seriously.

"We have people in Indian Country who know what happened to our relatives," she said.

Luana Ross, who is Bitterroot Salish and a co-director of the Native Voices program at the University of Washington, said cash rewards could boost interest but often aren't paid out.

"It is my opinion that in reservation communities, people would be extremely reluctant to turn a friend or relative into a criminal justice system that hasn't served them well," she said.

Cecil Jackson, 43, said he'd been aware of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons movement, but never thought he'd be affected. Then his mother, Mona Renee Vallo, was found dead after a suspected hit-and-run along historic Route 66 in Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico, in 2022.

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Vallo was a member of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. Jackson remembers participating in cultural activities with her and going picking for cherries and apricots.

He hopes the higher reward money will renew interest in the investigation. It's been a while since his family received an update from the FBI.

"Someone knows something there," said Vallo's friend, Lisa Foster. "They have to. I mean, it's weird that she went to work and then all of a sudden this happened to her."

Frustration mounts as families seek answers

The reward in Carlow's case was increased to \$25,000 in July, up from \$10,000.

Carlow's family says the 73-year-old rancher was respected in the Oglala community. He mowed the grass for others and spent time with his grandchildren. The family said more calls started coming in after the reward was increased, but the wait for answers continues.

Meanwhile, the FBI declined to provide The Associated Press an update on the case.

"It's so hard to get your hopes up like that and think, 'This is it, we finally got dad's killer.' And then nothing comes of it," Lisa Carlow said.

She said fear keeps community members who may have information from contacting authorities.

"I think that's like deep-rooted within our people," said her sister, JoDee Carlow. "It's not just on Pine Ridge. It's on every reservation."

Relatives don't want cases to be forgotten

The FBI initially offered \$5,000 for information in the deaths of two brothers from Ohio, Matthew and Philip Reagan. The reward was later doubled and now will hit \$25,000. Though not Native Americans, they were killed on the Navajo Nation and are featured on the FBI's Indian Country cases website.

The brothers planned to visit Canyon de Chelly National Monument during a trip to California. Authorities believe their SUV got stuck in mud after GPS sent them off course near Sawmill. They were shot multiple times while walking to seek help, authorities said.

Matthew Reagan's wife, Faye Wurstner-Reagan, said she doubts a \$25,000 reward will persuade anyone in the small community to come forward.

"You would have to promise someone, like, actual protection," she said. "I mean, they brutally murdered two men."

She suggested the FBI instead put resources toward law enforcement to keep the cases from going cold and for liaisons to keep families informed.

FBI spokesperson Brooke Brennan in Phoenix said investigating crimes in Indian Country often is complex because of the remoteness, limited resources and extensive workload.

Wurstner-Reagan hopes that families united in pain and grief over missing loved ones and unsolved killings might one day see justice.

"We're just getting forgotten, like no one is remembering any of us, and we're just told it's an active investigation," she said.

ICE agent charged with shooting in Minnesota could be released from Texas jail

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (AP) — An ICE agent charged in Minnesota with firing his gun through a house door, striking a man in his leg, and then lying to justify the shooting, could walk out of a South Texas jail on Thursday if a federal judge does not intervene.

Christian Castro, an agent for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, is charged in Minnesota with assault and falsely reporting a crime in the Jan. 14 wounding of 24-year-old Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis. Minnesota authorities have been seeking to have him extradited since his arrest, but he remains in custody in Brownsville, Texas, a city bordering Mexico.

Texas law says he must be released after 90 days of detention, which is Thursday. Minnesota's governor and attorney general filed a lawsuit asking a judge to compel Texas to return Castro to their state and to

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keep the Cameron County sheriff from releasing him until his extradition.

Castro is accused of firing a gun through the front door of a Minneapolis home, striking Sosa-Celis in the leg with a bullet that lodged in a child's bedroom wall. Prosecutors say Castro then falsely accused Sosa-Celis and another man of attacking an ICE officer with a broom handle and a snow shovel.

At a federal hearing Tuesday in Brownsville before U.S. District Judge Fernando Rodriguez, Jr., attorneys with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office argued it would be hard to compel Castro to face charges in their state if he is released, and even harder if he flees.

Rodriguez said he was inclined not to keep the sheriff from releasing Castro, but he said he would provide an order responding to the temporary restraining order on Wednesday.

Attorneys representing the Texas Governor's Office said the governor has not yet officially decided to deny or grant Minnesota's extradition request and therefore the lawsuit is premature.

"I think ripeness is a significant issue," Rodriguez told attorneys.

Gov. Greg Abbott ordered an internal state investigation to determine if Castro is legally considered a "fugitive." Trevor W. Ezell, Abbott's general counsel, also questioned whether the court could impose a deadline for the governor to respond to an extradition request.

"There's nothing legally left for them to investigate," Kimberly Ann Svendsen, an attorney representing the Minnesota attorney general, told the judge.

Abbott said last week that he would not respond to the extradition request, citing ongoing investigations of fraud in government social service programs in Minnesota, which President Donald Trump used to justify his immigration crackdown there.

Fire in a hospital nursery kills 14 newborns in Pakistan's capital

By MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A fire triggered by an exploding air conditioner killed 14 newborns in a hospital nursery in Pakistan's capital on Wednesday, officials said.

One baby of the 15 who were in the nursery at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences was rescued, the hospital said.

Television footage showed rescue workers using ladders to reach the third-floor nursery through broken windows. Grieving parents and relatives gathered at the hospital, some weeping while others demanded answers about how the fire began and whether the nursery had adequate firefighting equipment.

The government has opened an investigation, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered Health Secretary Aslam Ghauri, the Health Ministry's highest civil servant, to be removed from office.

A woman who identified herself as Mrs. Mohammad Sami said she gave birth three days earlier and her baby was receiving intensive care in the nursery when the fire broke out.

"I don't know what to say or whom to blame," she said through tears. "I have lost my child."

The fire was confined to the hospital's nursery

The fire was confined to the nursery at the institute, which is one of Islamabad's largest public hospitals. The rest of the facility was unaffected with no other injuries reported, according to hospital officials and witnesses. The blaze was later extinguished, Islamabad Chief Commissioner Suhail Ashraf said.

It was among Pakistan's deadliest recent tragedies involving children. In June, 14 schoolchildren were killed when the roof of a tutoring center under construction collapsed in the eastern city of Lahore.

Health Minister Mustafa Kamal, who confirmed the death toll, told the Geo News channel that he was traveling from Karachi to Islamabad to oversee the investigation.

Dr. Aneesa Jalil, a hospital spokesperson, said a doctor rescued one baby. She said the bodies of six babies had been handed over to their families, while the remaining bodies would be released soon.

The government is investigating how the fire started and the response

The Islamabad district magistrate appointed a fact-finding committee and asked it to submit a report within 24 hours. The panel will investigate the cause of the fire and its spread, determine whether adequate fire-safety measures were in place, and evaluate the emergency response, according to a government order.

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Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Sharif, the prime minister, expressed sorrow over the fire.

"A tragedy involving children is an irreparable loss," said Sharif, who held a high-level meeting with officials from relevant agencies hours after the fire.

President Asif Ali Zardari also offered condolences to the families, describing the deaths as "heartbreaking and an irreparable loss." He called for those responsible to be brought to justice and urged hospitals to ensure effective fire-safety measures and emergency procedures.

The US and Canada could pull back from an all-out trade war. It's not clear that they will

By PAUL WISEMAN and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. and Canada have ramped up their trade war, hitting each other with steep new tit-for-tat tariffs. Despite the bravado coming from both sides of the border, though, analysts suspect the longtime allies will eventually strike a deal to end a conflict neither really wants.

The prospects for compromise looked bleak Tuesday, with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney reacting to new 50% U.S. tariffs on certain Canadian goods by responding in kind on about \$20 billion worth of American imports, including steel, dairy products, appliances and farm equipment.

"You're at war when you get attacked. We got attacked," Carney, who came to power last year on the promise that he'd stand up to U.S. President Donald Trump, said over the weekend.

Doug Ford, Ontario's populist premier, told The Associated Press on Monday that he was ready to escalate even further by cutting off his province's shipments of electricity and critical minerals to the United States.

Soon after, Trump declared his intention to hammer the Canadian auto industry with another set of import taxes if the Canadians don't "fall in line."

With the breakdown threatening to harm one of the world's largest trading relationships and clouding efforts to renew the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement that Trump negotiated during his first term, experts cautioned that there's still time to pull back from the brink of an even bigger trade war.

They've done it before. "If there is political will, there is an off ramp," said former U.S. trade negotiator Wendy Cutler.

'It's not real until somebody walks away'

U.S.-Canada trade talks typically get testy, said Christopher Sands, who heads the Center for U.S.-Canada Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

The two neighbors have a long history of sparring over things like Canada's protected dairy market and subsidized softwood lumber exports.

"We've gone through this with Canadians before," Sands said. "It's almost like it's not real until somebody walks away from the table. ... I'm not panicked."

There are reasons to think something can be salvaged from the rubble of bilateral trade talks that collapsed Friday.

First, the U.S. tariffs that Trump imposed Saturday cover just \$20 billion worth — around 5% — of Canada's exports to the United States and are unlikely to do much lasting economic damage. Oxford Economics reckons the trade conflict would reduce Canadian economic growth only slightly next year — from a previously forecast 1.6% to 1.4%. On Monday, U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer even tried to downplay the trade rift as a "tempest in a teapot."

Moreover, Carney's retaliatory tariffs wouldn't take effect until Sept. 8. "That gives us this week. It gives us next week," Sands said. "Time to take a breather and talk about how to avert" an all-out trade war.

Despite Trump's tough talk on Truth Social, his punitive auto tariffs wouldn't kick in until Jan. 1 — well after the Nov. 3 midterm elections in which the president's Republican Party is hoping to keep full control of Congress despite voter frustration with the high cost of living.

So there's at least enough time for the countries to find a stopgap solution.

Cutler, now senior vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute, suggested that the U.S. could tap an emissary that both countries trust to get talks back on track; she recalled that Trump's son-in-law Jared

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Kushner helped negotiate the USMCA eight years ago.

Canada would likely balk at a one-sided deal

Cutler also noted that Trump suspended his global tariffs for months last year to allow U.S. trading partners to negotiate with him. Many did, including the European Union and Japan, and ended up agreeing to lopsided trade agreements to dodge the worst of Trump's tariffs.

Canadians, though, are in no mood for a Trump-friendly trade deal.

The American president has enraged the Canadian public with inflammatory talk of making their country the 51st U.S. state. And on Tuesday, instead of trying to lower the temperature, he declared that he was considering changing the name of Lake Ontario to Lake America. He has also repeatedly hit Canada with tariffs and threats of them, including when he suggested he might punish Canada for wildfires that were blackening U.S. skies.

"Fighting with Washington is hugely popular in Canada right now," said Scott Lincicome of the Cato Institute, a Washington-based free-trade think tank. "Guys like Doug Ford — like him, love him or hate him — understand this is a political winner for them."

The latest U.S.-Canada conflagration flared up last month when Trump said he planned to hit Canada with 50% tariffs. He complained that Canada had been unfairly restricting U.S. exports of dairy, alcoholic beverages and autos. Trump set a deadline of Aug. 19 — last Wednesday — for the two countries to reach a deal and head off the tariffs.

Because the Supreme Court struck down his biggest tariffs in February, the president turned this time to an obscure provision of a Depression-era trade law that gives him the power to impose tariffs of up to 50% on imports from countries that have discriminated against U.S. businesses. No investigation is required, nor is there any limit on how long the tariffs can last. But no president has ever imposed such tariffs before, so they are untested in court.

'No choice' but to walk away

Last week, negotiators appeared to be close to resolving their differences. Less than two hours before levies were set to take effect, Trump announced a three-day reprieve, posting on social media that "Canada and the U.S.A., subject to the finalization of documents, have a DEAL!" Greer, the U.S. trade representative, later told CNBC that the United States had offered to cut in half existing 50% tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum, and to sharply reduce levies on Canadian auto and softwood lumber imports.

But it all fell apart Friday and the Canadians walked away, with Carney saying the Americans had sought "to destroy our major industries, including autos, steel and aluminum. ... That was one of the main reasons we said no. It was a bad deal." Carney also said that Washington viewed protections for French and Canadian culture — considered fundamental rights in Canada — as irritants to trade.

Ford said he understood that late in the talks, Washington demanded veto power over trade deals Canada pursued with other countries, which would have violated Canadian sovereignty.

Despite the differences, Cato's Lincicome said, "both sides understand the economic consequences of some sort of a full-blown trade war."

The two countries last year did \$880 billion worth of trade, according to the U.S. Commerce Department. Canada sends 72% of its exports to the United States. And U.S. communities along the border depend on Canadian electricity. American farmers need Canadian potash fertilizer. And U.S. refineries in the Midwest rely on imports from Alberta's oil sands deposits.

Then there's U.S. politics. "Voters hate tariffs," Lincicome said. "They associate them with higher cost of living, and (Trump has) got to be hearing from political folks that if he wants any chance of salvaging the midterms he can't start a trade war with Canada."

"My guess — and it's only a guess — is that cooler heads do prevail somewhere in the next few weeks."

An AP reporter spends the night locked inside Jerusalem's holiest church with clergy and pilgrims

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The enormous doors were pushed shut, the clanking bolts secured from the outside and several clergy, pilgrims and one journalist — me — were locked for the night inside one of Christianity's holiest sites in Jerusalem.

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built over the spots where Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and rose from the dead.

Through many centuries, as Muslim rulers governed this region and changing politics affected the influence of religious powers, an arrangement evolved as unique as the church's jumbled architecture. Today, the Armenian Apostolic, Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches share the ownership of the worship space.

I watched through a tiny door slot as a representative from a Muslim family — they've been entrusted with the basilica's keys since the 13th century — climbed a small wooden ladder to reach the upper bolt. Then he passed the ladder back through that same opening, which a Greek Orthodox priest locked shut too. Another wished us "Good night!" in English before hurrying away.

Most nights, from 9 p.m. to dawn, when the doors are reopened with the same ceremony, about a dozen priests, a smattering of registered pilgrims and a few cats have the sprawling, dark basilica to themselves.

