

Groton Daily Independent

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Community Calendar

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.

Saturday, Aug. 29

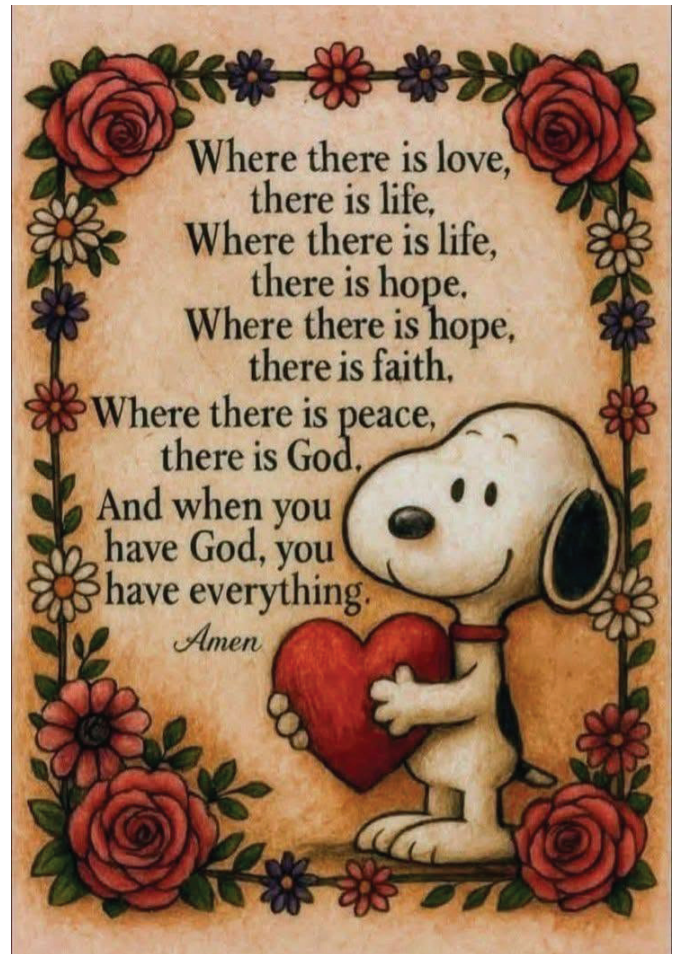
Volleyball: C Match at Matchbox, Aberdeen, 9 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent

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Volleyball: at Huron Arena (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.

Social Media Settlement

Meta yesterday agreed to pay up to \$17.1B and adopt child-safety measures for Facebook and Instagram to resolve lawsuits brought by 52 attorneys general over child privacy laws and social media addiction.

The settlement effectively ends a landmark trial that began in California last week, where states accused Meta of illegally collecting data from children under 13 and designing features to addict children. Meta, which did not admit wrongdoing, will initially pay \$12.1B and up to \$17.1B if Snap, TikTok, and YouTube settle similar lawsuits. The funds will reportedly support youth online safety initiatives. Meta will also introduce a two-hour daily limit for users under 18 and disable notifications during school hours, among other changes.

While a fraction of Meta's \$201B in revenue last year, the settlement is the largest state consumer protection settlement since the 1990s, when tobacco companies agreed to pay over \$206B. A Big Tobacco whistleblower says social media giants used the same addiction playbook.

Nepal Flash Floods

Flash floods swept through northern Nepal and Tibet yesterday, killing at least 160 people as of this writing. Among the hundreds reported missing were over 340 tourists, including visitors from the US, the UK, and Australia.

The Bhotekoshi River began flooding around 9 am local time after a landslide dumped ice and rock into its tributary, sending a surge of water downstream. Satellite imagery indicates a chunk of ice around 2,000 feet wide broke off a glacier and fell nearly 4,000 feet into a valley, setting off the avalanche. It is unclear what caused the ice to fall, though scientists indicated climate change may be to blame; the US Geological Survey initially registered seismic activity near the Nepal-China border as an earthquake but later attributed the tremors to the landslide.

Authorities warned a second flood could be imminent as a blockage is still lodged upstream on the Lhende Khola River.

 **Humankind:** A 9-year-old girl raises over \$500 in lemonade sales for a local food bank, funding two weeks' worth of kid-friendly meals.

New Pancreatic Cancer Drug

The Food and Drug Administration approved a twice-daily pill yesterday to treat late-stage pancreatic cancer. Rasonque (generic name: daraxonrasib) is the first drug by California-based Revolutionary Medicines.

Pancreatic cancer is among the deadliest cancers, with a five-year survival rate of 13% for the roughly 67,000 Americans diagnosed annually. One challenge is geometry: RAS mutations drive 90% of pancreatic cancer cases and more than one-quarter of all cancers. The proteins they generate are flat, making it difficult for drugs to bind to them. In 2013, however, one of RevMed's cofounders discovered a pocket for drugs to latch onto; the company began human trials in 2022. Recipients lived nearly twice as long on daraxonrasib: 13.2 months, compared with 6.7 months on chemotherapy. Among them is former Sen. Ben Sasse (R-NE), who lauded the drug despite side effects.

RevMed is investigating a potential drug for lung cancer, of which roughly 20% or more cases are driven by RAS mutations.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Tim Curry, who brought Dr. Frank-N-Furter to life in "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," dies at age 80. Rupert Grint to reprise his role as Ron Weasley in Broadway's "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child," over 15 years after his final film appearance as Harry Potter's best friend.

Indiana Fever-Chicago Sky game Sunday is the WNBA's most-watched regular-season game since the league's inaugural season in 1997, with 3.31 million viewers.

Science & Technology

Two antibody injections appear to restore some cognition in mice with Alzheimer's-like conditions, offering a potential new avenue for treating the disease in humans.

Researchers harness a natural hibernation molecule found in snails to create a drug that could preserve transplant organs, induce hibernation in astronauts on long space missions, and more.

Scientists use 165 million-year-old preserved fossil wings to recreate a partial Middle Jurassic soundscape.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -0.0%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq -0.1%) as new federal report shows persistent inflation.

Nvidia reports record \$96.2B in revenue, beating second-quarter earnings forecast.

Apple sets iPhone launch event for Sept. 9, the first under new CEO John Ternus, with a foldable phone rumored to debut.

Vanguard Group acquires fintech platform Altruist for \$4B, signaling a push by the world's second-largest investment firm into financial advice.

Politics & World Affairs

US Department of Justice says it disrupted a yearslong Chinese state-sponsored hacking operation that infiltrated US government agencies and critical infrastructure; targets included the Senate, NASA, and Federal Reserve, among others.

Federal judge temporarily greenlights executive order restricting mail-in voting; 24 states and Washington, DC, sue to block new US Postal Service policy, which restricts who can receive mail-in ballots to eligible absentee voters.

US military judge sets June 2028 as possible start date for trial of four men accused of conspiring in the 9/11 attacks, including alleged mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

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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Groton joins nation in honoring Dolly Parton

GROTON — The American flag at the Groton American Legion Post Home was lowered to half-staff Wednesday as Groton joined communities across the country in mourning the death of country music legend Dolly Parton.

Groton American Legion Commander Doug Hamilton lowered the flag in accordance with an order from President Donald Trump directing American flags to be flown at half-staff through sunset Tuesday, Sept. 1, in Parton's memory.

Parton died Tuesday, Aug. 25, in Nashville at the age of 80. Her death brought an outpouring of tributes for an entertainer whose influence extended far beyond country music.

Born in rural Tennessee in 1946, Parton rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most recognizable figures in American entertainment. Her six-decade career produced classics including "Jolene," "Coat of Many Colors," "9 to 5" and "I Will Always Love You." She also found success in movies, including 9 to 5 and Steel Magnolias.

But Parton's legacy stretched well beyond the stage.

Through her Imagination Library, she helped place hundreds of millions of books into the hands of young children, promoting childhood literacy in communities throughout the United States and around the world. She was also recognized for numerous other charitable efforts during her lifetime.

In ordering flags lowered, Trump described Parton's death as a tremendous loss and recognized the impact she had on millions of people. Flags at federal buildings and facilities across the nation are to remain at half-staff through sunset Sept. 1.

That national tribute could be seen Wednesday in Groton as Hamilton lowered the Stars and Stripes at the American Legion Post Home — a local gesture of respect for an American entertainer whose music, generosity and personality touched generations.



Legion Commander Doug Hamilton lowers the flag to half mast at the Groton Post Home in downtown Groton.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Johnson takes third, Groton places third at Northeast Conference Meet

GROTON — Jace Johnson turned in one of the top rounds of the day as Groton Area placed third in the team standings at the Northeast Conference Golf Meet held Tuesday, Aug. 25, at Olive Grove Golf Course.

Johnson fired a 1-over-par 73 on the 6,244-yard, par-72 layout to finish third individually, just one stroke behind the leaders.

Aberdeen Roncalli's Lucas Daggett captured medalist honors with an even-par 72, while teammate Harper Schnabel also finished at even par with a 72 to take second. Johnson was next with his 73.

Johnson was steady throughout the round. He went out in 37 and came home in even-par 36. His back nine included a birdie on the par-5 12th hole as he finished just one shot away from the top spot.

Groton teammate Liam Johnson also earned a top-10 conference finish, placing 10th with a 13-over-par 85. He shot 45 on the front nine before improving by five strokes with a 40 on the back.

Graham Rose finished 13th for Groton with a 94, shooting matching rounds of 47 on the front and back nine. Ryland Blackwood carded a 102 and finished 20th.

As a team, Groton posted a score of 349 to finish third in the six-team field.

Aberdeen Roncalli dominated the team competition, placing four golfers among the top seven individuals and winning the conference championship with a 307. Sisseton was runner-up at 340, nine strokes ahead of Groton.

Redfield finished fourth with a 396, followed by Milbank at 409 and Tiospa Zina at 497.

Behind the two Roncalli golfers and Johnson, Sisseton's Luke Nielsen placed fourth with an 80. Finn Anderson of Roncalli was fifth with an 81, followed by teammates Matthew Darling with an 82 and Matthew Gerlach with an 83. Sisseton's Malachi Anderson and Karter Duetsch each shot 84 before Liam Johnson rounded out the top 10 with his 85.

Groton's third-place team finish was highlighted by Jace Johnson's round, which left him only one stroke from the Northeast Conference championship on his home course.



Pictured left to right are Liam Johnson, Rylan Blackwood, Graham Rose, Jace Johnson and Bentley Ehresmann.

(Courtesy Photo Becca Johnson)

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☆	3	Jace Johnson <i>Groton</i>										+1			73							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
Strokes																						
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 116 / Course Rating™: 70.0 / Olive Grove Golf Course																						
Yardage	358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	6244	
Par	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	72	
Jace Johnson	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	5	37	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	73	

☆	10		Liam Johnson <i>Groton</i>										+13				85							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total		
Strokes																								
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 116 / Course Rating™: 70.0 / Olive Grove Golf Course																								
Yardage		358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	6244		
Par		4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	72		
Liam Johnson		7	5	6	4	5	6	4	3	5	45	5	4	4	4	6	4	4	3	6	40	85		

☆	13		Graham Rose <i>Groton</i>									+22				94							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total	
Strokes																							
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 116 / Course Rating™: 70.0 / Olive Grove Golf Course																							
Yardage		358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	6244	
Par		4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	72	
Graham Rose		4	5	5	4	7	5	5	4	8	47	5	6	5	4	6	5	4	5	7	47	94	

☆	10		Liam Johnson <i>Groton</i>										+13				85							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total		
Strokes																								
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 116 / Course Rating™: 70.0 / Olive Grove Golf Course																								
Yardage		358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	6244		
Par		4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	72		
Liam Johnson		7	5	6	4	5	6	4	3	5	45	5	4	4	4	6	4	4	3	6	40	85		

☆	20	Ryland Blackwood <i>Groton</i>										+30				102							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total	
Strokes																							
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 116 / Course Rating™: 70.0 / Olive Grove Golf Course																							
Yardage		358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	358	357	507	140	394	335	370	186	475	3122	6244	
Par		4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	72	
Ryland Blackwood		4	6	7	5	5	6	7	5	9	54	5	5	6	4	7	6	5	4	6	48	102	

Starting Hole Eagle or Better Birdie Par Bogey Double Bogey or Worse

Division of Disease Prevention and Control

SD West Nile Virus

- 11 human cases reported
 - 5 non-neuroinvasive cases
 - 6 neuroinvasive cases
 - 0 deaths
- 1 human viremic blood donor detections
- 7 counties with a positive mosquito pool

A circular gauge illustrating predicted COVID-19 cases. The gauge is divided into three colored segments: green (LOW, 0-50), yellow (MODERATE, 50-100), and red (OUTBREAK, 100-150+). The needle points to 76, which is in the MODERATE segment. Callouts link specific years to points on the gauge: 2011, 2019, 2020, 2024 are in the LOW segment; 2015, 2021 are in the MODERATE segment; 2014, 2017, 2022 are in the MODERATE segment; 2023, 2025 are in the OUTBREAK segment; and 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018 are in the OUTBREAK segment. A box at the bottom indicates '76 cases predicted'.