While the priests and a few nuns quickly went about their rest or chores, it took us visitors a few quiet, contemplative moments to even decide where to start wandering in the venerated, labyrinthine space.

A unique prayer experience in Jerusalem's holiest church

Peter Stängle, a pilgrim from Brazil, repeatedly prayed on his knees. His tattooed forearms and his forehead rested on the stone of the unction, where Jesus's body is believed to have been prepared for burial.

"A lot is going through my mind — what I did wrong in my life, is there salvation for everybody, maybe even for me?" he said.

He'd been so distracted by the stream of visitors during the day — even though it's a far tinier number than before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Israel-Hamas war and the Iran war decimated tourism — that he considered hiding at closing time in one of the many side chapels. Then he discovered he could simply sign up to spend the night in prayer in the church.

The complex was mostly built in the Middle Ages on sites venerated since the 4th century. With renovations and additions still ongoing, our steps echoed on millennia-old stones while 20th-century wall mosaics glittered.

It's a multistory, meandering construction decorated in the different styles of the denominations that use it. In addition to their dedicated altars, all pilgrims tend to venerate three spots — the unction stone, the shrine built over Jesus' tomb, and the upper chapel of Calvary, where a stone marks the spot where Jesus' cross stood, according to tradition.

Stängle and I sat facing it for a long time. Only a handful of oil lamps flickered in the shade of the side-by-side Catholic and Greek Orthodox spaces, with glass enclosures dividing the stone for their respective worshippers' veneration.

We also crossed paths in front of the Holy Edicule, the marble shrine erected over Jesus' cave tomb. Three Armenian pilgrims sat solemnly in front of it until a cat strolled up and nestled at their feet, almost touching the beads of the rosary that one white-veiled woman held.

Different Christian traditions share holy worship spaces

It's at the Edicule that each night around midnight, after the ringing of the bells, the first services are held as the resident clergy start the prayers that wrap up usually around 6 a.m. That's normally when we overnights are let out, and daytime worshippers can come in.

The reverence, said the Rev. Giuseppe Gaffurini, "enriches the Basilica."

"You can still breathe in the presence of he who was crucified and rose from the dead," said Gaffurini, who heads the monastic community of 10 Franciscans living in rooms above the Catholic section of the church.

The Italian priest laments that the ongoing conflicts have prevented hundreds of thousands of pilgrims

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from attending services at the basilica. He had often admired their devotion — those touching or kissing the cold, historic stones, and those hugging each other in tears.

He remembers first visiting to chant in some of the nighttime liturgies 15 years ago. He had taken monastic vows three decades earlier, so he didn't expect it to be a transformative experience — but it was so searing that he hasn't left.

"The joy of the encounter at the sepulcher of the risen one erases a lifetime of fatigue and launches you forward again," Gaffurini said.

He then retired to his room for a few hours' sleep before the Franciscans' dawn services started, his brown robes fading in the candlelit space.

A fellow friar from Guinea-Bissau was the first up from the Catholic order. He rang a bell and opened the Catholic chapel of the Blessed Sacrament — where Franciscans have worshipped for 700 years — so that priests of the Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Coptic rites could incense it on their around-midnight tour of the sacred spots inside the church. Ethiopian and Syrian Orthodox clergy also have clearly defined access to the church in an often controversial 19th-century arrangement.

The Franciscan, a Greek Orthodox priest and an Armenian one robed in bright red, nodded at each other as incense wafted near the Edicule. Then each started distinctive rites in rotation — an accommodating coexistence that's a welcome change from centuries of at-times violent fights about the right to worship here.

"We're living a particularly positive period of relationships with the other churches," said the Rev. Francesco Ielpo, the Franciscan priest who, as Custos of the Holy Land, oversees more than 300 friars in the region ministering to the basilica and many more holy sites.

That positivity and collaboration, he says, "is, I believe, the first and most important sign to be really prophets of peace."

At night, clergy and pilgrims are alone with their thoughts — and faith

Before the latest wars, the shop-filled maze of narrow alleyways that surround the church inside Jerusalem's Old City was often packed shoulder-to-shoulder with jostling pilgrims. On a 2016 trip here, the crowds were so dense I didn't even make it into the basilica's stone courtyard.

A team of archaeologists and a few groups of visitors still come in daily, crossing paths with Jews and Muslims going to pray at their respective major holy sites a few hundred meters (yards) away. For the Christian priests, nuns and monks who can be easily spotted because of their flowing robes, those encounters are increasingly tense.

But inside the church, especially in the silent wake, you're alone with your thoughts — and for Christians, with an almost tangible representation of the central tenet of the faith.

You're locked inside a cool, dark space, on the very site where Jesus suffered a brutal form of execution, the crucifixion. And yet, to believers, this is also where that page turned — where he defeated death, leaving the promise of eternal life for the faithful.

As we sat on a bench below the Calvary chapel — across from a 17-year-old Armenian priest on one of his first nights here — I asked Gaffurini if this mystery still affected him after 15 years.

"Fifteen?" he shot back. "It would still do so after 50 years."

Republican with same name as incumbent Dan Sullivan advances from Alaska US Senate primary

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — A candidate with the same name as Alaska's incumbent U.S. senator advanced Tuesday to the general election in what will be one of the most closely watched races in the country this fall.

Dan J. Sullivan, who goes by Dan Sullivan, was among the top four finishers after the Aug. 18 primary and moved on to the November matchup, which is a ranked choice contest. The incumbent, Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan, and Democratic former U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola also have advanced.

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The challenger Sullivan, a retired teacher from the island community of Petersburg, sued for a spot on the ballot and succeeded after a judge invalidated a decision by a top state elections official who said he had filed his candidacy with an intent to confuse voters. The allegation was driven by claims raised by the senator and his GOP allies. The state Supreme Court ultimately ordered Dan J. Sullivan eligible for the ballot.

While the challenger sought to appear on the ballot as Republican Dan J. Sullivan, the Division of Elections listed him as Daniel J. Sullivan Jr., with no party affiliation. The senator was listed as Dan S. Sullivan, Republican and incumbent.

A call seeking comment from the challenger was not immediately returned Tuesday, and emails to campaign staff for the senator also were not immediately returned.

President Donald Trump endorsed Sen. Sullivan for reelection and called the other Sullivan's candidacy an attempt to trick voters. Dan J. Sullivan criticized the incumbent for embracing Trump's endorsement and said the president was "more interested in raising tariffs on our allies than in lowering the cost of groceries, housing and energy."

It was too early to determine who would fill the fourth and final slot in the Senate general election race.

The Senate race was one of three major contests on Alaska's primary ballot, which also featured races for the state's lone U.S. House seat and governor.

In the congressional race, Republican Rep. Nick Begich, seeking a second term, advanced earlier to the general election along with independent Bill Hill. The other two spots remained too early to call.

Democrats Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins and Tom Begich, former state lawmakers, advanced on election night in the race for governor, topping a field of mostly Republican candidates all vying to succeed Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy. Tom Begich is Nick Begich's uncle. Republican Bernadette Wilson also advanced on Tuesday, with the fourth spot remaining too early to call.

The state accepts absentee and overseas ballots up to 10 days after the primary as long as they were postmarked by election day.

The incumbent Sullivan and Peltola are the leading candidates in the Senate race, after raising the most money and having statewide name recognition. It's one of a handful of Senate races around the country considered competitive and pivotal for both parties' hopes of controlling the chamber.

Dan J. Sullivan's presence on the general election ballot adds a twist to the race because of Alaska's ranked choice voting system. Under it, candidates who finish third or fourth in the general election can play a crucial role in deciding the eventual winner if their supporters rank other choices beyond them.

Dolly Parton built a better world, with rhinestones and songs

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — There are few inalienable truths: Everyone was born, everyone will die, and everyone loved Dolly Parton.

Larger-than-life at 5-foot-nothing, the country star, actor, philanthropist, entrepreneur and theme park enthusiast who died Tuesday, transcended celebrity in rhinestones and fringe. She was embraced by fans across gender, race and class, embodying a mythology typically inaccessible to even the most influential historical figures.

It's hard to name a more adored artist — one who could deliver a perfectly timed dirty joke seconds before a folk classic of her own composition. (This is where, if Parton were reading along, a self-deprecating quip would come in — lest anyone forget she was a whip-smart jokester, too.)

Throughout her endeavors, Parton worked to build a better world, while becoming inextricable from the American imagination. It is one of her greatest legacies: to take what you have and help someone with it.

One of the most beloved artists of all time

In 2015, when Parton returned to Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, Grand Ole Opry announcer Bill Cody introduced her as "the most beloved artist of all time," quickly amending it to "female artist." As history has proven, he was correct the first time.

Parton's legacy starts with the immortality of her music: songwriting as solace, an exercise in creativity

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and an unwavering ability to write experience into art. Across her career, Parton wrote and performed perennial hits ("Jolene," "Coat of Many Colors," "Little Sparrow," take your pick) and others that took on a life of their own (most famously, "I Will Always Love You," made immortal by Whitney Houston).

Parton grew up in poverty, one of 12 kids in East Tennessee's rural Sevier County, where she started writing songs as a toddler. By 10, she was on the radio and TV in Knoxville, Tennessee. By 13, she had made her debut at the Grand Ole Opry. At 21, she joined "The Porter Wagoner Show," her star power quickly eclipsing its host.

The accomplishments — and the trials and tribulations that came with them, which she let roll off her shoulders with enviable resiliency — came fast and furious, as they do with once-in-a-lifetime talents. There are the 10 Grammys, the numerous Hall of Fame inductions, and the fact that she revolutionized the world of country music for women alongside Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette, creating a path for crossover artistry. But there are also her Hollywood forays. It's telling that her first feature film, "9 to 5," celebrated women in the workplace and messed with their devious bosses.

One of her superpowers was rooted in a kind of irony: Everything about Dolly Parton is truly Dolly Parton or else she wouldn't partake — down to the false eyelashes and big wigs. She built an economic empire with down-home sensibilities. If authenticity is currency in popular culture, Parton showed the world how it was done.

An honest-to-goodness iconoclast

There's a moment in her 1983 television special, "Dolly in Concert," where Parton calls herself "the original punk rocker." It's a fitting description: Armed in a uniform of high heels, acrylic nails (the better to write songs with), tight clothes and big blond beehive, the image of Parton was enough to scandalize. Jokes about her breasts were prevalent for decades; she wielded them like a weapon.

Her first big break came in 1967 with a single, ironically titled "Dumb Blonde." It's a clever admonishment of a man who calls a woman stupid. It was fabulously misunderstood and misconstrued, forecasting the wonderful hypocrisy inherent in many public appreciations of Parton: She had full autonomy; make a low-brow pass at her and she'll have the last laugh. Always.

That spirit was inherent in her business ventures as well. Too poor to travel to Disneyland as a child, Parton opened her Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, amusement park, Dollywood, in 1986. Many thought it was a bad idea; it proved to be her most lucrative business venture. It's also, crucially, a blessing for the local economy. According to a 2021 study by the Tennessee Aviation System Plan, Dollywood brings in \$1.8 billion each year.

A great unifier

Parton's career kicked off in the transformative '60s, perfectly aligning with the emergence of the women's liberation movement. Though she didn't use the word herself, much of Parton's career — and in particular, her songwriting — has been viewed as a kind of feminism. Take the early hit, 1968's "Just Because I'm a Woman." Parton's sweet soprano and idiosyncratic tremolo are on full display as she reminds her male partner that he need not judge her for having previous sexual partners because he has done the same. "My mistakes are no worse than yours," she sings, "Just because I'm a woman."

Or consider 1970's "Down from Dover," a tearjerker about a pregnant teenager abandoned by her family and the child's father. She gives birth to a stillborn baby, alone, without medical treatment. "I guess in some strange way she knew she'd never have a father's arms to hold her," Parton sings. "And dying was her way of telling me he wasn't coming down from Dover." It's evocative then and now.

Still, across political divides, Parton is welcomed with open arms. It may have something to do with the fact that, when it came to capital-P party line, Parton valued apoliticism. During the 2016 presidential election, she said a woman would do a great job in office. When it was viewed as an endorsement of Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, she said her words were taken out of context. She never said who she voted for. And she declined the Presidential Medal of Freedom three times, twice from President Donald Trump and once from President Joe Biden so as to not appear biased. As a result, she was beloved by all — even in periods of unmitigated division.

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A fantastic philanthropist

With the same resolve she exhibited in her performances, Parton was dedicated to charity work.

In 1988, she launched the Dollywood Foundation, originally designed to combat high school dropout rates. Its early '90s Buddy Program paired junior high students in Sevier County and gave \$500 to each if they both finished high school. In 2016, when wildfires ravaged her native Great Smoky Mountains, the foundation announced it would give \$1,000 each month for six months to families who lost their homes. The following year, it was revealed the foundation's My People Fund helped 900 families with roughly \$9 million in the first six months after the fires.

In 1991, she launched a sanctuary for bald eagles that couldn't survive in the wild; in 2000, she started a college scholarship giving \$15,000 to five high school seniors in Sevier County. In 2020, she donated \$1 million to COVID-19 research at Vanderbilt University, which helped fund Moderna's vaccine.

Best known is her Imagination Library, founded in 1995. Parton's father was illiterate; it inspired her to launch an organization providing books to those without resources. By 2025, she had given away over 200 million books to children in need.

Parton was truly one of one — a generous country music heroine from the small-town South turned global phenomenon.

"I hope I'll be remembered as somebody that tried to do some good in the world," she told The Associated Press in 2024. "And left, you know, a few good things behind."

Release of Marine veteran from Russian custody turns focus to other detainees with health concerns

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Robert Gilman's release from Russian custody this month heralded a long-awaited homecoming for the Marine veteran after more than four years behind bars.

But as Harold Jezler followed the media coverage from the United States, he couldn't help but notice Gilman's gaunt and sickly appearance and think of the implications for his wife, Olga, who has been detained in Russia since 2022 and faces her own health problems.

"You just look at the pictures and the guy is not in good shape. It's concerning for me and for all the families, I would imagine," Jezler said in an interview with The Associated Press. "Is this what it takes for the government to really make a move and prioritize this — that the person is basically in dire straits? It was a very bittersweet thing to see that."