US West Nile Virus

- 299 human cases reported
 - 212 of which are neuroinvasive



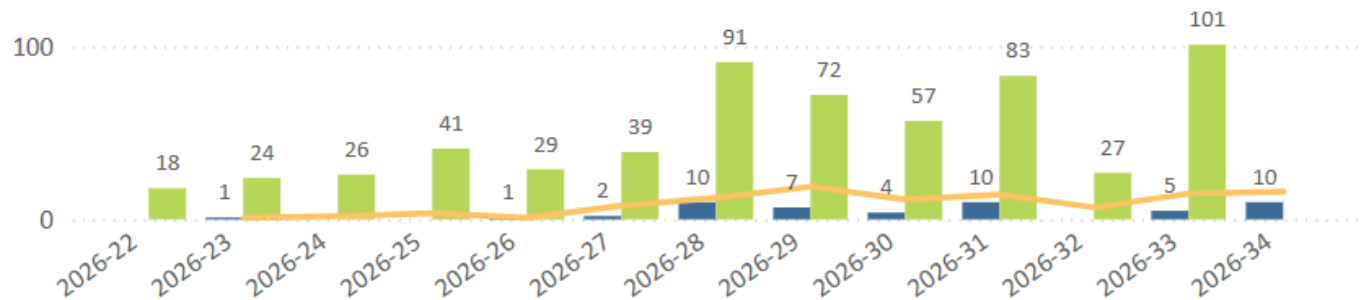
Data compiled from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. West Nile Virus: Current Year Data and Maps. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/west-nile-virus/data-maps/current-year-data.html>

SD Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2026

- Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 59
- *Culex* Species Collected: 44,286
- Total mosquito pools tested: 658
- Percent positivity: 7.60%

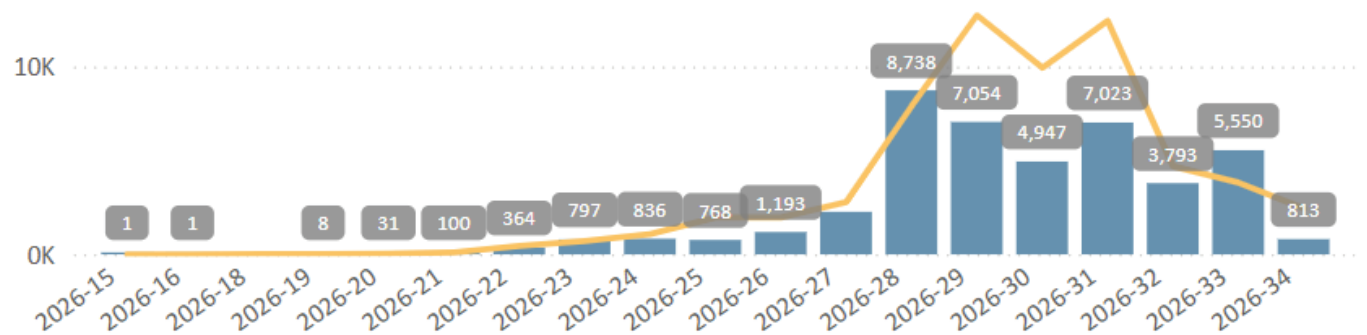
Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative ● 5 Year Median Pool Count



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week

● Culex Species Collected ● 5Y Median Culex Count



Meade County Fatal Crash

What: Single-motorcycle fatal crash

Where: Erickson Ranch Road/Escape Lane, 1 mile northwest of Black Hawk, South Dakota

When: 7:08 a.m., Wednesday, August 26, 2026

Driver 1: 44-year-old male from Summerset, South Dakota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2010 Triumph motorcycle

Helmet Used: Yes

Meade County, S.D.- A Summerset man died Wednesday in a single-motorcycle crash near Black Hawk, South Dakota.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2010 Triumph motorcycle was traveling westbound on Erickson Ranch Road near the Escape Lane intersection. The driver laid the motorcycle down after the curve, left the roadway and became separated from his motorcycle. He sustained fatal injuries.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota attorney general urges beefed-up consumer protection after \$53 million Meta settlement

State's share could eventually rise to \$73 million

BY JOHN HULT

State lawmakers should decide how to spend the largest consumer protection settlement with a single company in South Dakota history, Attorney General Marty Jackley said.

But he'd like to see them put at least some of the money toward consumer protection.

Jackley's office has two lawyers and six investigators in its consumer protection division, handling upwards of 82,000 consumer complaints a year.

That team was part of the work that led to Wednesday's \$17.1 billion settlement offer from Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, in a multi-state lawsuit to which South Dakota was a party. The 29 states alleged that the social media platforms are addictive and harm children.

South Dakota is in line for \$52.6 million of that money from Meta, which could rise to \$73.4 million if the other defendants in the case — the owners of YouTube, TikTok and Snapchat — also offer separate monetary settlements.

South Dakota's share of the money is 11% higher than it would've been had the state not signed on as one of the 29 plaintiffs in the initial lawsuit in 2023, Jackley said during a Wednesday press conference in Pierre. South Dakota's \$52.6 million share includes \$4.5 million to resolve the state's claims that Meta had shared nonpublic information about its users during the 2016 election cycle with a company called Cambridge Analytica.

"As part of the conversation," on how to spend the money, Jackley said, he thinks "adding a lawyer or two to work on these significant cases" in consumer protection would be wise.

"When you're bringing in upwards of \$73.6 million, I think it justifies building up the team," said Jackley, who asked for and received funding from lawmakers last year for an outreach worker in consumer protection.

The money would be deposited initially into the consumer protection fund, and continue to flow to the state over the course of 10 years. Jackley's spokesman, Tony Mangan, told South Dakota Searchlight that the Attorney General's Office can't spend money from the consumer fund without legislative approval.

Under the terms of the settlement, at least 50% of the money needs to be used to address "the concerns raised" by the lawsuit, Jackley said. Beyond that, Jackley said, he hopes lawmakers consider "guardrails" on how to invest the remaining dollars that make sure the money benefits children.

The dollar amount from Facebook is "the record" for the state's largest settlement with a single company, Jackley said. Collections from tobacco and opioid settlements have been larger overall, but the money in those instances came from multiple companies.

Because of ongoing negotiations, Jackley said he "has to be careful" when discussing how much money the owners of YouTube, TikTok or Snapchat might offer to resolve claims of harm to children. He said, however, that he'd expect it to "be somewhat consistent" with the Facebook figure.

Wednesday's settlement addresses the lawsuit against Meta from the state of South Dakota and other states, the trial for which began Aug. 12. Several other lawsuits of a similar nature against the company and other social media businesses are ongoing in other state and federal courts.

Among them are cases filed separately by the Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Oglala and Sisseton-Wahpeton tribes, each of which have lands entirely or partially located within the borders of South Dakota.

Tim Purdon, of the law firm Robins Kaplan, represents those four tribes, as well as others, in ongoing cases against Meta, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube. The Wednesday settlement, Purdon told South Dakota Searchlight, does not resolve those tribal cases.

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

Lawmaker salaries could top \$16,000 during next year's South Dakota legislative session

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A committee of South Dakota lawmakers endorsed budget increases Wednesday for the Legislative Research Council to cover the anticipated rise in legislator pay.

The council manages the Legislature's day-to-day operations, helps lawmakers draft bills and is responsible for updating the state's code of laws. Interim Director Jeff Mehlhaff asked for a \$29,479 addition to the council's fiscal year 2027 budget to cover rising lawmaker salaries, and a \$96,872 increase in the council's fiscal year 2028 budget to cover rising lawmaker salaries and "per diem" payments — Latin for "per day" — which help cover lawmakers' daily living expenses during the annual legislative sessions.

The salary for legislators is 20% of the South Dakota median household income as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, according to state law. The number is reported in September, Mehlhaff said. He told lawmakers their salary could increase from \$15,970 to \$16,608 for the legislative session that begins in January — a 4% increase.

The per diem, which lawmakers earn on top of their salary during the session and for committee meetings outside of the session, is tied to rates set by the federal government. The council's existing budget is based on a per diem of \$161.95, but the current per diem is \$178. During this year's 38-day legislative session, the total per diem paid to each lawmaker was \$6,764.

Legislators also receive mileage at a rate set by the Bureau of Finance and Management, which is currently 70 cents per mile.

The council's total anticipated budget for legislator pay during the 2028 fiscal year is about \$2.8 million.

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.

Meta to pay 47 states up to \$17.1B in landmark child safety settlement

The company will only follow through on toughest new limits if TikTok, YouTube adopt similar rules

BY ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS

Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram, on Wednesday agreed to pay 47 states, the District of Columbia, and a handful of U.S. territories, up to \$17.1 billion in penalties over claims that its social media platforms are addictive and a danger to children.

As part of the settlement, Meta also pledged to make changes to Instagram and Facebook that are designed to reduce young people's use of the platforms.

"Meta intentionally exploited kids for profit and then lied about it, claiming its products were safe when its own internal research confirmed the platforms were addictive and harmful," said Washington, D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwab, a Democrat, in a statement announcing the settlement.

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"The physical, mental and emotional harms that intentionally addictive social media inflict on youth — and particularly teenage girls — are widespread across the tech industry, and this successful, coordinated multistage litigation has resulted in Meta being the first platform to come to the table and agree to such comprehensive reforms," he said.

"It will not be the last."

The settlement ended a high-stakes, landmark case, filed in 2023, in which states said Meta purposely designed its social media platforms with addictive features, that Meta knew it was exposing children to serious mental harms, and that it intentionally misled the public about the safety of those platforms.

Meta has not admitted wrongdoing.

The federal trial began last week in Oakland, California, led by a bipartisan group of attorneys general from California, Colorado, Kentucky and New Jersey.

State officials are calling the settlement the biggest consumer protection win since the Big Tobacco settlements of the 1990s.

Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman, a Republican, said in a statement Wednesday that the lawsuit was "never just about the money."

"Kids deserve a childhood that isn't measured in likes and followers," he said. "The online protections delivered by this settlement will bring a generational change that will make social media platforms safer for Kentucky families."

In addition to the financial settlement, Meta agreed to make major changes to its Instagram and Facebook features for young users, including a daily time limit, automatic pauses, nighttime blocks that restrict access from midnight to 6 a.m., and stronger safeguards against bullying and harmful content. Most of the updates must be in place for at least a decade.

Meta is trying to drag its competitors along with it. The company agreed to further restrict daily time limits for teens only if TikTok and YouTube agree to adopt comparable measures.

Under the settlement terms, Meta will pay out just 70%(about \$12.7 billion) to states unless TikTok and Alphabet-owned YouTube also agree to set one-hour daily time limits for young users, as well as night mode and age assurance measures.