Gilman is the latest in a succession of prisoners freed by Russia going back years, but his release hardly cleared the decks of Americans held there. Some who remain are grappling with medical problems and receiving what family members and advocates say is below-standard care, adding urgency to the calls for their release.

Among those jailed are a Navy veteran with gastrointestinal illness, a man with an autoimmune disease, another with severe dental damage and Olga Jezler, 36, who was diagnosed with endometriosis, a condition involving abnormal tissue growth from the uterus that can cause severe pain and infertility.

"These are American citizens who are innocent of violations of Russian law. They're being held in Russia because they are Americans or because they have American status, and we shouldn't need to wait for their health to be on the brink of death for there to be an urgency to bring them home," said Eric Lebson, chief strategy officer for Global Reach, a firm that advocates for hostages and detainees and represents multiple Americans jailed in Russia.

The State Department said it was aware of concerns about medical care and continues to raise the issue with the Russians. The Russian Federal Penitentiary Service did not respond to a message seeking comment.

A former detainee describes medical care in Russian prisons

Paul Whelan assumes he received better-than-normal care in the Russian prison system given the high-profile nature of his captivity and his value as trade bait. But the more than five years the Michigan man

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spent in captivity on espionage charges the U.S. government called baseless gives him a good vantage point.

He spent the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in Russian custody, when he says extra raw onions were distributed as an apparent source of immunity. Prisoners with damaged teeth, he recalled, were more likely to have them yanked out than repaired. Prisoners had to make do, including with makeshift bandages, in the absence of a ready supply of first aid kits and bartered with guards for fresh fruit and vegetables, he said.

He had complained for months of a hernia, and when he finally was taken for an emergency, middle-of-the-night surgery, he recalls seeing medical instruments that were dropped on the floor cavalierly returned to the surgical tray.

"The poor conditions are part of the punishment," said Whelan, who was freed in 2024 in a blockbuster prisoner swap. "You are supposed to get less of everything than normal citizens would get."

The medical care of Russia's prisoners has long been a source of scrutiny, including because of the 2009 death of whistle-blowing Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky of untreated pancreatitis and more recently with the case of Trevor Reed, a Marine veteran who before his 2022 release had coughed up blood and experienced lung pain and a broken rib.

Gilman, a Massachusetts teacher, had been detained since 2022 on charges of assaulting a police officer. His family disputed the charges, and the State Department classified him as wrongly detained.

Before Gilman was flown out of Russia, he had been in "a dissociative stupor" for 47 days due to abuse he suffered in prison, Lebson has said. After Gilman was moved to the hospital, he was hooked up to a feeding tube and handcuffed to a bed.

The images of Gilman on the plane ride home raised troubling questions about his condition and the care he received, said Liz Richards, director of hostage advocacy and research at the Foley Foundation, a hostage advocacy organization. "We know he wasn't getting the medical care and treatment that he needs."

"I really do think Russia realized, if we don't release him, he is going to die, and that would create an international incident between our two countries — to have a Marine Corps veteran, an American, die in custody in Russia because of their treatment," Richards said.

Calls to release other Americans with health problems

Chuck Zimmerman, 59, was sailing from the U.S. to New Zealand in June 2025 when he was intercepted by the Russian navy in international waters and charged with transporting firearms on his yacht. His representatives say he voluntarily disclosed them after arriving in Sochi, a Black Sea port city. He was sentenced to five years in prison.

Within months, he developed excruciating stomach pain that became so bad that he took to making himself vomit to ease the discomfort.

An initial diagnostic test failed to identify the source of the pain, but a doctor consulted by the advocacy group Hostage US identified possible causes as a gastric ulcer, pancreatitis or a hiatal hernia with gastric bypass disorder, according to Global Reach.

"It's heart-wrenching to know that he's having to make himself do that to stop the pain," said his younger sister, Robin Stultz, who says her brother tells her he worries he might die in Russia. "It's hard for me to sit down and eat dinner knowing that he's throwing up his."

A recent letter from 16 senators to Secretary of State Marco Rubio cited Gilman's weakened condition in urging that more be done to secure the release of five other Americans. Besides Zimmerman and Jezler, the letter names Aleksandr Antonov, who advocates say has a traumatic brain injury; Andre Khachatoorian, jailed for nearly five years and living with an autoimmune disease; and David Barnes, who advocates say requires urgent dental surgery.

Other Americans who remain jailed include Stephen Hubbard, who is accused of fighting as a mercenary in Ukraine and has been classified by the U.S. as wrongfully detained, and Travis Leake, a rock musician held on drug-related charges. Richards, of the Foley Foundation, says that about 28 Americans are jailed in Russia, including a half dozen the organization considers wrongfully detained.

Olga Jezler, a green card holder, was arrested in 2022 after arriving in Russia to visit a sister grappling with cancer and charged with possessing CBD capsules that her husband and representatives say were legally permissible to carry.

She has been diagnosed with endometriosis, and a growth on her ovary continues to expand. Her husband and supporters are concerned the Russian government approach will be simply to remove the ovary if the cyst keeps growing, jeopardizing her ability to have children, as opposed to trying to preserve as much healthy tissue as possible — which they say would be the standard of care in the U.S.

The couple recently marked their seventh anniversary, but “it’s the fifth one we’ve celebrated apart,” Harold Jezler said.

“She’s been there,” he lamented, “way over half our marriage.”

Former detective says Tupac murder suspect was gang ‘shot caller’ who had final say in shooting

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. and JESSICA HILL Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A former Compton gang detective testified Tuesday that Duane “Keffe D” Davis was a high-ranking “shot caller” whose authority meant younger gang members would not have opened fire on Tupac Shakur with Davis present unless he allowed it.

Robert Ladd, a former Compton police officer who spent years investigating gang homicides, described Davis as a leader of the South Side Compton Crips who could order younger members to act.

Prosecutors have not accused Davis of firing the shots that killed Shakur in Las Vegas nearly 30 years ago. Instead, they allege Davis orchestrated the shooting in retaliation for a casino brawl hours earlier involving Shakur and Davis’ nephew, Orlando “Baby Lane” Anderson. Under Nevada law, someone who helps another person commit murder can be convicted of the crime.

Ladd testified that Shakur’s shooting triggered a 10-day war in Compton between the South Side Crips and Mob Piru, resulting in three killings and 10 attempted murders.

Davis has said in past interviews that he was riding in a white Cadillac with Anderson and two other men when they pulled alongside Shakur and Death Row Records co-founder Marion “Suge” Knight in a black BMW. In a 2008 police interview played for jurors last week, Davis said he provided the gun and Anderson opened fire.

Asked Tuesday who would have been the leader among the four men in the Cadillac, Ladd answered, “Mr. Davis.”

Ladd said that Anderson, a younger-ranking gang member, could not have opened fire with Davis in the car without Davis’ permission. If Davis had told the others to handle the dispute later, Ladd testified, “there wouldn’t have been a shooting.”

Defense attorney Michael Sanft emphasized the lack of physical evidence supporting that theory. Ladd acknowledged that, aside from Davis’ own admissions, he had no physical evidence placing Davis in Las Vegas that night and no phone records showing Davis ordered the shooting.

Law enforcement experts said they collected bills and letters from Las Vegas hotels in Anderson’s and Davis’ residences, but they didn’t know when they were dated, or the current location of that evidence.

Prosecutors have argued that Davis’ own words are central to their case, while Sanft has characterized his client’s accounts as fabricated bravado and accused investigators of failing to corroborate them.

Ladd was the 23rd witness called by prosecutors. The state is expected to rest its case Wednesday, with the defense expected to finish Friday and closing arguments anticipated Monday.

In a divided America, the left and right unite to oppose artificial intelligence data centers

By WILL WEISSERT and SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

MURDOCK, Neb. (AP) — In rural eastern Nebraska, a technology revolution could rise from fields of corn and soybean in the form of new data centers to power the artificial intelligence boom.

But just like around many parts of the country, opposition has been building in ways that defy typical partisan boundaries. Conservative farmers and the state Sierra Club chapter recently found common cause against labor leaders as they filled the firehouse in Murdock — population around 275 — to share concerns about data center development moving too quickly.

The scene exemplified an unlikely coalition that worries about dwindling farmland, declining water supplies and rising electricity bills — not to mention how massive corporations could reshape small town America into nodes in a national network of computing warehouses.

The debate around data center projects is one of the rare modern issues to cut across party lines, demographics and geography — from Republican-dominated Nebraska, Texas and Wyoming to swing-state Pennsylvania to Democratic-leaning New Mexico.

Supporters of data centers, including Republican President Donald Trump and some union leaders who usually back Democrats, praise a potential jobs and economic bonanza, while helping the U.S. thwart China in the geopolitical race for technological supremacy.

But hostility toward developments coming at breakneck speed has surged ahead of November's midterm elections, and forced national, state and local elected officials to adapt to a shifting political landscape.

Judy Stroy, a fifth-generation Nebraska farmer whose late husband grew corn and soybeans and whose son still does, worried that with "the amount of ground that's getting gobbled up every year, our food source is in trouble."

"That should scare everyone," she said.

Some areas have paused data center expansion

Stroy's fields are just outside Murdock, a village named for a railroad official at the company that first laid tracks here in the 1890s. There's a school, a post office, a bar and a Corn Grower's State Bank branch, plus the Midwest Farmer's Coop where growers sell their produce and buy supplies like feed and fertilizer.

Murdock is in Cass County, where officials recently approved a 12-month moratorium on allowing data center development.

That might freeze energy company Tenaska's plans to potentially option 1,300-plus acres of land along Highway 75, south of the nearby villages of Murray and Beaver Lake, in a project that activists fear would pave the way for a data center and its own natural gas power plant.

Tenaska spokesperson Leighton Elise Eusebio said the company has been exploring "the feasibility of developing power generation to serve large loads, whether that is a data center or other form of economic development."

"We believe there are opportunities to work with public power, communities and other stakeholders to develop power generation that will benefit Nebraskans," Eusebio said in a statement.

Meanwhile, data center operator CyrusOne has nearly 400 acres under its control outside another Cass County community, Plattsmouth, also along Highway 75, but no development has occurred nor has a project been announced, according to a CyrusOne spokesperson.

The area may be seen as particularly favorable because the highway has been widened, offering easy access to Omaha to the northeast, and to the college town of Lincoln to the southwest. The Missouri River provides a reasonably close, major water source.

Some landowners accepted large checks to sell. Local land typically can go for \$10,000 an acre, residents say, and developers sometimes offer four times that, or even more.

Such paydays can be extra enticing as farming has gotten more expensive amid rising diesel prices and soybean exports that have declined in the midst of Trump's tariff fight with a major market for the crop, China.

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"What if somebody offered me \$40,000 an acre for my ground? It would be hard to turn down," Stroy conceded.

Nebraska Sierra Club attorney Ken Winston noted that tech giants have made donations to municipal programs in Lincoln to help mitigate the impact of data centers.

"We need to be aware of the fact that they're going to happen somewhere," Winston said. "But communities need to be able to protect themselves and if they don't want them, they should be able to say no."

Major project sparks New Mexico divisions

There is no development moratorium in New Mexico that could stop Project Jupiter, a \$165 billion data center complex planned near the Mexican border, but concerns over dwindling water supplies are mounting.

"It is not about blue vs. red, or whether we're a purple state or county," said Samantha Barncastle Salopek, a longtime water attorney, who is running as a Republican for a seat on the Doña Ana County Commission partly because of the project.

"This is about the local community coming together and saying, 'Hold on, hold on.' We didn't get enough information, and now we're very concerned because also we have to cut back our water use anyway," she said.

Barncastle Salopek, whose family grows pecans, said she frequently fields worried calls from farmers, ranchers and local business owners across the political spectrum and in other states.

"When we have to fight over the last piece of the pie, those big companies are going to win," she said of pressure on remaining water supplies. That's because New Mexico has been hammered by persistent drought, and large swaths of the Rio Grande have dried up in the central part of the state.

The largest reservoir stands at 1.3% capacity, lows unseen since the early 1970s, even though New Mexico is on the hook to deliver more water to Texas under a recent settlement approved by the U.S. Supreme Court. Activists worry that New Mexico's pecan, chile and other farms could disappear, taking schools, hospitals and supporting businesses and incomes with them.

Oracle, which announced Project Jupiter, has offered funding for youth programs and pledged to invest \$50 million in water and wastewater systems in Doña Ana County.

It also plans to partner with an agriculture technology company to install sensors providing real-time data to farmers to help them use water more efficiently — estimating an eventual savings of 21 million gallons annually.

An Oracle spokesperson called the project a generational New Mexico investment, saying it would generate \$4.7 billion in taxes and create more than 7,000 construction jobs and 1,500 long-term jobs while being designed to use little water over 15 years, given its closed-loop cooling and fuel-cell systems.

Still, the Center for Biological Diversity last week filed an emergency petition with the New Mexico Supreme Court, challenging the state's approval of well drilling to supply millions of gallons of water for Project Jupiter's construction.

The court on Sunday granted that request, halting authorization to use water from a new well until the legal fight is concluded.

During a recent protest in the state capital of Santa Fe, the demonstrators included Jesus Rodriguez, who traveled four-plus hours from his micro-farm in southern New Mexico.

"The fact is that now the money has taken over," said Rodriguez, who described himself as disillusioned with American politics. "Now it shows that the Democrats, Republicans, or whatever other party is involved, they don't care about the land. They care about money. And that's because they want power."

Some labor leaders see new job opportunities

Data centers have found an ally in organized labor, including Mike Gage, president and secretary-treasurer of the Nebraska State AFL-CIO. Gage said he personally was worried that some workers are seeing their jobs replaced by AI, but that the centers can also create construction jobs and longer-term positions for people running the finished product.

"This problem is also a very big opportunity for some small communities," Gage said. He noted that a data center built decades ago in Council Bluffs, Iowa, near Omaha, still employs about 60 people today.

Heather McKenzie, who works in labor relations in Lincoln, said putting more data centers in Nebraska

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can slow an exodus of skilled young people leaving the state.

"I don't think that enough people understand that this is going to create really good jobs," she said. "I think a lot of people view it in a negative sense because it's being sprung on them."