Meta will pay the remaining 30% — \$5.3 billion — if the other two companies agree to the new measures and each agrees to pay states about \$5.3 billion.

C.J. Mahoney, chief legal officer at Meta, said in a statement that the changes needed to be made across the social media landscape to have an impact.

"Our new Time Limit commitments, Night Mode features and usage limits during school hours set the right path forward for our whole industry, but this framework will only work if all our peers join us," Mahoney said.

"Because teens move fluidly across dozens of apps, we need an industry-wide solution."

Settlement money will be paid out to the participating states and territories annually over a decade, based on their populations.

Just three states, Florida, New Mexico and Texas, aren't part of the settlement. New Mexico won its own lawsuit against Meta earlier this year, when a jury ordered Meta to pay \$375 million in damages for violating the state's consumer protection laws. Texas negotiated its own settlement with Meta that includes a \$1 billion payout and a promise of more safety features for children.

While state officials lauded the changes coming to Instagram and Facebook as wins for child safety, some free speech advocates expressed concern over broader implications of the new restrictions.

Kate Ruane, director of the Free Expression Project at the Center for Democracy & Technology, a civil rights organization said in a statement that safe and age-appropriate online experiences for children are critical.

"But we also see the potential for significant risks to everyone's privacy and free expression rights online, especially in the ways this settlement will subject all users to invasive age assurance and limit all kids' ac-

cess to content and services regardless of their individual needs," Ruane said.

Meta and other social media platforms still face thousands of ongoing lawsuits from individuals and school districts across the nation that accuse them of targeting young users with addictive algorithms and inadequate safety measures.

One of those is a lawsuit against Instagram filed by South Carolina state Rep. Brandon Guffey, whose 17-year-old son Gavin died by suicide in 2022. His family said they later learned he was a victim of sexual extortion after being targeted by a scammer on Instagram.

"Scammers put immense pressure and sometimes even a countdown on these teens," Guffey said in an emailed statement after the settlement announcement. "Gavin didn't deserve to have less than two hours before he took his life. He deserved to have a parent that was aware of this."

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

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

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

New challenges to Trump mail-in voting order arrive after US Supreme Court ruling

BY JACOB FISCHLER

Democrat-led states and voting rights groups re-filed lawsuits Wednesday to block the Trump administration from executing a new regulation to restrict mail-in voting, while a federal judge lifted a nationwide pause on the policy in line with this week's U.S. Supreme Court decision that handed the administration a procedural win.

Democratic officials in 24 states and the District of Columbia launched a new federal lawsuit challenging a U.S. Postal Service rule establishing federal vote-by-mail standards as unconstitutional and a coalition of voting rights advocates filed a supplemental complaint against the USPS rule after the Supreme Court struck down a similar suit as premature.

The rule establishes new ballot-design requirements and mandates states collect information from voters and voting-age citizens and transmit that information to the federal government. It forbids the Postal Service from delivering or collecting mail-in ballots from people who have not been confirmed as eligible voters.

The Supreme Court's decision Monday, with the three liberals dissenting, said states had not had the right to challenge President Donald Trump's March 31 executive order because there was no corresponding enforceable final rule.

The new filings largely incorporated earlier arguments, but updated the procedural history to reflect that the USPS rule is now final, and presumably open to legal challenge.

"As recently as August 12, 2026, USPS told the Supreme Court that there was significant 'uncertainty concerning the government's future actions,'" the voting rights groups wrote. "That uncertainty is now gone."

In fact, the final rule published Aug. 21 hewed closely to the March executive order, the groups said.

"The Final Rule now makes concrete what Defendants previously called speculative," they wrote.

States' responsibility

The voting rights groups said the rule would create a significant burden for voters.

The Democratic officials added that the requirements would place a significant strain on their resources, forcing them to scramble to overhaul their vote-by-mail systems less than three months before midterm elections.

And the rule impedes on a power that the U.S. Constitution expressly gives to states: election administration.

While Congress can make laws related to voting, the president and Postal Service have virtually no role, the state officials said.

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"Whether a qualified voter may vote by mail is a question of state law, as is the question of whether a ballot will be accepted for processing and tabulation," the states' complaint reads. "Congress has not afforded USPS any authority whatsoever to set rules for federal elections or mail voting, even though Americans have cast ballots by mail for generations."

The states also noted that Trump has objected to mail in voting for political purposes.

"One need not look further than the White House to explain USPS's unprecedented and unlawful conduct," they wrote. "President Trump has long opposed mail voting, expressing that it would 'LEAD TO THE END OF OUR GREAT REPUBLICAN PARTY.' Since reassuming office, the President has aimed to—in his words— 'get rid of MAIL-IN BALLOTS.'"

The states that brought the suit are: Massachusetts, Virginia, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

Decision coming soon

Also Wednesday, U.S. District Judge Indiria Talwani removed her nationwide preliminary injunction blocking the administration from implementing the executive order that directed the USPS to create new restrictions and standards for mail-in ballots. She dissolved her order only to comply with the Supreme Court decision, which she suggested might be different if the court considers a complaint filed after the USPS final rule.

"While Plaintiff Organizations have substantial arguments that might persuade the Supreme Court to reach a different result if Plaintiff Organizations have an opportunity to present them, this court is compelled by the Supreme Court's ruling" to lift the injunction, she wrote.

Talwani also set a quick briefing schedule for both cases Wednesday, with the final brief before a decision on a request for a new temporary injunction due Aug. 31.

That decision is likely to see an appeal.

White House response

Trump and administration officials have largely framed the order as an election security measure.

In a statement Wednesday, White House spokeswoman Lauren Bis repeated that defense and blasted Democrats for seeking to undermine the rule.

"The Supreme Court ruling was a major win for the security of American elections," Bis wrote. "Radical Democrats continue to oppose commonsense measures that protect the security of mail-in ballots and ensure only Americans are electing American leaders. The Trump Administration will continue to lawfully enact the agenda President Trump was elected on — which includes the safety and security of our elections."

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

Cheaper health insurance changed their lives. Then it went away.

BY SHALINA CHATLANI

Part 1 of an occasional series on how people are being affected by the expiration of Affordable Care Act subsidies.

EDWARDS, Miss. — Every now and then a freight train rumbles through, creaking and groaning on the rusted tracks that run along the edge of the largely deserted downtown. On some days, that train is just about the only thing moving.

Grandma's Ice Cream Shoppe, an ice cream parlor owned by a retired preacher and his wife, gets only one or two customers per day. There is a small barber shop, and the empty ruins of a former thrift store. The sugary, smoky red meat at Lee's Heavenly Barbecue and the fried shrimp and catfish at the M & L Fish Hut draw some folks. But the ellipticals and treadmills are silent, as usual, at the 4-year-old Kut-N-Fit Wellness Club on Vicksburg Street.

Derrick Clark, 51, has lived in Edwards his whole life.

Clark has always struggled with his weight and he readily describes himself as obese. About two decades

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ago, he was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes.

"My grandmother, my uncle, my dad are all diabetics, and I've had some relatives that have gotten some of their limbs cut off because of their diabetes," Clark said. "When it's a hereditary disease that runs in the family, it's kind of hard."

Last year, Clark was reelected as the at-large member of the Edwards Board of Aldermen. But the part-time job only pays about \$500 a month. His family owns a small sports bar in town, but it's only open for a few hours a day and doesn't generate much additional income.

He has no health insurance.

As is the case with many chronic diseases, the worst consequences of diabetes — such as blindness and amputations — can be prevented with routine care. Clark and many other diabetes patients in Mississippi were getting that care over the past few years through subsidized Affordable Care Act insurance plans.

But Congress allowed the so-called enhanced subsidies to expire at the end of last year. Now the number of diabetic Mississippians without insurance, and thus regular care, is once again on the rise: According to state data, enrollment in ACA plans has fallen by nearly two-thirds in just eight months. The medical and financial consequences could be dire — for individual patients like Clark and for the state.

Mississippi maladies

Designed as a temporary pandemic-era measure, the enhanced subsidies were made available by the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021 and later extended through the end of 2025 by the Inflation Reduction Act.

In 49 states (all but New Mexico), the number of people enrolled in ACA plans, also known as Obamacare, has declined since the subsidies expired and coverage became more expensive. Nationwide, participation has declined this year by nearly 3 million people, to about 19.2 million from 21.8 million in 2025, according to the Trump administration. The 2025 figure was the highest ever recorded, after six years of steady increases.

But few if any states are feeling the absence of the subsidies as acutely as Mississippi.

By many measures, Mississippi is the poorest state, with more than 14% of its families living below the federal poverty line. Its traditional Medicaid program has strict income limits, and excludes nearly all non-disabled adults, including Clark. And it is among the 10 states that have not expanded Medicaid to single adults and higher-income parents under the Affordable Care Act.

Mississippi is also one of the unhealthiest states. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified a "diabetes belt," where people are most likely to have the chronic disease. It includes 644 counties across 15 states, primarily in the South; Mississippi is the only state where every county made the list.

In addition to its high diabetes rate, Mississippi has the nation's second-highest heart disease mortality rate, and it is one of only two states, along with West Virginia, with an obesity rate above 40%.

Black people make up more than 36% of Mississippi's population — the highest percentage of any state — and Black Americans are more likely than other racial groups to have chronic diseases, including diabetes. That's largely because Black people are more likely to live in poverty, to have trouble accessing healthcare, and to be exposed to pollution and chronic stress.

When the subsidies significantly lowered the cost of Obamacare coverage — making it free or nearly free for some people with low incomes — Mississippi state health officials made a concerted effort to get residents to enroll. Dr. Daniel Edney, Mississippi's state health officer, said the state launched a public information campaign to encourage people to sign up at their local health departments.

It worked. The number of Mississippians enrolled in Obamacare plans more than tripled, from fewer than 99,000 people in 2020, the year before the subsidies went into effect, to more than 338,000 at the end of 2025, according to state data.

"Our uninsured rate went down significantly, and I'm convinced it's one of the reasons why our overall population health scoring has improved," Edney said in an interview in his office in downtown Jackson.

In its 2025 public health report card, the Mississippi State Department of Health reported lower rates of

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opioid-related deaths, HIV, syphilis, congenital syphilis, teen births and accidental deaths. Health officials acknowledged that the state had made less progress on chronic conditions such as hypertension and obesity, but also noted that it went from dead last in overall national health rankings three years ago to 48th last year.

But when the subsidies expired at the end of last year, Mississippi's Obamacare enrollment numbers plunged: Roughly 134,000 residents were still enrolled as of Aug. 21, about 40% of last year's total. And the state projects that the number will fall to around 127,000 next year.

Many of the Mississippians who dropped their coverage have diabetes or other chronic conditions. Without insurance, they are likely to put off routine care, Edney said.

"What's gonna happen to them? Probably present to the emergency room, eventually showing up once their vision is blurry, or they start having chest pain, or they have a sore on their foot that won't heal," he said. "At that point, you're scrambling to get them placed into care."

The Obamacare subsidies made a huge difference for Clark, who is unmarried and does not have any children. With coverage, his insulin and medications to control his blood pressure and blood sugar cost him about \$15 per month, he said. But he could no longer afford his insurance plan when the subsidies expired and his premiums went up by "hundreds of dollars."

Without insurance, he says his medications now cost him about \$200 per month — and that's with discounts he gets from medical clinics. Sometimes, he said, family members give him insulin they don't plan to use.

At some point, he said, he might have to choose between paying for medications and paying his other bills.

"I still have utilities and water and gas and food and still have to buy my medicine monthly out of pocket," Clark said. "I'm just praying for a better day and trying to lose some weight so I can try to get my diabetes in control."

Opening a gym

Like Clark, 49-year-old hair stylist and salon owner Angie Myles-Griffin grew up in Edwards, and she never really wanted to leave. But the limitations of living in a small town hit home after she gave birth to her third child and she set out to lose some of the weight she had gained: She had to drive more than an hour round trip to Jackson to find a gym and a grocery store selling healthy food.