Chris Backemeyer, a Democratic congressional candidate in the district that includes Murdock, is a former State Department employee. He said he heard about Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates offering to host data centers for the U.S., which might concentrate technology outside the country.

"That scares the bejesus out of me," Backemeyer said.

Trump champions data centers, but some Republicans are wary

The president has warned about China's technology gains and Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson said that a federal pause on data center construction might be a "dangerous prospect."

Still, most registered voters oppose building a data center in their area, according to a July Fox News poll, including 60% of Republicans and 53% of MAGA voters.

Democratic New York Gov. Kathy Hochul ordered a one-year ban on large data centers. Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, a fellow Democrat, said his administration would no longer prioritize data center projects when it comes to issuing construction permits or granting developers lucrative tax exemptions if they don't meet certain standards.

Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced a halt on approval of new data centers until audits determine their impact on the state's electrical grid.

Abbott told ABC News that data centers hadn't been working in collaboration with state or local officials and "basically dug their own grave for the problem that's been caused for them, and that's why they got the backlash they deserve."

The Republican Party's Senate campaign arm is worried enough about the issue potentially deciding races in Ohio, that it drafted a memo outlining how to respond. But politicians on both sides of the aisle have turned data centers into a punching bag.

Wyoming Secretary of State Chuck Gray, a Republican running for an open House seat, has pledged to halt their construction.

"If Silicon Valley wants to build their liberal empire, they can do it somewhere else," he said in an ad.

That overlaps with an ad for the mayor of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Democrat Paige Cagnetti, who said "we are not for sale" when it comes to data centers. Cagnetti is trying to unseat first-term Republican Rep. Rob Bresnahan in a battleground district.

Trump is undeterred, saying that what data centers mean "for a community is jobs and lots of money and lower taxes." The president has also conceded, however, that tech companies and developers maybe "can use a little public relations help."

Seeking to soften fears about rising utility prices, Trump says his administration has urged data centers to build their own power plants.

Yet, during a recent meeting in the conservative East Texas town of Tyler, residents complained of being forced to live in a "gas cloud" so data centers can get enough electricity.

The complaint echoed a similar objection from Kardal Coleman, who leads the Democratic Party in big-city Dallas County. He wrote a recent email decrying data centers for "replacing our jobs, polluting our air, and exacerbating the climate crisis, not to mention the noise disturbing our neighborhoods."

Dolly Parton, music star, actor and beloved figure who spanned generations, dies at 80 of cancer

By KRISTIN M. HALL and ANDREW DALTON Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Dolly Parton, the country music icon whose soaring vibrato vocals, poignant songwriting and sparkling costumes defined her rise from a log cabin in the Tennessee mountains to the height of stardom and acclaim, has died in Nashville. She was 80 years old.

"After bravely facing a brief battle with cancer, Dolly departed her Earthly life today at the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center surrounded by loved ones," her publicist, Marcel Pariseau, said in a statement Tuesday.

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Known for her curvy physique, massive blond wigs and skin-tight outfits that served her self-deprecating wit, she was among the most beloved personalities in music and beyond — the rare celebrity whose appeal transcended generations, geography and politics.

She wrote hundreds of songs, including classics like "Jolene," "Coat of Many Colors" and "I Will Always Love You," that totaled more than 100 million worldwide sales and more than 1 billion online streams. Parton, who plucked bejeweled banjos, guitar and dulcimers with her long fingernails during performances, was a generous philanthropist and successful businesswoman whose projects included a theme park in the Smoky Mountain foothills near her birthplace.

Her career was forever influenced by her upbringing as one of 12 children born into what she called a "dirt poor" Tennessee family. She started her education nonprofit, Imagination Library, to send free books to children in Tennessee because her father, who quit school to work on the farm, struggled to learn to read.

Parton's first musical performances were in church, where her grandfather was a preacher. By age 10, she was learning guitar and singing on local television shows. At 13, she appeared on the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, where Johnny Cash introduced her as "a little girl here from up in East Tennessee."

With a suitcase of songs, she followed her uncle, Bill Owens, also a songwriter, to Nashville after graduating high school in 1964. Fred Foster, who produced Roy Orbison, Willie Nelson and more, saw her potential and got her songs cut by other artists, as well as recording and releasing Parton singing her own material. By the mid-1970s, Parton was a Nashville queen.

A key collaboration launched Parton to fame

Parton's partnership with Porter Wagoner, a pencil-thin pompadoured star with flashy rhinestone outfits, was key to her career. She honed her acting skills on his syndicated TV show and he advocated for her to get a record deal at RCA. Their first duet, "The Last Thing On My Mind," was released in 1967, the same year she started her own publishing company.

While their duets were often big radio hits, Parton's solo singles didn't chart as high at first. With Wagoner as a co-producer, she began to adjust her country warble to a more polished, pop-leaning style.

She got her first No. 1 solo single with "Joshua," and reached the Top 5 with the ballad "Coat of Many Colors," about how her mother sewed together scraps of clothes to make a coat Parton wore "so proudly" even as her peers mocked her for being poor. The song, with its Biblical references and ode to maternal love, was later made into a children's book and a TV movie.

In 1973, she had the hit that made her career — "Jolene," a country music standard with its steady, churning rhythm and Parton's repeated delivery of the title as she pleads for the woman not to steal her man.

The song topped the country charts, crossing over to pop and later being released internationally, opening up new audiences for Parton. "Jolene" is one of her most covered compositions, including by Miley Cyrus (Parton's goddaughter), Olivia Newton-John and The White Stripes.

She left Wagoner's show in 1974, amid reports of squabbling between the two, although they continued to record together and Wagoner stayed her producer for years after that. But the relationship turned litigious when Wagoner sued her in 1979 for millions in management fees and royalties.

A push into pop music brought her first Grammy

She followed "Jolene" with a huge hit in 1974, "I Will Always Love You," an ode and farewell to Wagoner that helped her win the Country Music Association's female vocalist of the year back-to-back in 1975 and 1976. She famously turned down Elvis Presley, who wanted to record it, because she would not share publishing rights.

Decades later, Whitney Houston's version of "I Will Always Love You" became a smash for the soundtrack of her 1992 film "The Bodyguard," and broke sales records. Houston won a Grammy for her performance in 1994, presented to her by Parton.

"Here You Come Again," a pop crossover hit and one of the few she didn't write, further established Parton as a multi-genre entertainer and brought her first Grammy Award in 1979.

"A lot of people thought I had totally lost my mind," she told The Associated Press in 1979 of changing her singing style. "But I had no fear of change. I expected success, but I was braced for failure. I didn't care if people thought I was wrong. In my own heart, I knew I was doing the right thing."

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Parton's other crossover hits included the title song from "9 to 5," the 1980 comedy starring Parton, Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin; and her duet with longtime friend Kenny Rogers, "Islands in the Stream," written by brothers Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb of the Bee Gees. In 1987, she collaborated with Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris on the million-selling "Trio" album.

Rhinestones and wicked humor helped her cut a unique figure

For millions of fans, she was simply "Dolly," a mixture of Southern charm, humor and glamour. But she was also considered a feminist role model for holding the reins of her own career, writing her own songs, owning her content and looking after her finances in an entertainment world dominated by men.

Parton was open to making fun of herself; when she hosted "Saturday Night Live" in 1989 she told the writers that her only restrictions were she wouldn't curse and she wouldn't make fun of Jesus. She regularly joked about her breasts or her dumb blonde appearance, but with a wink that she was the one controlling the laughs. In the memoir "My Life So Far," Fonda remembered Parton's way with a wisecrack, "usually high raunch," and a laugh that was "somewhere between a girl's giggle, an explosive shriek, and a cascade of little bells."

After her gown split down the front when she won CMA's entertainer of the year in 1978, Parton quipped: "My Daddy said that's what I got for putting 50 pounds of mud in a five-pound bag."

Throughout her career, she embraced a glamorous style, often wearing custom curve-hugging rhinestone dresses and bodysuits even if they drew tsk-tsks from others in the industry. Her look was always a part of her larger musical business plan.

"I knew my songs were good even if I had been ugly as sin," she told the AP in 2014. "So I thought, 'Well, I would have probably chose to look this way even if I had been a waitress.' I mean, this is my look. I mean, I like a lot of makeup. I like a lot of hair. I like flashy clothes. I like to show it off. But that's just who I am."

She married Carl Dean, an asphalt paving contractor, in the mid-1960s; they were together until his death in 2025 at the age of 82. Though rarely seen in public, he was an influence on her career. She told NPR that she wrote "Jolene" about a flirty bank teller who seemed to take an interest in Dean.

'9 to 5' took her to Hollywood, and then Broadway

In her first major film role, Parton played alongside Fonda and Tomlin as office workers who rebel against their tyrannical boss in "9 to 5." Critic Roger Ebert called her a "natural-born movie star" and the title song earned her two Grammy Awards and a ranking of 78 on the American Film Institute's list of top 100 movie songs. Starring roles in "The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas" and "Steel Magnolias" followed.

"I never thought of myself as a movie star," she told AP's Bob Thomas in 1979. "I knew I'd be a star, but as a singer or as a writer of songs or books or poetry. I wanted to be a famous performer and wear flashy clothes, but singing in movies was not one of my ambitions. My family lived in the mountains and we didn't see movies."

Her love affair with TV and film continued for decades, with appearances alongside Cyrus on "Hannah Montana" and adaptations of her music for Christmas specials, films and streaming series. She also became an author, her books ranging from the memoir "Dolly" to a bestselling novel co-authored by James Patterson, "Run, Rose, Run."

The stage adaptation "9 to 5: The Musical" debuted in 2009, and "DOLLY: A True Original Musical" is set to open Jan. 19, 2027, on what would have been her 81st birthday.

She presided over a United States of Dolly

Beyond her music, Parton's most lasting legacy might be her generosity and broad appeal.

When a deadly wildfire swept through the Smokies in 2016, she held an all-star telethon and set up a foundation that sent monthly checks to residents whose homes were damaged or destroyed.

She opened up her Dollywood theme park in East Tennessee, a major economic driver in Appalachia that draws tourists from around the country, and established the Dollywood Foundation. She wrote books and memoirs, was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame and was given a lifetime achievement award by the Recording Academy. She was selected for the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 2025.

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With 55 Grammy nominations and 10 wins, Parton is the third-most nominated woman in Grammy history, only behind Beyoncé and Taylor Swift.

Parton spanned social and political divides, through multiple generations of fans, urban and rural and in between. In tumultuous election years, it wasn't uncommon to see "Dolly for President" shirts. But she was strict in not voicing her own political beliefs, often turning aside questions about presidents, candidates, policies and other controversies.

"I don't do politics," Parton told host Jad Abumrad on his hit podcast "Dolly Parton's America."

"I have too many fans on both sides of the fence. Of course, I have my opinion about everything, but I learned years ago to keep your mouth shut about things."

When the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Foundation sent out a ballot in 2022 with her name on it, though she said she felt she hadn't earned it, the voters answered with a "Hello, Dolly." Parton showed up to the induction ceremony, performed and then put out a rock album.

Darline Graham wins South Carolina GOP nomination to replace her late brother in US Senate

By MEG KINNARD and JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — U.S. Sen. Darline Graham won the Republican nomination to replace her late brother on South Carolina's general election ballot, notching another win for President Donald Trump after he threw his support behind the political novice.

Graham defeated U.S. Rep. Ralph Norman in Tuesday's special Republican primary runoff, two weeks after they were the top two finishers in a 10-way primary.

Despite being a political unknown, Graham bested some of South Carolina's top political names in the special election spun up after Lindsey Graham's sudden death last month. She was appointed by Gov. Henry McMaster to serve out the remaining months of her late brother's current term and swiftly won an endorsement from Trump, who encouraged her to enter the race for a full term and campaigned for her in the state last week.

Graham got emotional while addressing her supporters Tuesday night, saying she misses her brother every day.

"The past few weeks have been an unbelievably challenging time for our family, but you know what? We did it," she said.

With McMaster, her family and U.S. Rep. William Timmons looking on, Graham went on to thank the president for his support and for the relationship he had with her brother.

"Our victory would not have been possible without you and we are truly grateful," she said.

Graham will face Democratic nominee Annie Andrews in November.

On Monday, MAGA Inc., the super PAC that supports Trump and aligned Republicans — but that has spent little thus far on Trump's picks in this year's midterms — spent nearly \$830,000 for voter calls and text message blasts in support of Graham.

Among the unknowns going into Tuesday was whether Trump's backing would be enough to boost the political newcomer with the famous last name, but whose political positions were previously unidentified, across the finish line to the nomination.

After losing a top Senate advocate when Lindsey Graham died July 11, Trump angled to play a role in picking his successor.

Trump heralded the selection of Darline Graham to serve as her brother's interim replacement as "a fabulous tribute." He also urged her to run in the special primary, endorsing her before she'd made her candidacy official.

On Friday in Myrtle Beach, Trump reiterated that sentiment to a crowd of several thousand, encouraging people to vote for Graham to preserve tax cuts, among other things.

"I want it to happen," he said. "Good luck, Darline."

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In forging a relationship with her, Trump could be angling to develop another ally to help steer his agenda through the Senate.

Throughout her brief campaign, Graham did just that. She repeatedly stressed to voters her intent to support Trump's policy positions and often referenced in particular her co-sponsorship of a voting bill that's become a key priority for the president.

Norman thanked his supporters at his Tuesday night watch party but decried Graham taking outside PAC money, and Trump for supporting her.

"I never understood why he got in this race," Norman said. "It is what it is and we accept it."

Casting his ballot for Graham at an early voting location near Trump's rally site, Robert Tropiano said Friday that the president's backing for the candidate was enough to win his support.

"Trump wants her, he's doing a great job and I believe we should give him what he wants," Tropiano said.

Norman promoted legislative know-how over Graham's inexperience

Fresh off his unsuccessful primary run for governor, Norman entered the Senate contest as one of several politicians more familiar to South Carolina voters. He snapped up endorsements from the likes of Sens. Rick Scott of Florida and Mike Lee of Utah, as well as former South Carolina Sen. Jim DeMint and Turning Point Action, the conservative youth movement founded by the late Charlie Kirk.