Frustrated by the back and forth, Myles-Griffin decided to do something about it: She became a certified personal trainer and opened her own gym in Edwards, the Kut-N-Fit Wellness Club, right down the street from Lee's Heavenly Barbecue.

"I became very passionate about health and just fitness overall," Myles-Griffin said. "So I wanted to bring that back to my community, so people wouldn't have that excuse of having to drive."

Myles-Griffin said that in 2024 she partnered with the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson to lead a yearlong diabetes prevention program for 20 Edwards-area women. Myles-Griffin gave participants fitness and nutrition coaching at her new gym and even brought in dieticians to show them how to prepare healthy meals. A dozen people stuck with it.

But since the medical center concluded its sponsorship, most of Myles-Griffin's clients have melted away. Even though Kut-N-Fit is conveniently located, she said most Edwards residents just don't have the "mind-set" to work out regularly. And Edwards residents still have to drive about a half hour to get to a grocery store with a wide selection of healthy offerings, she said.

Unfortunately, a lack of transportation is one of the many challenges that Edwards residents face.

"If you don't have transportation, you can't get to a job, and if you can't get to a job, there's no income," Myles-Griffin said. "And so when there's nothing going on, it's like a lack of motivation."

Poverty, a lack of exercise, obesity, diets high in sugar, unhealthy fats and processed ingredients — that confluence of factors exists in many Mississippi communities. It's a recipe for Type 2 diabetes, and it's costing Mississippi billions of dollars.

Diagnosed cases of diabetes cost the state an estimated \$5.1 billion annually — \$3.4 billion from direct medical expenses and another \$1.7 billion from lost productivity in 2022, according to the American Dia-

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betes Association.

And when diabetics don't get regular care, because they don't have insurance or don't have easy access to a doctor, the most extreme — and expensive — health outcomes become more likely. Mississippi's lower extremity amputation rate is about twice the national rate, according to the American Heart Association.

Irena McClain, the executive director of the nonprofit Diabetes Foundation of Mississippi, said that since the subsidies expired, her organization has been receiving more calls from people asking for help. Without insurance, medical care for diabetes can cost people upward of \$1,000 per month, according to a 2022 study.

"I had someone call me up last week, whose doctor wants her on an insulin pump to control her Type 1 diabetes, and she doesn't have any insurance. She can't get a pump unless someone donates a pump to us," McClain said. "And there's certainly a lot of people who need help much more than the amount that these charities have to give. I don't know what's going to happen."

In Jackson, McClain said, charities, free clinics and community health centers are struggling to provide care to all the diabetes patients who have lost their Obamacare coverage.

Mississippi hospitals also are feeling the pinch, according to Richard Roberson, president and CEO of the Mississippi Hospital Association. In 2023, the most recent year for which numbers are available, Mississippi hospitals provided more than \$600 million in "uncompensated care," or care for which they received no payment from either the patient or an insurer.

"That trajectory of costs combined with the trajectory of uninsured is just going to really exacerbate the challenges for hospitals," Roberson said. He added that changes to hospital funding included the broad tax and spending law President Donald Trump signed last summer, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, will increase the financial strain.

"We're just going to start seeing that decrease in revenue, increase in cost, and at some point on the axis, they're going to cross, and it's going to be bad," he said.

No help coming

Meanwhile, the cost of Obamacare coverage keeps going up. Next year, the median proposed premium increase is expected to be close to 15%, the second consecutive year of a double-digit premium hike.

In addition to the expiration of the federal subsidies, prices have increased because of other factors, including labor shortages and the rising cost of prescription drugs, driven in part by the growing demand for GLP-1 drugs such as Ozempic and Wegovy.

At least 10 states are using their own money to help people buy Obamacare health plans, partially replacing the expired subsidies. But Mississippi isn't one of them.

"It's not that there's a big money room in the basement where we can go get the money that we're keeping from everyone," Mississippi Republican state Rep. Lee Yancey, who serves on the House's public health and human services committee, told Stateline. "It's just there's a limited amount, and there's only so much you can do."

Yancey expressed sympathy for Mississippians who can't afford Obamacare plans without the subsidies. However, he added, he doesn't believe that "just because a problem exists the government is the one that has to fix it."

Without the Obamacare plan he used to have, Clark said he has little choice but to drive to Jackson every month to get discounted medications at the Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center.

"Sometimes you got to do what you got to do, and with this high price of gas and food ... it's just rough," Clark said as he stood outside the clinic.

"If you go in there, you see it's not about a race thing," he said. "It's just poor people — the working poor."

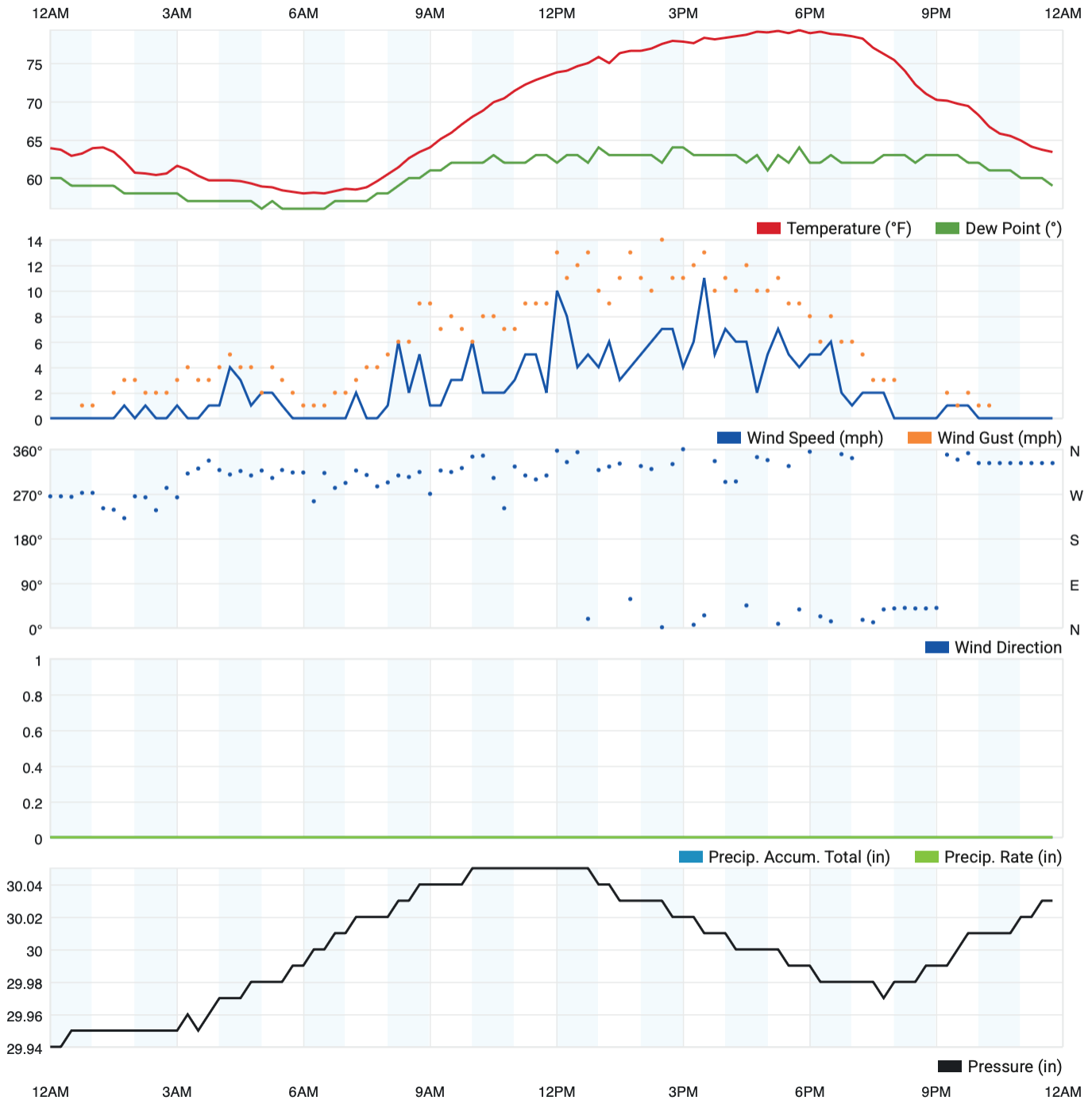
This story is part of "Uninsured in America," a project led by Public Health Watch, a nonprofit newsroom based in Texas. The project focuses on life in America's health-coverage gaps and the impact of potential Medicaid cuts and other changes. This story was originally produced by Stateline, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501(c)(3) public charity. Shalina Chatlani covers health care and environmental justice for Stateline.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 26, 2026



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Today



High: 81 °F

Patchy Fog
then Sunny

Tonight



Low: 54 °F

Increasing
Clouds

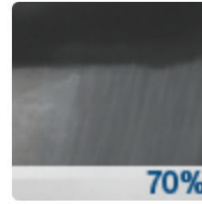
Friday



High: 84 °F

Partly Sunny
then Chance
Showers

Friday Night



Low: 62 °F

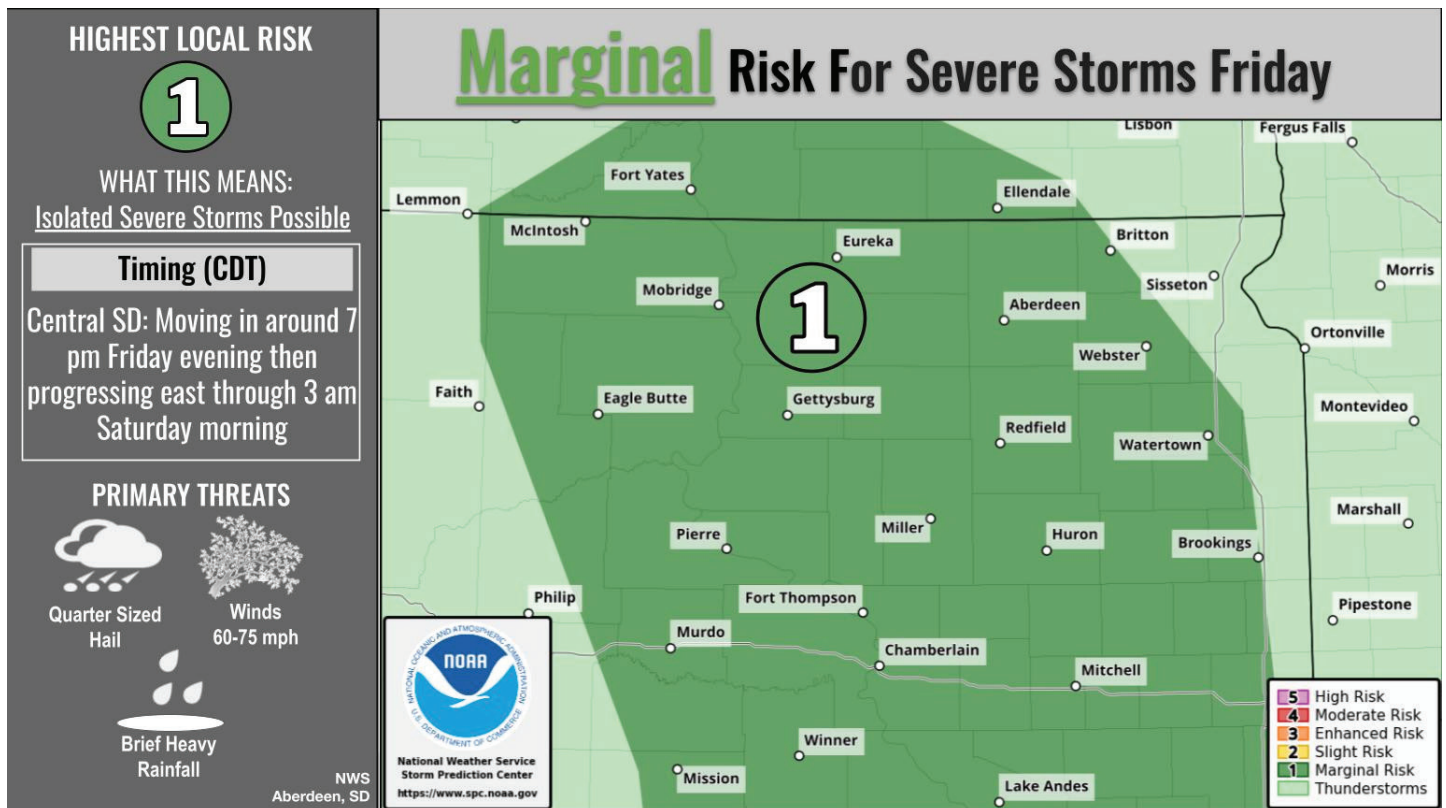
Showers
Likely

Saturday



High: 86 °F

Mostly Sunny



Dry and seasonable weather today gives way to a system moving off the Rockies on Friday. Early morning thunderstorms on Friday are not expected to be severe, but another round of storms will roll through Friday evening from west to east. Evening storms may have large hail or strong winds.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 5:47 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 5:55 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 2:03 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1973