During the sprint to the runoff, Norman — one of the most conservative U.S. House members — frequently touted his experience in Washington and willingness to take unpopular stances. That includes at times challenging Trump, whose policies Norman has routinely supported in Congress. But Norman campaigned against Trump in the early part of the 2024 presidential primary, siding instead with former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley.

A wealthy developer before he entered politics, Norman put some of his own fortune toward the campaign, including more than \$1 million in the closing week.

Graham overcomes debate flub

Graham and Norman met for a single runoff debate, and there was one moment from the hourlong face-off that lived on.

Graham stumbled over a question about foreign policy — a signature issue of her late brother — when asked whether the U.S. has a national security interest in Taiwan and the South China Sea, a longstanding contention of both Democratic and Republican administrations.

She struggled to answer before admitting "national security is not my thing" and "I'm not that informed on national security."

Graham avoided a direct response and instead mentioned her brother's wealth of experience and her desire to focus on more domestic issues like affordability. Norman called Taiwan "a definite ally" when posed the same question, applauding Trump for "enabling Taiwan to defend themselves against China." Afterward, he suggested Graham's answer showed her lack of qualifications for the office.

Some of that argument landed with Rock Hill voter Mike Sellers, who said that he voted Tuesday for Norman in part because Graham's experience level "wasn't really cutting it for me."

Sellers also said he wasn't swayed by the notion of supporting Graham as a tribute to her late brother.

"Just because her brother was senator doesn't give her an easy pass in," Sellers said. "If she wants to come next time around — maybe challenge (Sen.) Tim Scott — we'll look at it then."

No Democrat has won a U.S. Senate seat in South Carolina in decades. When Lindsey Graham last ran in 2020, he defeated his Democratic opponent by a 10 percentage point margin.

That contest was the most expensive in state history and among the country's most expensive congressional races ever.

Iran and Oman hold talks on managing the Strait of Hormuz and other news from around the Middle East

By The Associated Press undefined

The top diplomats of Iran and Oman met on Tuesday to discuss a phased approach to managing ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, which remains largely shut down nearly six months after the Iran war began.

The talks came after an oil tanker was disabled in an attack off the coast of Oman, underscoring the ongoing dangers for shipping companies attempting to use the waterway while it's under Iranian control.

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

Iran and Oman issue statement on talks to manage the strait

Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi met with his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi, in Tehran, Iran's capital, to discuss a framework for managing ship traffic in the Strait of Hormuz.

A joint statement by the two countries, located on opposite sides of the narrow strait, said the proposed framework includes a "joint temporary navigational corridor" and both countries working to clear mines from the waterway.

The statement said Iran and Oman will continue technical negotiations toward establishing a permanent shipping corridor and an agreement on the future administration of the strait.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi told state TV that the two countries had reached an understanding on a temporary route. Traffic into the Persian Gulf from the Gulf of Oman would pass entirely through Iranian waters, while the outbound route would pass partly through Iranian waters and partly through Oman's territorial waters.

Iran and Oman would then hold negotiations over 30 to 60 days to "reach an understanding on a new permanent and sustainable route," he said.

About a fifth of the world's traded oil passed through the strait before the United States and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28.

It's unknown whether the U.S. will accept the emerging deal. U.S. President Donald Trump last week threatened to bomb Oman if it "gets in the way" of American efforts to reopen the strait.

Iran's president and other senior officials also discussed the strait with a delegation from Pakistan that left Tehran on Tuesday following talks on reviving negotiations to end the Iran-U.S. conflict, the Pakistani military said.

A tanker is hit and disabled off Oman's eastern coast

A strike on an oil tanker on Monday night off Oman's coast disabled the ship's engine, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization reported. It said all crew were reported safe.

There were no immediate reports of any environmental impact.

Iran periodically fires at vessels attempting to transit the strait to enforce its control of the waterway, though there was no immediate claim for Monday's attack. The U.S. has also fired on vessels while imposing a blockade of Iranian ports.

No answers a year after Israeli soldiers kill 22 Palestinians, including journalists and rescuers

Tuesday marked one year since Israeli soldiers killed 22 Palestinians, including journalists and rescue workers, in a double strike on a hospital in Gaza that provoked global outrage. No one has been held accountable.

Israeli officials said the target was a suspected Hamas camera on the roof of Nasser Hospital. Among those killed were Reuters cameraman Hussam al-Masri and Mariam Dagga, a visual journalist who worked for The Associated Press and other news organizations.

Despite repeated requests by the AP, the army has not provided details about the investigation or a timeline for when it could be completed. Rights groups say Israel rarely holds troops accountable for killing Palestinians, pointing to long investigations that rarely lead to prosecution.

China warns about US sanctions threat disrupting its cooperation with Iran

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China's Foreign Ministry says it is closely following plans announced by U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to expand sanctions to entities and individuals linked to Iran, including some based in China.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said China-Iran cooperation "should not be disrupted or undermined," noting that it has conformed with international law.

China is one of Iran's biggest trading partners and purchases the majority of its total oil exports.

The Treasury Department on Monday said it was imposing sanctions on nearly 60 Iran-linked entities, including several based in China. It stopped short of imposing secondary sanctions on countries that trade with Iran.

Israeli strikes kill at least 4 people in Gaza

An Israeli strike killed at least three people on Tuesday in the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, according to Shifa Hospital, which received the casualties. Another strike, northwest of the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, killed at least one Palestinian and wounded four, according to the city's Nasser hospital.

Separately, Medical Aid for Palestinians, a U.K.-based charity providing health and humanitarian assistance, said an Israeli airstrike destroyed a warehouse belonging to a local partner in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza. The warehouse stored nutritional supplies for children, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, the charity said.

The Israeli military said it struck a suspected militant in southern Gaza and several targets it described as Hamas infrastructure in Jabaliya. It did not immediately comment on the warehouse strike.

Palestinians in Gaza face severe food shortages, with many displaced families relying on scarce humanitarian aid and charity kitchens for meals.

Israeli forces seize vocational school run by a UN agency

Israel on Tuesday seized a U.N.-run facility housing a vocational school on the outskirts of Jerusalem, advancing its campaign against the U.N. agency that provides humanitarian services to millions of Palestinian refugees across the Mideast.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said the agency, known as UNRWA, does not own the land. Israel cited similar reasoning when its forces demolished the agency's former east Jerusalem headquarters in January.

The U.N. interim Mideast coordinator, Ramiz Alakbarov, called the seizure unlawful and said it deprived 340 Palestinian refugees of educational services.

Israel has accused UNRWA of anti-Israel bias and at times of employing Palestinian militants. The United Nations and UNRWA have denied the accusations and say they investigate credible allegations and act quickly to purge suspected militants among staff.

Last year Israel's Knesset passed legislation severing ties with the agency and banning it from functioning in what it defines as Israel — including east Jerusalem.

A Montana man killed 8 relatives, including 4 kids, at Sunday dinner, family says

By MATTHEW BROWN, MICHAEL BIESECKER and MIKELLA SCHUETTLER Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — A man killed eight of his relatives, including four children, as they gathered for Sunday dinner at a home outside Billings, Montana, weeks after his parents asked him to move out, a family member told The Associated Press.

Brad Ireland, whose former wife and two children were among the dead, identified the shooter as 44-year-old Alan Smith. Smith's parents, who were also killed, had asked him to move out, but he returned on Sunday and opened fire, Ireland said.

The victims represented four generations of the blended family, ranging from a great-grandmother in her 90s who used a wheelchair to a 7-year-old girl, according to Jennifer Mercer, a neighbor and family friend who set up an online fundraiser to help cover funeral costs and other expenses, and was authorized to release these details.

Gunshots followed by an inferno

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Police responded to the home on Sunday evening and heard gunshots coming from out back, just before the house was completely engulfed in flames. Investigators confirmed Tuesday there were eight victims, including four children, and that the suspect had suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound and later died.

The investigation has been complicated by concerns about the structural integrity of the house after the fire burned it to its foundation, said Jeff Stovall, a spokesperson for the Billings Police Department.

Firefighters fought the blaze until around 1 a.m. Monday, according to Billings Fire Department Chief Matt Hoppel. The home is in a subdivision outside of city limits that's not required to have fire hydrants.

Efforts to fight the fire were delayed until the site was secure, allowing the blaze to tear through the home. 12-year-old calls 911

Among those killed were Ireland's ex-wife, Megan Ghekiere, and their two children, Owen Ireland, 13, and Chloe Ireland, 7. Also killed were Ghekiere's two stepchildren with her current husband: Landon Ghekiere, 15, and Charlotte Ghekiere, 12.

"The one thing we do know is that Charlotte was the hero," Mercer said. "Charlotte called 911 and she tried to save her family. And that's something the family does want out there."

She described the family as "very loving and close," and said the children all got along and that their parents remained amicable even after divorcing.

"I feel like our entire community is devastated, even people that never knew any of them," Mercer said.

The family relocated from Seattle

The Smith family was originally from the Seattle area. Ireland said that after he and Megan Ghekiere divorced six years ago, she moved to Montana with their children. That's where she met the man who would become her second husband, Adam Ghekiere, who was working and not at the home when the shooting occurred.

Her parents, Dana and Barb Smith, soon followed, buying a house in Billings near their daughter's home. Evelyn Smith, Dana's elderly mother, lived in a nearby retirement community, Ireland said.

Alan Smith moved in with his parents in Montana and stayed with them for years before being asked to move out a couple weeks ago, Ireland said. He unexpectedly returned to the home on Sunday evening, where the Smiths had gathered for a weekly family dinner.

Alan Smith killed his grandmother, his parents, his younger sister and the four children before setting the house on fire, Ireland said. He tried to flee before being confronted by law enforcement, he said.

Suspect was a 'hermit,' relative says

"There were many red flags and many people spoke out," said Ireland, who lives in Arizona. "No one listened."

Alan Smith was a "hermit" who spent most of his days in his room on his computer, Ireland said.

"No one knew what he did in there 24/7," he said.

Alan Smith had attended Eastern Washington University but had been unable to find or hold a job. A search of criminal records in Montana and Washington found no record Alan Smith had ever been arrested or charged with a crime.

Ireland said that to his knowledge Alan Smith had never been violent, though he could be verbally abusive.

Friends of the victims have set up two GoFundMe accounts to raise money on behalf of Adam Ghekiere and his ex-wife, Erica Schneider.

Husband races back to house

Adam Ghekiere, who works at the airport in Billings, told the AP that he heard over a dispatch radio about an active shooting. After calling each member of his family, he raced across town to the Smith home.

When he got there, the house was ablaze, and two hours later, he learned his wife and children had been killed. His children weren't supposed to be there because family dinner was usually on Friday, he said.

"I don't think he expected my kids to be there," Ghekiere said, referring to his brother-in-law. "Monster isn't even enough to describe what he did."

Ghekiere said police confirmed his daughter, Charlotte, was the one who dialed 911 from inside the house.

"I keep hearing her quote to me every time I would say 'I love you' and she would say 'I love you more,'"

he said.

22nd mass killing this year

The shootings were the 22nd mass killing this year, according to a database maintained by the AP and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University.

Fifteen of those have stemmed from domestic disputes, which is higher than the average of about 50% of U.S. mass killings, said James Alan Fox, a criminologist at Northeastern University who manages the database.

The Montana shooting is the deadliest in the U.S. since April, when a Louisiana father fatally shot eight children, including seven of his own, and shot and wounded his wife and another woman.

Nothing changes yet with the Supreme Court's order on elections. But it could open door to 'chaos'

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

The Supreme Court's decision giving preliminary approval for President Donald Trump's order restricting mail voting may not lead to a single election procedure changing during the November midterms, but it has already thrown into uncertainty the method that nearly one-third of the country uses to vote.

Rather than saying that Trump's order is legal, the high court said Monday it was too early for Democratic-run states to challenge it in June, when they convinced a federal judge in Boston to freeze the order for November's election. That effectively restarts the legal fight over the order in an incredibly compressed timeline, with initial ballots scheduled to be sent to North Carolina's overseas and military voters in just over a week, on Sept. 4.

A second injunction barring the U.S. Postal Service from making changes to comply with Trump's directive remains in effect. Still, the administration late Monday filed a motion asking that the second hold be removed, and has posted new regulations from the Postal Service that would go into effect Tuesday if the legal pathway is fully cleared.

That new rule requires specific formatting for envelopes containing mail ballots — which may force some jurisdictions to completely revise theirs — and makes states use an electronic system to identify to the Postal Service who is voting by mail. If states don't comply with the rule, their mail ballots won't get sent. U.S. District Court Judge Indira Talwani on Tuesday found that the administration violated her injunction against work on the Trump directive by formulating the rule, but declined to sanction it as she considered whether to lift her freeze entirely.

The prospect of such a potential sweeping overhaul in mere days boggled critics' minds. In her dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson warned that the decision "needlessly injects chaos and uncertainty into the upcoming midterm elections."

David Becker, executive director of the Center for Election Innovation & Research, agreed, saying the majority "seemed to create complete chaos leading up to the midterm elections" and it'd be "impossible" for states to comply with the new rules at this late date.

Some ballots for the November election are set to go out within days

Jesse Salinas, the registrar of Yolo County in California and president of that state's association of election officers, noted that ballots in his state start going out in 11 days and his county already printed its envelopes.

"You look at the timeline, and it's a bit chaotic," Salinas said, noting he doesn't know precisely which envelope designs comply with the new rules.

He dismissed the idea of a last-minute revision in procedures. "The capacity to do that, I just don't see it," Salinas said.

Tammy Patrick, chief program officer at the Elections Center, an association of 2,500 election officers, warned that it's impossible for any state to comply with the rule and that no one she talked to has tried.

"There isn't a single state that does their elections in a way that this postal rule lays out," Patrick said in an interview. "There has been this assumption that this is not going to happen because it could not

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happen the way it's laid out, because no one does it this way."

Cisco Aguilar, the Democratic Secretary of State in Nevada, where every registered voter gets a mail ballot, noted the post office had already misdelivered three dozen mail ballots from his state's June primary.

"They're going to come in within seven days and build a massive database that has 100% accuracy?" Aguilar said in disbelief. "It is impossible to implement this system in that time frame."

Trump votes by mail, but has sought to curb it for others

Trump has long sought to make voting by mail largely impossible, though he himself has repeatedly cast his ballots by mail.