Record Low: 38 in 1967

Average High: 81

Average Low: 54

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.96

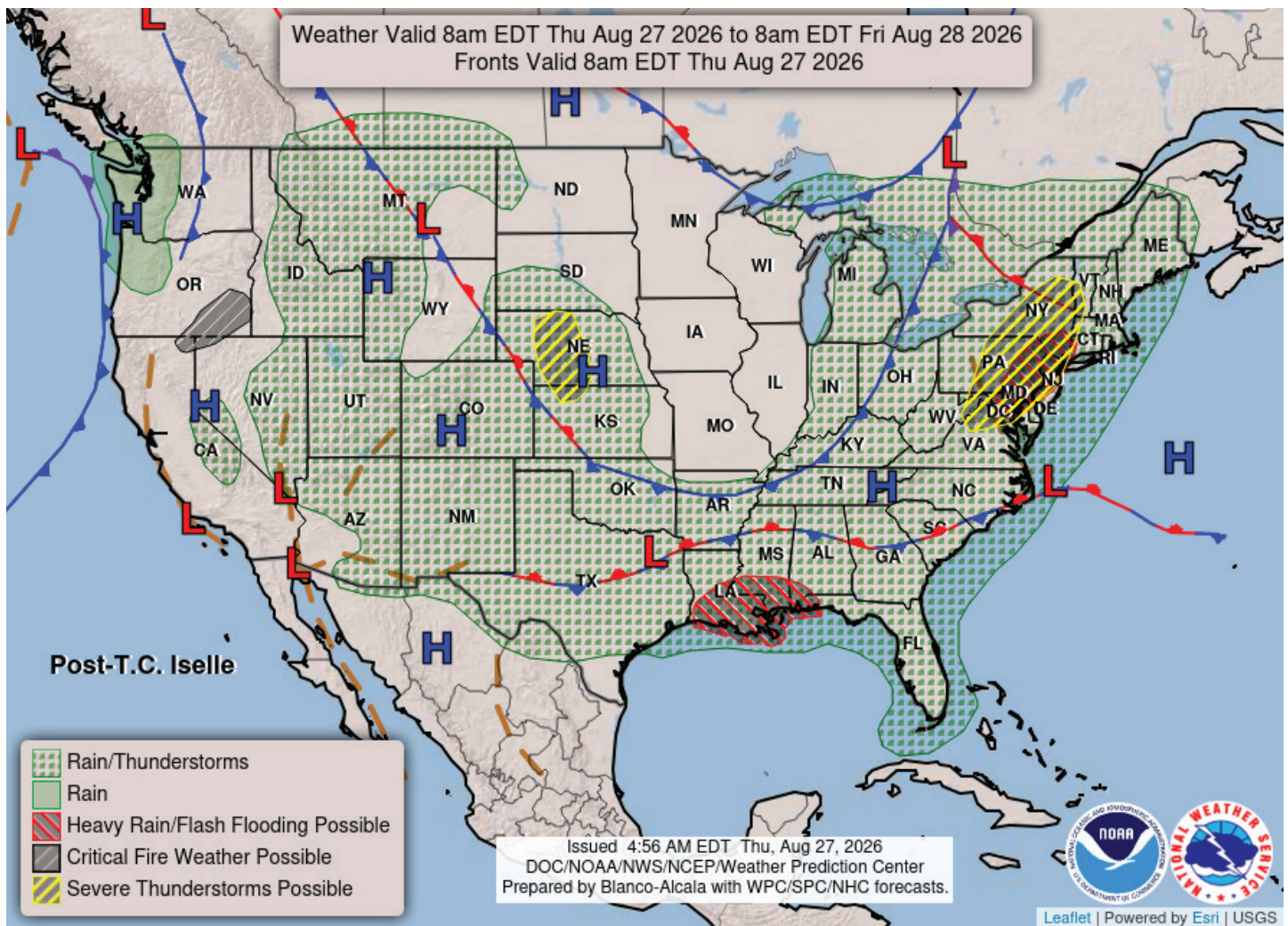
Precip to date in Aug.: 10.52

Average Precip to date: 16.06

Precip Year to Date: 19.99

Sunset Tonight: 8:20 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:49 am



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Today in Weather History

August 27, 1983: High winds tore through Glenham and Wakpala, destroying several structures and damaging crops. The worst damage occurred in Glenham, in Walworth County, where two mobile homes were damaged, the roof of a school torn off, and trees limbs down. A tall TV antenna was blown over, and a boat was blown off a trailer. High winds also tore through the Bowdle area, downing power lines and tree limbs. Numerous roofs were also damaged.

August 27, 2013: Numerous severe thunderstorms brought large hail along with wind gusts from 60 to 90 mph to parts of north central and northeast South Dakota. Numerous trees were downed along with many structures damaged. Eighty mph winds near Polo in Hand County snapped off two large cottonwood trees. Ninety mph winds snapped numerous trees off at their base along with destroying a garage and tipping several campers over onto their side at Cottonwood Lake near Redfield.

1854: A tornado struck downtown Louisville around noon on Sunday, August 27th, 1854. It first touched down near 25th Street, southwest of downtown and lifted at the intersection of 5th and Main Streets. Although the tornado was only on the ground for a little over two miles, the twister claimed at least 25 lives. Many of those who perished were killed in the Third Presbyterian Church, where 55 people were gathered for Sunday church services. Straight-line winds that accompanied the tornado did significant damage to the Ohio River, where at least one boat sunk.

1881: A Category 2 Hurricane made landfall between St. Simons Island and Savannah, Georgia, on this day. Landfall coincided with high tide and proved very destructive. The hurricane killed 700 people, including 335 in Savannah, making it the sixth deadliest hurricane in the United States.

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 airwave, 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 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.

1893: An estimated Category 3 hurricane made landfall near Savannah, Georgia on this day. This hurricane produced a high storm surge of 16 to 30 feet which cost the lives of 1,000 to 2,000 people. As of now, this storm is one of the top 5, deadliest hurricanes on record for the USA.

1964 — Hurricane Cleo battered Miami and the South Florida area. It was the first direct hit for Miami in fourteen years. Winds gusted to 135 mph, and the hurricane caused 125 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1970 — Elko, NV, was deluged with 3.66 inches of rain in just one hour, establishing a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Washington D.C. soared to a record hot 100 degrees, while clouds and rain to the north kept temperature readings in the 50s in central and southeastern New York State. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Afternoon thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in the southwestern U.S. Thunderstorms in eastern New Mexico produced wind gusts to 75 mph near the White Sands Missile Range, and produced three inches of rain in two hours near the town of Belen. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in southeastern Nebraska, eastern Kansas and Missouri. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail south of Belleville KS, and tennis ball size hail south of Lincoln NE. Thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 70 mph at Saint Joseph MO. Thunderstorms in North Dakota deluged the town of Linton with six inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005: Hurricane Katrina reached Category 3 intensity in the Gulf of America about 335 miles south-southeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River with maximum sustained winds of 115 mph.

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Daily Devotion

Rich Toward God

True security and satisfaction are found not in what we possess but in trusting God with all we have.

Luke 12:16-21: 16 And He told them a parable, saying, ``The land of a rich man was very productive.
17 ``And he began reasoning to himself, saying, `What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'
18 ``Then he said, `This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.
19 `And I will say to my soul, ``Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'"
20 ``But God said to him, `You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'
21 ``So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

In today's passage, Jesus tells a parable about a wealthy man whose fields produced abundantly. Instead of sharing his surplus, he planned to tear down his barns and build bigger ones to store everything for himself. He could live comfortably for years on what he'd accumulated—eating, drinking, taking life easy.

The problem wasn't the man's wealth. It was what he chose to do with it. His focus was on himself: "my crops," "my barns," "my goods." This rich man didn't choose to share with those in need or be generous toward God. He believed he could secure his future through accumulation, mistaking material abundance for true security.

The parable exposes a deeper foolishness: treating the soul as if it can be satisfied with possessions. But death came suddenly, proving that spiritual needs can never be fully satisfied by things that provide physical comfort.

Jesus says that this is how it will be with whoever stores up things for himself but is not "rich toward God" (v. 21). Doing that means using what we have generously, recognizing that all we possess is meant for stewardship, not hoarding (Matthew 6:19-21). True security isn't found in "bigger barns" but in trusting God and living with open hands toward others.

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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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.26.26

3 25 51 54 56 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 47 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: 1 Days 17 Hrs 32 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.26.26

5 8 36 37 45 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$3,120,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 47 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.26.26

1 5 10 20 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$40,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 2 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.26.26

6 11 15 32 58 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 31 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.26.26

12 32 45 50 58 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$119,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 31 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

More than 1,300 are missing in Nepal and Tibet after catastrophic floods caused by glacier collapse

By NIRANJAN SHRESTHA and SHRISTI KAFLE Associated Press

DEVIGHAT, Nepal (AP) — Rescue teams searched on Thursday for hundreds of missing people along the Nepal-China border after a catastrophic and deadly torrent of floods and mud swept through several communities a day earlier following a glacier collapse.

The disaster left at least 273 people dead and more than 1,300 missing, including foreigners and pilgrims, and displaced hundreds of people across the Himalayan region.

Videos of the tragedy showed the flood swallowing up people as they tried to escape, and destroying buildings and bridges. On Thursday, drone footage from Nepal showed the scale of the destruction.

The region's steep valleys are economic lifelines and travel corridors, but are precarious when disaster strikes. Images showed what appeared to be the second floors of buildings in Nuwakot slathered in mud after the torrent rushed by. Debris hung from tree branches and wires, vehicles were buried and some stunned survivors were caked in mud. The floods halted travel in some areas.

There was little time for anyone to flee.

The village of Soley in Nuwakot, with about 25 homes, was virtually wiped out, said Nirajan Paudyal, a Kathmandu-based journalist whose parents and other relatives live there. Desperate for information, he traveled to the area on Thursday for news of his family.

"There is no update till now. I fear there won't be any update," Paudyal said.

Warming climate threatens communities

The Himalayan mountain range spans several countries in South Asia and has many of the world's highest peaks and remaining glaciers.

The steep slopes and the lush valleys below the Himalayan mountain range are especially vulnerable to flooding and landslides, and extreme weather events. Melting glaciers have become more common because of warming because of human-caused climate change.

Researchers in Kathmandu found earlier this year that glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalaya region are melting faster, with ice loss rates doubling since 2000.

Helicopters deployed for rescue as roads were damaged

The disaster has left at least 270 dead and 826 people missing in Nepal, and three dead and 558 missing in Tibet, authorities said.

Nepalese officials said that dozens of bridges were destroyed and nearly 40 kilometers (25 miles) of roads were damaged, complicating search efforts.

The Nepalese army has rescued more than 100 people from flood-affected areas through helicopter operations on Thursday morning, army spokesperson Brig. Gen. Raja Ram Basnet said.

At least eight foreign nationals were airlifted to the country's capital, Kathmandu, he said, adding that army teams also evacuated people trapped inside facilities linked to the Trishuli hydropower project.

Rescuers found bodies hundreds of kilometers downstream from the disaster zone in Chitwan district. Dozens of injured people have been transported to Kathmandu for advanced medical care.

Bishal Kumar Bhandari, chairman of the Nepal Red Cross Society, said they have shifted focus from rescue to large-scale relief operations in the flood-hit districts. He said that around 1,200 people were displaced from at least three villages.

In Tibet, a mudslide that struck near the land border crossing of Gyirong Port on Wednesday left mud in the surrounding areas more than 1½ meters (5 feet) deep on average, with some road sections exceeding 2 meters (6 feet), Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported. Roads leading to the port were all damaged, while secondary collapses or landslides might occur as rain continued in the area, it added.

Chinese authorities deployed a large military transport aircraft to send a team to the region, and the

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country's premier, Li Qiang, arrived in Gyirong on Thursday to direct rescue efforts.

Further, Chinese authorities are warning that a barrier lake, which formed at the confluence of Tsogyal River and the Purupqiangzangbu, is overflowing and may burst.

Hundreds of foreigners are missing

According to Nepal's Tourism Board, 517 of the missing people in the country were foreigners and 178 of them were from India, and some were likely there on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in Tibet, a sacred site for Hindus.

The site, however, drew tourists from all over the world. More than 60 of the missing in Nepal were from the U.S. and the rest were from 30 other countries, ranging from Ukraine and the U.K to South Africa and Japan, the Tourism Board said.

Indian spiritual guru and the head of the Isha Foundation, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, said on X that 77 people from one of his pilgrimage groups to the Mount Kailash were caught in the flash floods at the immigration office at the Nepal-China border.

A visibly emotional Sadhguru said in a video that the group included foreign nationals from various countries. He said that there was no official information on the whereabouts of those who were at the immigration office, including 22 U.S. nationals.

"Looking at the scale of destruction, it looks bad. The same building where we were for the immigration just a week ago, that entire building is washed away," Sadhguru said.

In addition, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian said that nearly 100 Chinese citizens were missing on the Nepal side. He said that according to preliminary information, 260 of those missing in Tibet were foreigners.

Experts say glacier collapse caused devastating floods

The U.S. Geological Survey first reported a magnitude 4.4 earthquake early Wednesday, about 66 kilometers (41 miles) north of Kathmandu, near the border.

The USGS later updated its analysis to say the seismic event it measured was a magnitude 5.2 glacier collapse that sent debris flowing downstream with catastrophic impact on communities. It said its determination was based on data from nearby seismic stations, long period seismic waves and satellite imagery, and that no earthquake had occurred.

Climate experts at the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development said an avalanche from a glacier likely caused Wednesday's flash flood.

"Hydrological observations indicate the exceptional speed and magnitude of the flood wave," they said in an emailed statement, noting that water levels at one point on the Trishuli river rose by as much as 9 meters (27 feet) over half an hour.

The Lhende Khola River, a tributary of the Bhotekoshi, had maximum flooding, they said.

The disaster in Nepal and Tibet is not a one-off. The increasingly unstable Himalayan ice system threatens communities, infrastructure and water supplies across one of the world's most densely populated regions.

The region saw similar flash floods in August 2025, when a glacial lake in Tibet overflowed because of high temperatures. Nine people were killed, and critical infrastructure, including a bridge connecting Nepal and China, was damaged.

After six months of Iran war, US goals have shifted. The Strait of Hormuz is now a top concern

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Donald Trump launched the war with Iran in late February, he initially forecast it would last four to five weeks. Six months later, there's still no off-ramp in sight despite Trump's repeated assertions that the war has been won or a deal to resolve it was nearly complete.

A June memorandum of understanding designed to pave the way to end the war has fallen by the wayside. U.S. stockpiles of key weapons have diminished and the Trump administration has pivoted to pressuring Iran economically rather than launching more strikes.

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As the shape of the war has morphed over the last half year, so have the goals for the conflict.

One of the prime goals now — reopening the Strait of Hormuz — was not one of Trump's original objectives. The waterway had been a vital shipping lane through which about 20% of the world's oil passed.

But Iran seized on it as a chokepoint for the global economy and it has been largely closed since the war started, driving up prices for fuel and fertilizer needed for farms and creating economic and political pressure in the U.S.

The U.S. has had tactical success on its goals to degrade Iran's military capabilities. But some of the other key objectives Trump laid out at the start of the conflict remain unfulfilled — and others have shifted.

Here's a look at the objectives and what we know about where they stand:

Stop Iran from having a nuclear weapon

Last June, Trump declared that the U.S. had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear program. But when the war started, his aides justified the strikes by warning that Iran had been just weeks away from developing a bomb.

One of the most pressing questions has been what will be done with a stockpile of about 970 pounds (440 kilograms) of enriched uranium that Tehran could potentially use for a weapon. The material is believed to be buried under three sites bombed by the U.S. and Israel last year. Trump said in a May 29 social media post that it would be retrieved by the U.S. "in close coordination and conjunction with the Islamic Republic of Iran, plus the International Atomic Energy Agency, and DESTROYED."

Iran has not said whether it would consent. Without permission from Iran, experts have said seizing it would be a dangerous mission requiring a sizable deployment of U.S. troops into the country.

Officials said that Tehran reaffirmed in the June memorandum of understanding that it would not procure or develop nuclear weapons. The deal called for Iran to dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. But many other details about Iran's program were left for future negotiations, and it's unclear how much progress, if any, was made before talks quickly fell off.

Reopen the Strait of Hormuz

Trump has said that a proposed deal with Iran would include the reopening of the strait and the U.S. ending its blockade of Tehran's ports, but at other times he has suggested the international waterway would somehow become American territory and indicated the U.S. could impose a toll on passing ships.

Trump also has repeatedly said that the strait is open, including during an interview on Wednesday on conservative commentator Glenn Beck's radio show.

"It's a functioning strait. Yes, every once in a while, there'll be a drone or a rocket or something shot, but it is a very functioning strait," Trump said.

Destroy Iran's ability to fire missiles

One of the prime objectives laid out by the administration was to "destroy their missiles and raze their missile industry to the ground."

Trump said in late March that Iran's missiles "are mostly decimated" and that 90% of their missiles and launchers were knocked out.

By mid-May, that shifted to a more conservative estimate, with the president saying that 82% of Iran's missiles were gone.

Iran has shown its ability to still launch attacks in the region, including drone strikes on ships sailing through the strait.

As recently as July, the U.S. military still had Iranian military targets to strike, with its Central Command announcing it was striking "Iranian military command centers, air defense and coastal surveillance sites, maritime capabilities, missile and drone launch sites and communications networks."

Destroy Iran's defense industrial base

Early in the war, the president and his administration sometimes listed this as a standalone objective. Other times, it has fallen off their list.

U.S. Central Command has said its targets for strikes in Iran have included weapons production and missile and drone manufacturing facilities.

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Secretary of State Marco Rubio told lawmakers in early June that Iran has had "massive destruction" of its defense industrial base and "80 to 90% of attrition. It will take years for them to rebuild it."

Eliminate Iran's navy and air force

The U.S. and Israel quickly established air superiority in the skies above Iran, where they flew largely unchallenged.

Rubio told lawmakers that Iran still has drone capabilities, but it lacks the ability to use swarms of drones to attack targets, as it did at the start of the war. He also said Iran does not have a navy anymore, and relies on small craft outfitted with machine guns that harass ships and sometimes drop mines in the water.

Trump on Wednesday said that Iran's navy and air force are "totally gone."

Protect America's Middle Eastern allies

Trump, in a March social media post, added another objective for the U.S.: "Protecting, at the highest level, our Middle Eastern Allies, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, and others."

The U.S. maintains thousands of troops on bases and other installations in the region, but Trump has been unclear on how far he'd be willing to go to protect Middle East allies from threats in the long term. In June, when the U.S. said Iran fired missiles at Kuwait and Bahrain, the U.S. launched strikes on Iran in response.

But one ally — Oman — has notably not been feeling the warmth of Trump's offer of protection, and instead has grappled with Trump's wrath over the deal it was negotiating with Iran over the Strait of Hormuz. In mid-August, he threatened in an interview that the U.S. would bomb Oman if it "gets in the way," using an expletive for emphasis.

Cut off support for Iranian proxy groups

In March, Trump and his administration repeatedly said degrading Iran's proxy terror networks was a key goal.

As time has gone on, administration officials have offered fewer updates about this objective, which the president described as ensuring that "the region's terrorist proxies can no longer destabilize the region or the world and attack our forces" and "ensuring that the Iranian regime cannot continue to arm, fund, and direct terrorist armies outside of their borders."

Early on, the U.S. struck Iranian-aligned militia groups in Iraq. But the biggest focus has been Israel's war in Lebanon against Hezbollah, which Iran backs. Iran has insisted that the fighting in Lebanon must be stopped as part of any deal with the U.S. Israel and the Lebanese government announced a deal, which was mediated by the U.S., for Israeli forces to leave southern Lebanon in exchange for Hezbollah's disarmament — something an administration official described as a "huge step," speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to address the issue on the record. But the militant group has refused direct talks and its leader has said it will not disarm.

Chinese foreign minister calls for US and China to 'overcome obstacles' ahead of presidential summit

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — China's foreign minister said his country and the United States should overcome obstacles between the nations ahead of an expected summit next month between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Wang Yi met with U.S. ambassador to China David Perdue on Wednesday and called on both sides to "focus on the positive agenda, properly manage differences, remove interference and overcome obstacles to high-level exchanges between the two countries," Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported Thursday.

China-U.S. relations "still face various risks and challenges," he acknowledged in a statement released by CCTV.

Trump and Xi met in May in Beijing and pledged to keep the relationship stable and maintain the fragile trade truce. Trump invited Xi to meet Sept. 24 in the U.S., but the exact date of the Chinese leader's visit

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has not been confirmed.

Since then, however, the U.S. and China have continued to take targeted economic action against each other, including the U.S. banning imports of new Chinese-made humanoid robots and China banning American entities engaging in trade and other activities in China.

Also on Thursday, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian said at a regular press conference that China and the U.S. were maintaining communication about the two leaders' upcoming meeting "within the year."

China-U.S. tensions had been elevated since Trump's return to the White House last year, with the U.S. at one point saying tariffs on China would be up to 145%, although the tariff levels came down substantially later. Tensions have eased in recent months and several agreements were made during the leaders' May meeting, including the setting up of boards of trade and investment between the two countries.

However, the Trump administration has recently been deliberating new tariffs of 7.5% on China as a result of an ongoing U.S. probe against 16 economies on excess industrial capacity and production. An official decision has not yet been finalized or made public. The U.S. also said last month that it was imposing a 12.5% tariff on China as a result of a U.S. probe on forced labor against 60 economies.

In response to the potential 7.5% new tariffs by the U.S., China's Ministry of Commerce on Thursday told reporters that China "firmly opposes" the U.S. probe on excess capacity, adding that the U.S. was "politicizing economic and trade issues."

Beijing will continue to closely monitor developments and "reserves the right to take all necessary measures" if needed, the Commerce Ministry added.

Last month, China also hit back against Western criticism of overcapacity in a report titled "China's Position on the So-called Excess Capacity Issue," saying China never sought a large trade surplus.

Regional powers seek off-ramp from Iran war, and other Middle East developments

By The Associated Press undefined

JERUSALEM (AP) — Regional powers sought an off-ramp from the war with Iran as another tanker attack was reported in the Strait of Hormuz and Tehran dismissed Washington's latest sanctions.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, a Jerusalem court acquitted a man accused of beating a Catholic nun but ordered him to undergo years of psychiatric hospitalization over the attack that drew global condemnation.