Trump falsely blamed his 2020 loss on mail voting and spun up baroque conspiracy theories that he's tried to prove while back in office. Judges blocked him from creating new voting restrictions by executive order last year, and he only issued his latest order after his bill to revamp voting procedures stalled in the Senate amidst Democratic opposition.

The Election Assistance Commission found that 29% of voters in 2024 cast their ballots through the mail. Democrats are more likely to use mail voting than Republicans, a reflection of how the process has become polarized since Trump began attacking it in 2020. Still, the president has to date been unable to make the sweeping changes he's sought because the Constitution grants control of voting rules to states, and in federal elections, to Congress — not the president.

Legal experts stressed that's why they view it as unlikely Trump's order will actually be implemented. Not only did the majority in the Supreme Court's unsigned order note that it hasn't determined whether the measure is constitutional, but every victory the administration has won so far has only been because it's argued that it's premature to talk about its constitutionality.

Opponents are already weighing new lawsuits since the final rule was published Friday night. Democrats on Tuesday asked a Washington, D.C., court to reconsider their request to halt the order now that the rule is out; the court had turned down their request in June because it was premature.

More litigation is expected

Becker, a former Department of Justice lawyer who co-wrote a book debunking Trump's 2020 election lies, added that he expects the next round of litigation to keep the order from being implemented in November. Rick Hasen, a UCLA law professor, said after the ruling: "This doesn't necessarily mean anything in terms of November."

Derek Muller, a Notre Dame law professor, said the Supreme Court still ensured a fraught court battle in the coming days.

"It puts courts in a terrible place, because whatever happens is super close to the election," Muller said. "If it permits it, it creates super disruption for the states. If it suspends it, it visibly angers the administration."

Hasen said it's inconceivable that the regulation will impact voters in November.

"Both legal and practical reasons make this practically impossible to enforce," he said of Trump's mail voting order.

Elections are run by local officials in thousands of scattered offices, many of which don't even have a full-time employee. Patrick said that those who work in the field have been left reeling.

"Election officials just feel like punching bags at this moment because they plan one way of conducting their elections, and have contingency plans if a fire breaks out, or one location loses power," Patrick said. "But how do you plan for something that affects one-third, one half, or all of your voters?"

Texas wildfire mushrooms within hours, ripping through ranchlands

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

A wildfire that exploded in size in a matter of hours ripped through wide swaths of ranchland in rural Texas, burning structures at a youth camp while forcing evacuations and closing schools Tuesday.

The fire, which began early Monday afternoon, charred more than 78 square miles (200 square kilometers) in less than a day across lightly populated areas in two counties in north central Texas. Fueled by whipping

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winds along with extremely hot and dry conditions, the Ross Fire jumped creeks and rivers, residents said.

"It just took off way too fast," said Katie Rochelle, whose fifth-generation family canoe rental business lost its office and repair shop outside Graford. "The wind was going in a tornado motion."

Her husband, a local firefighter, helped save their home overnight, but she was worried it could go up in flames anytime.

"I don't know how our house survived," she said. "Now we're waiting and praying. Praying it doesn't get our house. That's all we can do."

It wasn't immediately known how many structures have burned. Multiple buildings were destroyed at Worth Ranch, a youth camp on the southern edge of the fire, when flames swept through Tuesday. No campers or guests were on the property, and all personnel were safely evacuated, according to Scouting America's Longhorn Council, which owns the camp.

Firefighters aided by water-dropping aircraft protected structures on ranchland near the tiny town of Palo Pinto.

High temperatures and gusty winds allowed the blaze to shoot up faster than anyone could have imagined, officials with Palo Pinto County's emergency services district reported. "We've thrown everything at this, and we're still having minimal effect," Fire Chief Danny Watkins said. There was just 8% containment as of Tuesday evening.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said Tuesday that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will provide resources to help fight the Ross Fire, and he warned Texans to limit activity that could spark new blazes during the dangerous weather.

Crews were also battling four smaller wildfires in surrounding Texas counties. Fires have been popping up across the South and the West in recent days as extremely dry conditions persist. A dozen new large blazes were reported on Sunday alone, the National Interagency Fire Center said.

Nationwide, there have been more than 50,000 wildfires so far this year, the most over the past 10 years covering the same time period, according to the center.

The National Weather Service warned of a high risk of fast-moving fires in Southern California north of Los Angeles, and a red flag warning was issued through Friday.

Firefighters in Nevada made significant progress in slowing a fire that forced thousands to evacuate from Reno over the weekend after flames spread dangerously close to densely populated neighborhoods.

The Hawk Fire has destroyed at least 47 homes across about 23 square miles (60 square kilometers). Authorities in Nevada said on Tuesday evening that the fire was 85% contained.

The number of people in the Reno area under mandatory evacuation orders dropped significantly. The fire near the California state line began Saturday and rapidly grew in size on Sunday. At least seven people — three first responders and four civilians — were injured.

Fire officials in Reno have blamed human activity for the Hawk Fire, saying it was either intentionally set or accidental. Critical fire weather with hot temperatures and low humidity was expected through the weekend.

In Texas, the Ross Fire was only slightly contained as it churned through ranchland about 60 miles (about 100 kilometers) west of Fort Worth. At least five structures were destroyed, according to officials in Palo Pinto County.

Emergency officials expected the fire to keep growing as temperatures rise.

Rochelle, whose great-grandparents started the canoe rental business in 1969, said the fire also burned a family home built on the property about 100 years ago. Some of the company's buses and trailers also were destroyed, but the canoes appeared OK for now.

"I don't know what we're going to do now," said her father, Buddy Rochelle.

Authorities opened evacuation centers, some schools canceled classes and ranchers and a livestock commission offered barns to temporarily hold animals in need of evacuation.

Secret Service confirms awareness of Iranian state media video threatening Barron Trump's life

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Secret Service has confirmed it is aware that Iranian state media has aired a video that appears to threaten the life of Barron Trump, President Donald Trump's youngest son.

"The U.S. Secret Service is aware of the video and investigates anything that can be perceived as a threat toward our protectees," Secret Service spokesman Nate Herring said in a statement. "Out of concern for operational security, we do not discuss matters of protective intelligence."

Since the U.S. assassination of Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iranian media have on multiple occasions circulated content threatening the president and family members. The assassination came at the start of the war in Iran that Trump launched alongside Israel.

CNN previously reported that the Secret Service had knowledge of the Barron Trump threat.

Trump's new economic squeeze on Iran has a big challenge: China

By DIDI TANG and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The "economic onslaught" that Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has declared on Iran's financial connections around the world may have one major caveat: China.

Beijing is Iran's biggest trading partner and its leading oil buyer. While the U.S. is trying to isolate the Islamic Republic from its remaining economic partners, President Donald Trump also is preparing to host Chinese leader Xi Jinping next month to maintain a fragile trade truce.

Absent from Bessent's remarks this week were specifics about how the Trump administration would target China, casting doubts on how effective the new campaign would be when the U.S. must balance putting maximum pressure on Iran and avoiding higher tensions with China that could be costly to the American economy.

"The announcement yesterday was very careful in my view to avoid specifics (against China), which could have led to a disruption in the summit," Edgard Kagan, senior adviser and Freeman Chair in China studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said Tuesday. "For Xi, a state visit to Washington is a big deal; and for Trump, hosting it is a big deal."

That means both Washington and Beijing will have a dance to do, said Kagan, who served as U.S. ambassador to Malaysia from December 2023 until this February.

"I think the real question is, is there room to push (the Chinese) to reduce what they're doing with Iran, to put more pressure on the Iranian regime in a way that doesn't lead them to say, 'This is unreasonable, and we're not going to comply,'" he said.

China is likely to wait and see and do the minimum

In response to "Operation Economic Outcast," which Bessent announced Monday, Beijing said its cooperation with Iran has always been "within the framework of international law." China receives more than 80% of Iranian oil shipments but usually through indirect channels.

Lin Jian, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, said China-Iran cooperation "should not be disrupted or undermined."

"China is closely monitoring relevant developments and will take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its own rights and interests," Lin said. He repeated China's opposition to "illegal unilateral sanctions."

Kagan described Beijing's remarks as "a holding response" and said Beijing will try to do the least to comply without openly confronting the U.S.

"They've tended to be careful not crossing explicit red lines, but they haven't addressed the spirit of what the U.S. has sought," Kagan said, pointing to practices such as ship-to-ship oil transfers that obscure the origin of Iranian crude oil to evade American sanctions.

Sun Yun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center, a Washington think tank, said China will not go along with the new campaign if the U.S. goal is to destroy the Iranian economy and seek the

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government's collapse.

But "if the goal is to exert enough pressure for Iran to make concessions on the Strait of Hormuz and potentially ending the conflict, I think China can and will demonstrate its cooperation without having to completely sever ties with Iran," Sun said. "China only needs to do enough to demonstrate it is cooperating, such as cut back on its oil import from Iran."

With a planned summit between Trump and Xi weeks away, "neither side wishes to have a major escalation bilaterally at this point," she said. "China needs to give U.S. something, and U.S. needs to understand and accept that it is not going to be everything U.S. asks for."

US is not likely to act tough on China, analysts say

So far, the Trump administration has refrained from imposing sanctions on major Chinese businesses or banks connected to the U.S. financial system and thus vulnerable to American penalties.

The Treasury Department said Monday that it was penalizing nearly 60 Iran-linked entities, accusing them of involvement in Iran's nuclear and missile programs, cyber activities and oil shipments.

It targeted a number of entities and individuals based in mainland China and Hong Kong for supporting Iran's missile and nuclear programs. It sanctioned a China-owned crude oil tanker for transporting millions of barrels of Iranian oil to China this year as well as a Hong Kong-based business for its role in the shadow fleet that ships out Iranian oil.

With Xi's visit coming up, Trump may not act tough on China now, said Ali Wyne, senior research and advocacy adviser on U.S.-China relations at the International Crisis Group.

"Given how keen Trump has been to maintain both a trade truce between the United States and China and his personal rapport with Xi, he seems unlikely to do a volte-face just a month before Xi's state visit and adopt a highly confrontational posture," he said.

Plus, Xi's visit to the U.S. could pave the way for Trump to return to China in November for the leaders summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation grouping.

In his second term, Trump has been less hawkish on China than in his first presidency and frequently touts his good relationship with Xi following a major trade war last year that featured back-and-forth escalating tariffs. The U.S. business community also welcomes Xi's visit, saying it's a good sign if the two leaders meet in person, even when any substantial deals may be elusive.

"Beijing is betting that Washington will be reluctant to jeopardize the current leader-level dynamic by targeting major Chinese entities before the summit," said Craig Singleton, senior director for China at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a hawkish Washington think tank.

Target faces renewed backlash after stocking Halloween costume with 'minstrel show features'

By NANCY JIANG Associated Press

Retailer Target pulled a children's Halloween costume from its shelves Monday after widespread social media backlash, apologizing for selling a garment critics said evoked racist minstrel caricatures.

Critics say the costume, along with its promotional image of a Black child modeling the get-up, is reminiscent of caricatures from Jim Crow-era minstrel shows that embedded stereotypes into popular culture and helped justify discrimination, segregation and racial violence.

"As a company, we know we got this wrong, and we are deeply sorry. The costume is offensive and should never have been part of our assortment. It is no longer available for sale," Target said in a statement.

"We know this is especially hurtful for our Black guests, team members and partners. Removing the costume is an important first step, and the company is looking closely at how this happened and what needs to change to ensure this won't happen again."

The costume misstep happened as Target's sales have started rebounding from earlier company moves that alienated some customers and from a perception the quality of its stores and merchandise had declined.

It is the latest controversy for the retailer, which joined companies like Meta, Walmart, and McDonald's in rolling back their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts after President Donald Trump won the 2024 election.

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The "Kids' Glows Under Blacklight Circus Clown Halloween costume," an orange-and-black circus clown costume, now deleted from the Target website, featured gloves, a top hat and a grinning mask with large teeth.

'Not simply getting it wrong'

"A Jim Crow-era minstrel costume is not simply getting it wrong. It is a profoundly harmful symbol of racism that should never have been designed, approved, or sold by Target," said the Rev. Jamal Bryant, a Georgia pastor who led a 40-day "Target Fast" boycott last year. "It shows that Target still lacks corporate diversity among decision-makers and needs concrete internal change."

In January 2025, the Minneapolis-based corporation ended its three-year DEI program, stopping reports to external groups like the Human Rights Campaign and ended a program focused on carrying more products from Black- or minority-owned businesses, replacing it with a new "Belonging" strategy. The company previously stated that the murder of George Floyd was a catalyst for its DEI initiatives.

Activist-organizers called for a boycott of Target, which lost roughly \$12.4 billion in market value by the end of February from January.

Minnesota civil rights activists, separate from Bryant, organized a national Target boycott, resulting in a 33% fall in the corporation's stock prices and wiped out over \$20 billion in market value.

Target's recent recovery

Target has managed a recovery in recent months. The stock closed at \$165.44 on Aug. 21, a fresh 52-week high, after a strong second quarter. On Aug. 24, Target's shares closed at \$169.89.

Target's stock is up roughly 63% this year, a sharp rebound from the depths of the boycott. The company's turnaround strategy, launched by new CEO Michael Fiddelke after former CEO Brian Cornell stepped down, includes store refreshes, increased staffing, and more aggressive pricing. Target announced a plan in March to invest \$2 billion in 2026, including \$1 billion in additional operating investments, with plans to open more than 30 new stores this year as part of its path to 300 new stores by 2035, while investing in over 130 planned full-store remodels.

Bruce Winder, a retail analyst and former retail buyer, says that inventory errors, such as the recent Prada and Gucci controversies, "can happen to the best of them."

"These things happen over time. I think the most important thing for Target, and they did it, was to quickly take accountability, quickly say sorry, acknowledge that this was a big mistake, and pull the product from the shelves," Winder said.

Boycott organizers undeterred

Target boycott organizers in Minneapolis, including Nekima Levy Armstrong and community leaders Monique Cullars-Doty and Jaylani Hussein, remain steadfast in their divestment calls.

They have continued to press the company to reinstate its DEI programs and continue its commitments to Black communities, and they say the costume controversy is a refresher on their mission.

"It's important for people to understand that the Target boycott never ended; that it was indefinite from the beginning, unless and until Target reversed course on its decision to roll back diversity, equity, and inclusion," said Armstrong, an organizer of the national Target boycott.

"What we've seen is Target engaging in PR campaigns: recruiting high-visibility Black ministers to meet with them, partnering with (rapper and businessman) Jay-Z, all types of different shenanigans to deflect from the fact that they abandon their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and capitulation to the Trump administration."

Hussein, another boycott organizer, said the costume incident was "not surprising."

"It was almost predictable because of the behavior of Target, and I think this is going to build on the momentum of the boycott. More people are going to be upset," he said.

"It's not just an incident with a costume. There are a lot of people right now in this country across many parts who've changed their culture of shopping, who have found other places to put their money behind."

Target Corporation's stock closed at \$163.47 on Aug. 25, dropping 3.78% from its previous close the day prior.

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Falling oil prices help calm the stock and bond markets

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Oil prices fell again on Tuesday, which helped ease worries in the bond market and support stock prices.

The S&P 500 rose 0.3% and edged a bit closer to its all-time high set earlier this month. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 160 points, or 0.3%, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 0.7%.

Some of the strongest action was in the oil market, where the price for a barrel of Brent crude fell 3.6% to \$87.27 for a second decline following 13 gains in 14 days. The drop came even though tensions between the United States and Iran seemed to ratchet higher after the Trump administration announced new sanctions to further hurt Iran's economy.

Brent's price zigzagged between \$72 and \$102 last month as hopes rose and fell that the United States and Iran could reach a deal that would allow oil tankers to freely exit the Persian Gulf again.

A delegation from Pakistan left Iran Tuesday after talks with Iran's president on reopening the Strait of Hormuz and reviving negotiations to end the Iran-U.S. conflict, the Pakistani military said. Pakistan Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said a meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had been "very positive and productive."

Tuesday's drop in oil prices reined in worries about high inflation, which had helped drive Treasury yields higher in the bond market through the summer. Yields had gotten so high that the U.S. Treasury Department announced a surprise move last week to increase its repurchases of longer-term Treasury notes and bonds.

High yields make borrowing more expensive for everyone and can slow the economy's growth while undercutting prices for stocks, cryptocurrencies and other investments.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.63% from 4.70% late Monday and from 4.74% at the end of last week. That's a significant move for the bond market, though the 10-year yield remains firmly above its 3.97% level from before the war with Iran sent oil prices and worries about inflation much higher.

On Wall Street, Nvidia and other winners of the boom in artificial-intelligence technology helped lead the way. Nvidia rose 2.2%, a day after its drop of 2.9% was the heaviest weight on the S&P 500.

AI stocks have veered up and down through the summer on worries that their prices shot too high and that the AI boom may not be sustainable if it doesn't produce enough profits for companies. Nvidia will report its latest quarterly results on Wednesday, which could help steer the next move for AI-related stocks.

The gains for chip stocks helped offset a 30.7% plunge for Dick's Sporting Goods, its worst drop on record, after the retailer reported weaker results for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Executive Chairman Ed Stack said the retailer cut prices on some of its footwear and apparel to remain competitive, while launches for some footwear during the quarter ended up being weaker than it expected.

The company also cut its forecast for an underlying measure of profit in 2026 for both its Dick's and Foot Locker businesses. Dick's spent \$2.4 billion last year to acquire the struggling Foot Locker chain.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 24.42 points to 7,677.28. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 160.24 to 53,577.40, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 171.11 to 26,151.30.

Worries have been rising about how strong spending can remain generally for U.S. households, which is the main engine of the economy. They're facing higher prices on everything from food to clothes and a job market that suddenly looks iffier after employers cut more jobs last month than they added.

A report from the Conference Board on Tuesday said that confidence among U.S. consumers weakened by more than economists expected.

In stock markets around the world, many indexes drifted modestly higher. South Korea's Kospi, which is dominated by two AI winners, added 0.7% for one of the world's biggest moves. It's been steadying since plunging 22.2% in July.

Pennsylvania reports first 2 measles deaths in the US this year, both people unvaccinated

By JONATHAN POET and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Two unvaccinated Pennsylvania residents have died after being infected with measles, the first U.S. deaths this year related to the contagious virus.

State health officials announced the deaths Tuesday. They did not reveal any details about the people who died, other than that they lived in Lancaster County, west of Philadelphia.

"My deepest sympathies are with the loved ones who are facing this unimaginable loss," said state Health Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen. "Because measles was largely eliminated in the Commonwealth for more than three decades, people are not familiar with this disease and don't fully understand the potential severity of the illness."

The U.S. has now seen five measles-associated deaths in the last two years — more than the combined total of reported deaths over the previous three decades — and is enduring its worst year for measles since 1991.

With 2,777 cases as of Thursday, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this year already has surpassed 2025's measles count.

In November, international health officials will meet to determine if the U.S. and Mexico have lost their measles-free status. The U.S. eliminated local measles spread in 2000 by maintaining high vaccination rates, which have fallen in recent years to below the 95% coverage needed to prevent outbreaks.

Governor suggests Trump administration could do more to promote vaccines

The measles surge has coincided with moves by President Donald Trump's administration to scale back childhood vaccinations, based on concerns — unfounded, according to scientific studies — about vaccine safety.

Trump earlier this month signed an executive order calling for revamped childhood vaccine recommendations. He also advocated separating the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine into three different shots, and administering all childhood immunizations at separate appointments whenever possible.

Doctors have raised concerns that Trump and U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. are stoking confusion and hesitancy.

In a media briefing Tuesday, Gov. Josh Shapiro said he had spoken with Kennedy, who offered the assistance of federal health staffers. Shapiro declined the offer, saying Pennsylvania's health department was able to handle the current situation.

"I was very, very blunt with him," Shapiro said. "I made very clear that his actions and the rhetoric that's coming from this administration are having a negative impact on communities across America, particularly right here in Pennsylvania."

He added: "There's real-life consequences to scaring people and not relying on actual doctors and actual medical professionals to provide unbiased information to parents so that we can make reasonable decisions for our kids."

Federal health officials did not comment on Shapiro's account, but they issued a statement extending condolences to the families and affected communities.

"The MMR vaccine provides the most effective protection against measles and helps prevent its spread," the statement said, adding that federal health officials will continue to support Pennsylvania's response.

Vaccination rates are declining nationwide

Decades of widespread vaccinations turned measles cases and deaths into a rarity, causing people to forget that the very contagious virus can be deadly, said Dr. David Margolius, director of Cleveland's health department and a leader in a coalition of big city health departments.

He said that some Cleveland residents have expressed irritation with vaccine-promotion campaigns.

"They say, 'Oh, that's not a big deal. I mean, do people even die from measles? And, you know, why do you care so much? Why do you keep calling me about this?'" he recounted.

Margolius said the Trump administration has reacted to outbreaks with offers of assistance.

"But the time to prevent measles is before the outbreaks happen," he said. "And the way to do that is clear and consistent and very visible messaging" about the importance of vaccinations.

The overall U.S. kindergarten vaccination rate inched down last year and the share of children with exemptions rose to an all-time high, according to federal data posted last week.

Lancaster County is known as the heart of Pennsylvania's Amish community, a religious group that is sometimes reluctant to embrace modern medical interventions such as vaccines. About 88% of kindergartners in the county were up to date on their measles vaccines during the last school year, according to state data.

Pennsylvania has counted nearly 400 measles cases this year, state officials said.

The state has been promoting measles vaccinations as cases have risen, and about 35,000 people have been vaccinated, up from the usual pace of about 25,000 per month, officials said.

A year after Israeli strikes killed journalists at a hospital, no one has been held accountable

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — It's been a year since Israeli soldiers killed 22 Palestinians, including journalists and rescue workers, in a double strike on a hospital in Gaza. No one has been held accountable.

Israeli officials said the target was a suspected Hamas camera on the roof of Nasser Hospital. Among those killed were Reuters cameraman Hussam al-Masri and Mariam Dagga, a visual journalist who worked for The Associated Press and other news organizations.

Despite repeated requests by AP, the army hasn't provided details about the investigation or a timeline for when it could be completed. Rights groups say Israel rarely holds troops accountable for killing Palestinians, pointing to long investigations that rarely lead to prosecution.

As global outrage over the Aug. 25, 2025, strikes grew, the Israeli military said that in addition to taking out the camera, six of those killed were linked to Hamas, without providing evidence.

But an Israeli soldier, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution, now says the military could find no evidence linking the camera, which belonged to al-Masri, to Hamas. The soldier, who was privy to discussions surrounding the military's response, said none of the six was the intended target of the strikes.

AP sent detailed questions to the military about the allegations, as well as other questions about the strikes. The military didn't address the questions but said the incident is being examined and findings will be transferred to the Military Advocate General's Corps to reach a verdict on whether to open a criminal investigation. It didn't provide a timeline.

The army said it would not comment on details while the incident was under review.

AP reported at the time that one of the six Israel said was linked to Hamas wasn't on the hospital's list of casualties and two others were medical or emergency personnel. That, along with the soldier's account, raises serious questions about Israel's rationale for the strikes.

Why did troops fail to identify the cameraman as al-Masri, even though journalists were known to film at the hospital? Why did they strike a second time, causing most of the deaths and raising accusations of a "double tap" attack on first responders, which would be a war crime?

AP and Reuters released a statement Tuesday calling again for Israel to provide a full explanation of the strikes. The news organizations also called on Israel to give journalists access to Gaza to support colleagues who have covered the war from the beginning.

"A year later, we remain devastated by their deaths and are still searching for answers from the Israeli authorities about what happened," the statement read.

Also Tuesday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, told U.N. reporters: "There will need to be accountability for the civilians killed, for the journalists killed, and we will

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continue to call for that.”

Nasser Hospital was a vital location for journalists

News agencies like Reuters and AP supplied live video footage to newsrooms around the world from the hospital, one of the few functioning in Gaza at the time. AP repeatedly informed the army that its journalists were there.

The first strike killed al-Masri and another person. As other journalists, including Dagga, and rescue workers rushed up an external staircase to help the wounded and document what happened, the military struck again, killing 20. Based on footage and eyewitnesses, none was armed. In all, Israel struck the hospital four times using high-explosive tank shells.

Israeli officials afterward said Hamas was using the camera to observe nearby troops. They alleged “suspicious behavior” around the camera, but the only example they gave was that a towel draped over the camera and the person filming appeared to be an effort at concealment.

Al-Masri routinely covered equipment with a white cloth to protect it from the sun and dust, a common practice among journalists in Gaza and other hot climates.

Last week, the army announced criminal investigations into two other high-profile attacks by its troops in Gaza — the 2024 killing of 5-year-old Hind Rajab and her family, and the 2025 killing of 15 paramedics. It cleared troops in three other attacks that killed international aid group workers.

Soldier details an attempt at damage control

The soldier was connected to AP through Breaking the Silence, a group founded over two decades ago by Israeli veterans that collects testimony from soldiers and is critical of Israel’s actions in the Palestinian territories.

The soldier said after high-profile strikes that kill civilians without clear military purpose, army officials search for militant links among those killed.

Breaking the Silence said its testimonies show there is a “retroactive incrimination process” in which Palestinians who are killed are automatically counted as militants, even when unarmed.

Retroactive incrimination is used as a “near automatic justification for every bullet, shell or missile fired, and as a tool used to avoid carrying out real investigations,” Nadav Weiman, the group’s executive director, said.

AP confirmed some details of the soldier’s account, which is consistent with the military’s public response. Breaking the Silence said it corroborated the account with its own sources.

The Israeli military has raided or laid siege to hospitals throughout the war, accusing Hamas of using them as command centers and to hide fighters, though it’s provided evidence for only some of its claims.

Hamas security men have been seen in hospitals during the war, controlling access to certain areas. Earlier this year, Doctors Without Borders suspended some operations at Nasser Hospital for several months after patients and staff reported seeing armed, masked men roaming parts of the building.

Tank shells were fired after a drone failed

The soldier, and a former military official with knowledge of the situation, said a high-ranking army official initially approved use of a precision weapon to take down the camera, but an attempt by drone failed for unknown reasons. The former official spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to talk to the media.

The division commander then approved an alternative method, said the soldier, without saying what the method was. It’s unclear who made the decision to fire tank rounds, which can cause more damage than drone strikes.

Oded Ailam, former head of the counterterrorism division in Israel’s Mossad spy service, said while commanders on the ground have a degree of freedom, they don’t have a “blank check.”

“If the change is significant, particularly where it may affect the risk to civilians, it must remain within the authority, rules and intent of the original order, or require renewed approval,” he said.

Israeli troops have killed over 200 journalists in the war

Israeli troops have killed 207 Palestinian reporters in Gaza since Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack ignited the war, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists. Israel has barred foreign journal-

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ists from entering Gaza, giving Palestinian journalists a critical role.

Sara Qudah, CPJ's Middle East and North Africa regional director, said Israel has a responsibility to conduct a prompt, transparent investigation. "When journalists can be killed without credible accountability, it becomes harder and more dangerous for the press to document conflicts and for the public to know what is happening," she said.

The lack of answers has been agonizing for families.

Ezz al-Din al-Masri said he doesn't understand why his brother, Hussam, was killed. "Unfortunately, we found that the blood of journalists in Gaza is cheap ... as if the rules protecting journalists do not apply," he said.

Dagga, 33, had just taken her last photos before rushing up the stairs. Whenever her father, Riyad Abu Dagga, visits her grave, he carries her phone and camera — she always had them with her. He visits her apartment near Nasser Hospital and cries.

"Had any of the daughters of the soldiers been killed unjustly, they would not have stayed silent," he said of the Israelis. "They would want to know why."

Iran's gas lines are growing, but there's no sign so far that its leaders will bow to US sanctions

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Lines have grown outside gas stations across Tehran in recent weeks as the United States has tightened its blockade and threatened more severe sanctions, with some people waiting for two hours or more to fill up.

The uncertainty deepened on Tuesday, after U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent vowed to fully sever the country from the global economy. In recent days, Iranian officials have spoken of a possible reduction in heavy gas subsidies as they seek to endure the tightening blockade.