Israel's strikes in Gaza drew a sharp rebuke from the top diplomat overseeing the U.S.-brokered ceasefire in the territory.

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

Court orders psychiatric hospitalization for man indicted in nun attack

A Jerusalem Magistrate's Court judge acquitted a man accused of attacking a Catholic nun based on his insanity defense and ordered him committed to psychiatric hospitalization for up to six years.

The violent assault in April on a nun walking in her habit in Jerusalem's Old City sent shockwaves across Israel — and its many Christian communities, which have reported an increase in harassment.

Religious Freedom Data Center, an Israeli volunteer organization that tracks incidents like verbal abuse and spitting in the direction of visibly Christian people in Jerusalem, said they're happening almost daily and virtually all are committed by Jewish religious nationalists.

Jerusalem's Old City contains some of the holiest sites of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Tanker was attacked in the Strait of Hormuz

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization said Thursday that it had received a report of an oil tanker hit in the strategic waterway that's been at the center of the evolving diplomacy in the Iran war.

The monitoring agency, run by the British military, said local authorities reported that the vessel was hit by an unknown projectile Tuesday in the waters between Oman and Iran, causing it to catch on fire.

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The crew was reported safe and there have been no reports of environmental damage, the UKMTO said. The attack underscores the ongoing dangers for vessels attempting to transit the key waterway while it's firmly under Iranian control, even as Oman and Iran are reportedly in the final stages of talks on a plan to manage shipping traffic through the strait.

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

Faltering diplomatic efforts to end Iran war continue

Pakistan said Thursday it was continuing diplomatic efforts to help resolve the crisis between the United States and Iran and reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said at a news briefing that Field Marshal Asim Munir's recent visit to Tehran was aimed at reviving the June memorandum of understanding to reopen the strait.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has also continued diplomatic outreach during Munir's visit, speaking with his Turkish, Egyptian, and other regional counterparts, Andrabi said.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani is expected in Tehran on Thursday for talks with Iranian officials on "ways to de-escalate tensions & create the conditions conducive to dialogue," Qatar's Foreign Ministry said on X.

The discussions, confirmed by Tehran, will also address "freedom of navigation" in the Strait of Hormuz and the need to return to the prewar status quo, according to Majed Al Ansari, an agency spokesperson.

But U.S. President Donald Trump told Al Jazeera by phone Wednesday that he has "no time schedule" to wrap up the conflict that will reach the six-month mark on Friday. Trump told the Qatar-based broadcaster that he believes the United States is "winning very big."

Iran's Foreign Ministry calls US sanctions "pure parody"

Esmail Baghaei, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, wrote late Wednesday in a social media post that the U.S. had made a coalition with Bahrain, calling it a country with "virtually no meaningful economic exchange with Iran."

In another social media post on Wednesday, Iran's top negotiator and parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf thanked China for rejecting the U.S. "economic D-Day" policies against Iran.

"We welcome China's principled statement rejecting illegal sanctions against Iran," Qalibaf said.

Earlier this week, Tehran had warned that it would respond harshly to expanded U.S. sanctions, including measures against countries it sees as cooperating with Washington. Iran has repeatedly targeted Bahrain and other Gulf countries with missiles and drones since the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Feb. 28.

Israel's Gaza strikes get rebuke from peace board chief

Nickolay Mladenov, head of Trump's Board of Peace, told the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday that the gap between what has been agreed by both sides and what is happening on the ground is the biggest risk to the peace process in Gaza.

"Israeli strikes have continued since the road map was accepted, and Palestinian civilians are still being killed," Mladenov said.

An Israeli strike on a tent for displaced people Wednesday in southern Gaza killed one person and wounded at least four, the territory's Health Ministry said. The Israeli military said that it struck a "military operative," without elaborating.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have reported a surge in deadly Israeli strikes despite a fragile ceasefire in the nearly three-year Israel-Hamas war. Israel has said that it targets Hamas and other militants.

Israel's deputy U.N. ambassador Noa Furman told the Security Council on Wednesday that Israel is committed to Trump's peace plan, but that Hamas' "disarmament must come first" before Gaza's reconstruction can begin.

The war in Gaza was triggered by the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023 attack in southern Israel; some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed and 251 others abducted. Israel's retaliatory offensive killed more than 73,400 people in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry, part of the Hamas-controlled government, is staffed by medical professionals and main-

tains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by United Nations agencies and independent experts. It does not distinguish between civilians and militants, and says women and children make up around half of all fatalities.

What to know about Mount Kailash, a sacred site for pilgrims missing after floods in Nepal and Tibet

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — More than 100 of the nearly 1,300 people missing after massive floods in a border area of Nepal and China were on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash, a sacred site in the Himalayas. The disaster left at least 168 people dead and displaced hundreds of people across the Himalayan region.

Here's what to know about the mountain and its centuries-old role as a pilgrimage site.

A sacred mountain for several religious traditions

Mount Kailash is a Himalayan peak in southwestern Tibet, near China's borders with Nepal and India. It rises more than 6,400 meters (21,000 feet) above sea level and lies close to Lake Manasarovar. Both have long been part of Sanskrit religious and literary traditions.

Mount Kailash holds sacred significance for Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and the Tibetan Bon tradition. Each associates the mountain with different beliefs and sacred histories.

According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, the mountain is considered the home of Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction, and Parvati, a Hindu goddess associated with marriage, fertility and motherhood.

Followers of the Tibetan Bon tradition regard it as a seat of spiritual power and associate the region with Tonpa Shenrab, the tradition's founder.

Geographer Emily Yeh, a professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, who has conducted research in Tibet, wrote in 2017 that Kailash is associated with the mythical Mount Meru, considered the center of the world in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology.

The surrounding landscape also figures in local legends and Himalayan traditions. "Shared Sacred Landscapes," a book published by ICIMOD in 2017, gathers some of them.

One story tells of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, who visits villagers longing to make the pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. Nanak teaches them that the true pilgrimage is a spiritual journey within themselves.

Pilgrims travel to Kailash for a journey of purification

According to India's Ministry of External Affairs, pilgrims can reach Mount Kailash by crossing the Lipulekh Pass from Uttarakhand into Tibet.

India's government operates an official Kailash Manasarovar pilgrimage from June through August or September each year, with routes through the states of Uttarakhand and Sikkim. Private operators also organize pilgrimages through Nepal.

Pilgrims traditionally walk around Mount Kailash rather than climb it, completing a roughly 33-mile (53-kilometer) circuit around the mountain.

The journey around the peak is believed to cleanse pilgrims of their sins and can take about three days to complete. Hindus and Buddhists traditionally circle the mountain clockwise, while followers of Bon travel counterclockwise.

At nearby Lake Manasarovar, some Hindu pilgrims bathe in its waters as a ritual of spiritual purification.

Yeh wrote that Tibetan pilgrims stop at monasteries and other sacred sites along the route, touching prayer beads or their foreheads to features believed to bear sacred imprints. Other rituals are meant to test a pilgrim's merit, sin or fortune.

Pilgrims among hundreds missing after floods

The disaster has left at least 165 dead and 826 people missing in Nepal, and three dead and 558 missing in Tibet, authorities said. Hundreds of those missing were foreigners.

Nepal's tourism board said 179 of those missing were from India. Officials said most were on pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. Also missing were 65 from the United States, 35 from Australia, 33 from Britain and 25

from Canada.

Indian spiritual guru Jaggi Vasudev, also known as Sadhguru, said in a post on X that 77 people returning from the mountain with groups organized by his Isha Foundation were at an immigration center in Gyirong, Tibet, when the floods struck.

The floods followed a glacier collapse that sent debris rushing downstream through communities on both sides of the border. Similar flash floods have struck the region as warming temperatures increasingly destabilize Himalayan ice.

Yayoi Kusama, who splashed polka dots across art world, dies at 97 in Tokyo

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, who splashed her signature polka dots on paintings, sculptures and museum installations around the world, has died, her studio said Thursday. She was 97.

Kusama died Aug. 14 at a hospital in Tokyo, Yayoi Kusama Studio said, without specifying the cause of death.

"She continued to paint until her final days, never setting aside her brush, and continued exploration of forever love and eternal soul," the studio's statement said. "We will carry forward Kusama's wishes and, through art, continue to bring hope and strength for the future to people around the world."

Kusama, one of Japan's most respected contemporary artists, was widely exhibited around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and the Museum Ludwig in Germany.

Repetitive motifs were her trademark, in various shapes, resembling netting, swirls or worms, but most often dots, dancing proudly on her canvases, or as sparkling balls or dots of light in her installations, in all their vibrant psychedelic glory.

"Polka dots are fabulous," Kusama said in a 2012 interview with The Associated Press, appearing in her signature orange bob wig and polka dot attire.

"I want to create a thousand paintings, maybe two thousand paintings, as many as I can draw," she said in her childlike but matter-of-fact tone. "I will keep painting until I die."

Kusama insisted she drew the way she saw the world -- covered with spots, part of the hallucinations she said she had from childhood. She was in and out of psychiatric institution for decades, although her sickness did not hold her back as she was one of the first Japanese women to go to New York to pursue her art, in 1957.

Although soft-spoken and shy in her mannerisms, she was always unabashedly bold in the assertion of her dotty vision, not only in sticking to the style for decades but also in making it accessible to the masses.

In her later years, as the times caught up with her art, she enjoyed fame. She signed on with fashion brands like Louis Vuitton as well as other licensed products like teacups, T-shirts and key chains with her illustrations, including replicas of her likeness that were used in show windows and other marketing.

In 2008, Christie's auctioned her work for \$5.8 million. In 2016, she won the most prestigious award Japan gives its artists, the Order of Culture.

Upon receiving the award, she told reporters she was more determined than ever to pursue her art, stressing that the sincerity and devotion she had demonstrated in her personal life were crucial parts of her artistic legacy.

"I feel there is little left in my life, but I am now still fighting to the death for my art," she said. "I am giving all I have so that many people will continue to be interested in my art, even after I am dead."

Kusama was called pop, avant-garde, feminist, just to name some of the categories thrown at her, most of which Kusama brushed off as not quite representative of her art.

She was born in a middle-class family but felt misunderstood, as her parents wanted her to simply get married. They wanted to buy her kimono, not paints and brushes. She knew she had to get away. She chose America.

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When she arrived in New York, the fad was "action painting," characterized by dribbles, swooshes and smears, not dots. She suffered years of poverty and obscurity. But she kept painting dots.

She put circles of paper on people's bodies, and once a horse, in "happening" anti-war performances in the late 1960s, which got some people arrested for obscenity but helped get media attention for her art. While in New York, she befriended artists like Andy Warhol, Georgia O'Keeffe and Joseph Cornell, who praised her innovative style.

Over the years, Kusama made quirky but stunningly celebratory works like "Macaroni Girl," a female figure plastered with macaroni, which expresses the fear of food; "The Visionary Flowers," giant sculptures of twisting tulips, and "Mirrored Corridor," a room with mirrors that delivers an illusion of a field of phallic protrusions speckled with dots.

Kusama, who has also made films and published several novels, said she wasn't sure where she got her ideas. She just picked up her brush and started drawing. The process was so mysterious sometimes she surprised herself, she told AP.

"I think, 'Oh, I drew that? I was thinking that,'" she said.

But she appeared happy to have her art be the focus of media attention and praise, reading one of her poems to a reporter or tackling her artworks with gusto for photos.

But she was also a charmingly disarming mix of vulnerability and defiance — at one moment, declaring herself "an artistic revolutionary," and then the next, mumbling: "I am so afraid, all the time, of everything."

Canada is bolstering its defense industry as US relations fray. A boom is on for local contractors

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

TORONTO (AP) — As Canada moves to reduce its dependence on American military suppliers, the push is on display inside a Toronto garment factory.

Hunched over sewing machines, two workers rapidly stitch together pieces of camouflage-patterned fabric and Velcro strips. In the next room, workers snip stray threads as they inspect the finished product: helmet covers for the Canadian military.