"Maybe we will face a shortage of fuel," said Hashem Abadi, a 34-year-old barber. "I rush to the filling stations whenever my tank is down to half or so."

The latest U.S. measures are aimed at wringing concessions from the Islamic Republic nearly six months into the war launched by President Donald Trump and Israel. The war has already battered Iran's economy and inflicted mounting pain on ordinary people. But there's no sign yet that it has brought Iran's leaders to their knees, or that it will reignite the anti-government protests that convulsed the country in January.

Shelves are full but pockets are empty

The lines had been growing longer well before Bessent's announcement, amid shortages caused by the American blockade and existing sanctions. And with double-digit inflation and the rial currency at a record low, Iranians are struggling to afford more than just fuel.

"I'm filling my car as much as possible since soon it will be sold at higher prices," said 51-year-old taxi driver Mahmoud Chavoshi. "Everything I buy has grown more expensive over the last week, from milk to pasta."

There were no such lineups outside banks, and grocery stores and pharmacies are still well-stocked, but customers complained about being able to afford less. Inflation has soared during the war, and the currency hit a record low ahead of Bessent's announcement.

"Some of our regular customers buy now and pay later, since their pockets are not as full as before," said Morteza Daryani, who runs a grocery store in Tehran.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian accused the U.S. of resorting to economic pressure after failing to defeat Iran militarily. He said it was trying to create "social problems and economic dissatisfaction in order to throw Iran into chaos."

"Should we bow down to the problems and surrender? Absolutely not," he was quoted as saying by the semiofficial Fars and Tasnim news agencies.

No signs of unrest, but resilience has its limits

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There are no signs yet that the economic discontent has translated into protests in Iran, where authorities violently crushed demonstrations at the start of the year, killing thousands.

Iran has been under heavy international sanctions for decades due to its nuclear program and support for armed groups. Oil sales to China have long provided a lifeline, and it's unclear if the U.S. can cut them off.

Still, there are "always limits to resistance and resilience," said Mohammad Farzanegan, a professor of Middle Eastern economics at the University of Marburg in Germany.

"People are losing their purchasing power every day," he said. "All of this, combined with worsening diplomatic prospects and the psychological burden of mounting pressures, could push frustration to a point where it can no longer be effectively managed by the state."

Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj, who heads the Bourse & Bazaar Foundation, a think tank focused on Iran's economy, said the sectors that Bessent threatened to target "are not lifelines for the Iranian state, they are lifelines for the Iranian people."

In an analysis posted on X, Batmanghelidj said digital assets and gold are how Iranians protect their savings, technology keeps them connected with the world, aviation allows them to travel, and shipping is how food and medicine reach Iran.

UAE decision to cut trade ties could hit hard

At the moment, the most effective economic pressure has come from the naval blockade.

But last week's announcement from the United Arab Emirates that it was cutting off all trade and financial transactions with Iran could have longer-term effects if the country follows through, said Sascha Bruchmann, an analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies' Middle East office in Bahrain.

Bessent, who on Monday threatened secondary American sanctions on countries doing business with Iran, suggested it was pressure from Washington that led the UAE to its decision.

"Actions that they took last week were not coincident but likely causal, and I would expect that we would see a broad array of countries taking similar actions as we continue our engagement," he said.

Iran is exerting pressure of its own by largely closing the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway that carried a fifth of the world's oil and gas before the war. It's betting that the impact on the global economy — and U.S. gas prices ahead of midterm elections — will force Trump to back down.

"Trump is betting that their time runs out first due to the naval blockade," Bruchmann said. "Both clocks are ticking, and no one knows which clock is right."

Federal judge rejects Ghislaine Maxwell's 'miscarriage of justice' claims and bid for prison release

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Ghislaine Maxwell's bid to overturn her sex trafficking conviction and be freed from prison was rejected by a federal judge Tuesday who said the claims by Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend and longtime associate that new evidence had emerged were "demonstrably meritless."

Maxwell filed a habeas petition last December seeking to set aside her conviction and free her from a 20-year prison sentence, claiming exonerating information was withheld and false testimony presented at her trial, resulting in a "complete miscarriage of justice."

Judge Paul A. Engelmayer rejected her arguments, saying in his written ruling they "all or almost all are frivolous" and that she had presented nothing that could upend the outcome of her trial.

"Nearly all its claims are procedurally barred; the overwhelming testimonial and documentary evidence adduced at trial conclusively established her guilt; and her petition's claims are demonstrably meritless, and generally based on speculation, distortions, and/or outright falsehoods," Engelmayer wrote.

A request for comment was sent to lawyers who represented Maxwell in the past.

Habeas petitions are often filed as a last resort and to protect against unlawful confinement after appeals are exhausted, as happened after Maxwell's conviction and sentencing.

Epstein, a millionaire financier, was arrested in July 2019 on sex trafficking charges. Ordered detained until trial, he was found dead in his cell at a New York federal jail in August 2019 and his death was ruled

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a suicide.

Maxwell, a British socialite, was arrested a year later and was convicted of sex trafficking in December 2021. She was moved from a Florida prison to a prison camp in Texas last year, shortly after she was interviewed by the Justice Department's then second-in-command, Todd Blanche, President Donald Trump's former criminal defense attorney and now U.S. attorney general.

The judge noted that many of Maxwell's claims of "new evidence" stem from documents released under the Epstein Files Transparency Act.

As a result of that law, the Justice Department over the last eight months has released 18 categories of investigative materials gathered in the massive sex trafficking probe, including search warrants, financial records, notes from interviews with victims and data from electronic devices.

Engelmayer said that material is "largely irrelevant to the charges against Maxwell and does not support her claims of error."

"On the contrary, to the extent it is relevant, far from exculpating her, it incriminates her or reinforces the correctness of the legal rulings Maxwell challenges," he wrote.

The judge also rejected Maxwell's claim that she was selectively prosecuted and made a "scapegoat" when the Justice Department did not indict four co-conspirators named in a government document or 25 men who settled with victims.

Engelmayer said she could have raised that claim on appeal after her trial, but he found it to be frivolous nonetheless.

Among the recently released Justice Department documents, "she does not cite any that reveals the existence of an uncharged confederate, let alone one as instrumental as she in facilitating Epstein's horrific crimes," the judge said.

A tornado tears through a village in southern France, wrecking 300 homes

PARIS (AP) — A tornado ripped through a small village in southern France, damaging about 300 homes, destroying several cars and injuring dozens of people, authorities said Tuesday.

The tornado struck Pomas, a village of about 1,000 people, on Monday and rescue teams continued their search through ruins on Tuesday, though no people were immediately reported missing.

Authorities said that 39 people were injured. Alain Bucquet, the head of the local government office, later said 20 of them were hospitalized, with none of them in critical condition as of Tuesday evening. Authorities opened emergency accommodation centers to house displaced residents.

Bucquet said the Pomas school was partially destroyed, but assured residents that the town's children would be able to attend classes in surrounding municipalities starting on the first day of the school year in September.

In the broader Aude department, about 1,400 households were still without electricity on Tuesday morning, officials said.

The region was under a thunderstorm alert at the time of the tornado, with wind gusts exceeding 100 kilometers per hour (60 miles per hour) recorded at a nearby meteorological station. The third stage of the Vuelta a Espana bike race, which was held in southern France on Monday, was halted because of hail.

According to Meteo France, the national weather agency, a few dozen tornadoes occur each year in mainland France, most of them of low intensity.

Putin decree lets Russia take control of infrastructure damaged in Ukrainian drone attacks

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian President Vladimir Putin has decreed that the state can temporarily seize control of critical infrastructure facilities if private owners fail to protect them from Ukrainian drone attacks or rebuild them

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after the strikes.

The move came Monday amid growing economic pressure and public frustration being felt in Russia after months of escalating Ukrainian attacks on oil refineries and e-commerce hubs that have caused nationwide disruptions.

Ukraine also is reeling from relentless aerial attacks that have smashed its power grid ahead of winter and heavily damaged homes as Russia's invasion stretches into its fifth year.

The decree may pressure owners to undertake repairs

The Kremlin's exact intentions with the decree are unclear. However, it applies to various sectors, including energy infrastructure, as well as industrial, communications, transportation and logistics facilities.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that "often business owners do not pay enough attention to taking measures to ensure safety, anti-drone safety."

Given the threat to vital economic infrastructure, "we must take measures, we must ensure our own safety," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov said in a statement the decree doesn't imply the nationalization of companies or a change of ownership — only "involvement of the state in the management of an enterprise to solve specific security problems."

He added that the decree "doesn't imply widespread use," and that "targeted, carefully considered decisions will be made at the highest level."

Analysts say Putin wants companies to boost defenses

Russian political analyst Abbas Gallyamov said the measure might be a "tactical" step designed to force the owners of repeatedly damaged oil refineries into making repairs.

"Given the fact that the same refinery has already been hit three to five times, it's safe to assume that the owners are now reluctant to invest in restoring what's been destroyed," he said on the Telegram messaging app.

"Why spend billions if they're going to get hit again tomorrow?" said Gallyamov, a former speechwriter for Putin.

He said the government is giving companies an ultimatum: "If you don't finance the restoration of the refineries, we'll take them away from you."

Chris Weafer, the CEO of Macro-Advisory Ltd. Consultancy, said the Kremlin is trying to compel companies to spend more on drone protection and reduce the number of successful, high-profile Ukrainian attacks.

"This is an effort to force companies to look at their own security, to take measures and to spend their own money on security measures and not just be relying on the state," Weafer told The Associated Press.

The war is increasing costs for businesses, he noted, but added: "The state doesn't want any additional budget burdens and having to repair businesses or having to provide security. They want the companies to do it themselves."

Ukraine says it hit more Russian refineries

In the latest attacks, Ukraine's General Staff said Tuesday its forces struck facilities at Russia's Afipsky oil refinery in the Krasnodar region overnight, causing a fire. Krasnodar Gov. Veniamin Kondratyev said a fire broke out at an oil refinery in the town of Afipsky.

A Ukrainian attack also damaged the Novoshakhtinsk oil refinery in southern Russia's Rostov region overnight and halted operations, Rostov Gov. Yuri Slyusar said, without elaborating.

It was the eighth time in a year that Ukrainian drones have targeted the Afipsky refinery and the fourth time in the past year they have aimed at Novoshakhtinsk, according to data from Ukraine's General Staff.

Russian businesses face fundamental economic challenges as the costly war drags on. The government has raised taxes and increased domestic borrowing to keep its budget deficit under control, and taking over major companies could potentially bring in revenue.

At the same time, seizing damaged assets could bring another financial burden. The Kremlin may intend the measure as a way to pressure companies to shoulder more responsibility for air defense, as Russia's vast territory is hard to protect.

Russia also is offering more help for its biggest online retailer, Wildberries, and businesses selling goods

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through it. The company and thousands of sellers working with it have been hit hard by repeated Ukrainian strikes on warehouses. The Finance Ministry proposed Monday extending deadlines for tax and insurance payments to give Wildberries and its sellers some financial breathing space.

On Saturday, Putin told state television that Russia "must and will improve the air defense system and enhance its capabilities."

"We need to streamline coordination between defense, law enforcement and civilian agencies at all levels, and to leverage the capabilities of state-run enterprises and private businesses," he said.

In May, following deep strikes that unsettled Moscow, Russian lawmakers approved a bill that allowed the Central Bank, state-controlled Sberbank and other financial services to fend off drone attacks by installing air defenses on their premises.

News outlet RBC, citing anonymous sources in and close to the Defense Ministry, reported that month that a mechanism had been established for businesses to procure weapons and equipment to protect themselves from drone attacks, something Russian officials and lawmakers have said companies should do.

Today in History: August 26, De Gaulle leads victory march through Paris

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 26, the 238th day of 2026. There are 127 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 26, 1944, French Gen. Charles de Gaulle braved the threat of German snipers as he led a victory march in Paris, which had just been liberated by the Allies from Nazi occupation.

Also on this date:

In 1939, the first televised Major League Baseball games were broadcast on experimental station W2XBS: a doubleheader between the Cincinnati Reds and the Brooklyn Dodgers at Ebbets Field. The Reds won the first game, 5-2, and the Dodgers the second, 6-1.

In 1958, Alaskans went to the polls to overwhelmingly vote in favor of statehood.

In 1968, the Democratic National Convention opened in Chicago; the four-day event that resulted in the nomination of Hubert H. Humphrey for president was marked by a bloody police crackdown on anti-war protesters in the streets.

In 1972, the Summer Olympics opened in Munich, West Germany.

In 1978, Cardinal Albino Luciani (al-BEE'-noh loo-CHYAH'-nee) of Venice was elected pope following the death of Paul VI. The new pontiff, who took the name Pope John Paul I, died just over a month later.

In 1980, the FBI inadvertently detonated a bomb planted at Harvey's Resort Hotel in Stateline, Nevada, while attempting to disarm it. (The hotel had been evacuated and no injuries were reported, but the blast caused significant damage.)

In 1985, 13-year-old AIDS patient Ryan White began attending classes at Western Middle School in Kokomo, Indiana, via a telephone hook-up at his home; school officials had barred White from attending classes in person due to his illness.

In 2009, kidnapping victim Jaycee Dugard was discovered alive in California after being missing for more than 18 years.

In 2021, two suicide bombers and gunmen attacked crowds of Afghans flocking to Kabul's airport, transforming a scene of desperation into one of horror in the waning days of an airlift for those fleeing the Taliban takeover of the country. The attacks killed at least 60 Afghans and 13 U.S. troops.

Today's Birthdays: Former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge is 81. R&B singer Valerie Simpson (Ashford & Simpson) is 80. Broadcast journalist Bill Whitaker is 75. Puzzle creator/editor Will Shortz is 74. Jazz musician Branford Marsalis is 66. Actor-singer Shirley Manson (Garbage) is 60. Actor Melissa McCarthy is 56. Latin pop singer Thalía is 55. Actor Macaulay Culkin is 46. Actor Chris Pine is 46. Comedian/actor/writer John Mulaney is 44. Country musician Brian Kelley (Florida Georgia Line) is 41. NBA guard James Harden is 37. Actor Dylan O'Brien is 35. Actor Keke Palmer is 33. Actor Charlie Gillespie is 28.