The factory is assembling uniforms for Wuxly, a luxury parka maker that is among a flurry of Canadian companies branching into defense contracting. As Canadian military spending surges, others are developing remote sensors for the country's vast Arctic region, making drones to resupply soldiers, and building autonomous robots.

The boom in the defense sector reflects Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's vow to strengthen the country's economic self-sufficiency amid fraying relations with Washington, including a fresh escalation this week with new rounds of tariffs.

Canadian startups and established companies, alongside firms in Europe, are set to benefit from tens of billions of dollars in extra defense funding, driven partly by pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump to contribute more to NATO. Canada's investment remains small compared with the Pentagon's budget, but its strategy aims to boost domestic defense capabilities, and not just U.S. contractors.

A country known for peacekeeping ramps up military spending

A defense industrial strategy released earlier this year by Carney represents a generational shift for Canada, which invented modern peacekeeping and had long been content to remain in the shadow of its southern neighbor on defense matters.

The defense plan earmarks an additional \$60 billion in funding over the next five years, and the government has promised support for domestic businesses to sell into defense and security supply chains. Currently, Canada spends about \$36 billion to \$43 billion on national defense.

"The scale of investment that is involved is quite significant by Canadian standards, certainly in peacetime," said Philippe Lagassé, an associate professor at Carleton University specializing in defense policy.

The defense boom is "quite evident at all the events we're at. Every defense show (is) sold out. Lots of

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new companies and (other) industries coming into the (defense) industry, getting involved,” said Wuxly founder and CEO James Yurichuk.

Wuxly’s helmet covers, destined for the Canadian Armed Forces, allow soldiers to attach call sign patches or gear like lights, cameras and beacons. The company also makes military parkas and tank covers and has been supplying Ukraine’s military with gear, including 40,000 female uniforms — one of the company’s specialties.

Carney has called for upgrading the Canadian military’s Arctic capabilities, increasing spending by tens of billions of dollars to assert sovereignty over the vast but sparsely populated and increasingly contested region.

“There’s a lot of innovation that can create advantage in the North, and with the Arctic region being so important, we’ve got to clothe our soldiers properly,” Yurichuk said.

Canadian companies and European allies find new opportunities

A major part of the strategy is diversifying away from U.S. defense contractors. It focuses on tapping a wider global pool of suppliers of military hardware — and fostering domestic defense supply chains.

The strategy envisions investments amounting to more than half a trillion dollars, creating 125,000 jobs and tripling the size of the country’s defense industry over the next decade by steering contracts to Canadian companies. It calls for accelerating research and development and prioritizes developing key “sovereign capabilities” including aerospace, robotics and unmanned systems.

As Canada pursues partnerships with other allies, in addition to the United States, Ottawa has announced deals this year to buy radar planes from Sweden’s Saab over American competitors and submarines from Germany’s ThyssenKrupp.

Canadian startups like New Frontier Robotics also are lining up to play a part.

“There definitely is money in play,” said Nikhil Malhotra, co-founder of the two-person company. “We see it. Obviously, we are going for it.”

The company is working on a mobile manipulator robot — essentially a robot arm on a mobile platform — powered by artificial intelligence that could have both military and civilian applications, in what’s known as dual-use technology.

The initial plan was to target manufacturing, with robots working autonomously between assembly lines, but potential customers suggested there was also a growing need from the defense industry. Robots could also be used for support roles at military bases, Malhotra said.

“If you have infrastructure up in the Arctic that needs maintenance, obviously the climate is very dangerous. Are you really willing to risk an operator’s life? The answer is no. It’s better to put this thing on,” said Malhotra, whose company is based temporarily at a robotics lab at the University of Waterloo, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) west of Toronto.

Startups focus on products with versatility

Canada’s efforts to modernize its war machine still face big potential challenges, including the risk that opposition parties target Carney’s spending plans in future elections.

Companies that develop novel technologies could be lured to the U.S. by its much larger defense market. It also will be tough for Canadian companies competing against American counterparts with much bigger research and development budgets that mean they are “always going to be a bit more at the edge of the technological capability,” Lagassé said.

Still, the strategy opens new possibilities for companies like drone maker Volatus Aerospace, based near Montreal.

“Defense was not a popular topic for a small-cap Canadian public company in the past,” CEO Glen Lynch said.

Lynch said Canada has had limited manufacturing capability not just for drones “but manufacturing capability in general.”

Like New Frontier, Volatus’ technology is considered dual use. Because Canada is technically not at war, companies can’t rely on selling exclusively to the military.

Volatus makes drones and related services for civilian and commercial uses, such as air dropping medi-

cine to isolated communities. But it also has a defense unit and makes first-person-view drones that take out targets by crashing into them.

The company does some testing at a 100-acre site north of Toronto accessed by an unmarked gravel road and surrounded by fields of corn. Volatus employees demonstrated several aircraft on a recent visit by The Associated Press.

The company showed off a drone with a 60-kilogram (132-pound) payload slung underneath by cable, and a scaled-down drone with tilt-wing rotors that can carry cargo over long distances. In a demonstration, the drones operated autonomously and flew in a circular pattern before landing.

One drone, dubbed the Canary, has payload bay doors and is used to airdrop medical supplies to remote indigenous First Nations communities in Alberta.

It could also be used to send "resupply packages for soldiers" as well as dropping munitions, said Chief Operations Officer Greg Colacitti.

Britons get the chance to read Jason Arday's story for themselves as memoir is published in the UK

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britons who saw Professor Jason Arday's life and death dissected by weeks of headlines covering allegations about his academic qualifications and personal accomplishments can now read his version of the story.

Simon & Schuster will on Thursday publish Arday's memoir "Great and Unfortunate Things," which tells the story of how an autistic boy who was non-verbal as a child and illiterate until his late teens grew up to be the youngest Black professor in the history of Cambridge University.

The book's release comes less than two weeks after Arday, 41, was found dead at his apartment in London following relentless media coverage about allegations that his academic work was bolstered by plagiarism and that he exaggerated his athletic and fundraising achievements. The memoir was published earlier this month in the U.S.

Simon & Schuster said it decided to publish the book in accordance with his family's wishes. The publisher said it would have no further comment about the book at this time.

"To the very end, Jason was clear that he wanted his memoir to be published, and it is only right that we honor his wishes," the family said in a statement released by Simon & Schuster.

"There has been so much that has been written and said about our beloved brother, son, father, partner and uncle, mostly by people who don't know the truth of what he experienced, and we experienced as a family, or what an extraordinary person he was."

Arday's death on Aug. 14 has sparked recriminations over who was responsible.

Cambridge has been criticized for elevating Arday too quickly in a rush to promote diversity, despite red flags about his qualifications. The news media has been targeted for driving the professor to despair with a barrage of coverage that his supporters say was out of proportion to what a white scholar charged with similar mistakes would have faced.

Scrutiny of the memoir increased following the controversy, with British newspapers noting that some of the running and fundraising accomplishments he previously touted had been left out of the book. For example, an advance copy of the book doesn't mention his claim that he once ran 600 miles in six days to raise money for charity.

In an interview with the Times of London that was published July 31, Arday acknowledged that he had made mistakes, which he attributed to his autism and a lack of oversight early in his career. But he rejected accusations that he was "a liar and a fantasist and an academic fraud," saying they were motivated by "racism and ableism."

Arday, a sociologist, first rose to prominence when Cambridge announced his appointment in 2023, saying he was a "respected scholar" whose work focused on increasing the number of people from minority

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ethnic backgrounds who pursued higher education.

Questions about his academic qualifications began attracting public attention in mid-July after British newspapers picked up plagiarism allegations published by a white researcher who has been critical of "diversity, equity and inclusion programs."

Cambridge initially stood by Arday, saying the plagiarism allegations had been investigated and determined to be unfounded. But on Aug. 5, the university announced that it had opened an investigation into Arday's appointment after receiving "new information" about his qualifications and honorary appointments.

News coverage of Arday's story didn't stop, and he died nine days later.

"We are happy to allow the book to speak for itself and won't comment further on its content," the family said in their statement. "The family is still in shock and we are grieving. We call upon the media to give the family the space it needs to come to terms with this terrible loss."

In Dolly Parton's theology, God and acceptance shared the same stage

By KRYSTA FAURIA Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In her 1994 memoir, Dolly Parton recounts in vivid detail the place where she found God.

It was an abandoned church, in rural Tennessee where she grew up, that had become known as a haven for sex, drugs and violence. Rather than see the used condoms on the floor, the out-of-tune piano left behind or the explicit drawings on the walls as a hindrance to her religious encounter, Parton spoke fondly of the setting where she went to pray as a young girl.

"I would sing hymns to God for a while and look at dirty pictures for a while and pray for a while, and one day as I prayed in earnest, I broke through some sort of spirit wall and found God," she wrote.

"Here in one place was God, music and sex."

The country music icon was known for blurring the line between Sunday morning and Saturday night, a window into her theology that captivated people across political and denominational lines.

As news broke this week that the 80-year-old country music icon died of cancer, social media was flooded with quotes and interview clips of Parton proclaiming her Christian faith, something she wore on her sleeve even when her relationship to church was complicated.

But for many Christian members of the LGBTQ+ community who struggled to reconcile their sexuality and gender identity with the intolerant beliefs they were taught, Parton's public support helped them keep their faith in some cases, and transformed their understanding of how God sees them in others.

"Her approach to solidarity was inspiring for me as a young, queer Christian girl realizing I was gay," said Ciarra Jones, a 32-year-old workplace consultant from Oakland, California. "For queer Christians, experiencing another queer Christian — or another queer-affirming person that is Christian — is important to your journey. Dolly, for me, was one of those lights."

Parton was a trailblazer in LGBTQ+ acceptance

Long before same-sex marriage was legalized nationwide, Parton made acceptance a recurring theme of both her music and public persona, which has contributed to long-running support from the LGBTQ+ community.

"I got a huge gay following and some really macho-looking women," Parton told Andy Warhol for a 1984 cover story for Interview Magazine.

When Warhol told her she would make a great preacher, Parton responded: "What do you mean? I am a great preacher."

American Christianity spans the theological spectrum on sexuality and gender identity, with some remaining firmly committed to a conservative view. As society has shifted, so have some Christians' beliefs on things like same-sex marriage, though there is a widening partisan divide on certain issues, particularly regarding transgender people.

Parton, whose grandfather was a Pentecostal preacher, said her support for LGBTQ+ people was rooted

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in her Christian faith. "We are all God's children," she told Larry King in 2016. But she also did not try to convince others of her beliefs, sometimes to the frustration of fans who thought she ought to be more vocal.

"Some are preachers, some are gay / Some are addicts, drunks and strays / But not a one is turned away / When it's family," Parton sings on the song, "Family," from her 1991 album "Eagle When She Flies."

"I don't condemn nor condone anything," Parton once told The Associated Press regarding the song. "I just love and accept people where they are for who they are."

Some queer people who were raised in religiously conservative homes push back against the notion that Parton was not political enough.

"It's very, very hard to grow up and know who you are and have that be described as deviant and to be afraid that what you are is totally wrong," said Duncan Teater, a film student at the University of Southern California, as his voice broke.

Teater, who is gay and grew up in Kentucky, was raised as a conservative Christian and has a complicated relationship to the faith as an adult. But, he said, Parton's support was meaningful and he appreciated how she thinks about religiosity.

"For someone with the credibility and respect that Dolly Parton had, to be confident about the worth of every human being and to say that out loud and without hesitation and in such simple and loving words was a pretty radical act and a pretty political act," he said.

Parton was vocal about faith in unexpected places

Parton's faith, and her relationship with the gay community, spread beyond her music and interviews.

On the website for Dollywood, the East Tennessee theme park Parton opened decades ago after seeing families like hers unable to afford to go to Disneyland, there is a mission and values statement, which includes a commitment to live them out "in a manner consistent with Christian values and ethics."

The park has a chaplain and a chapel — the Robert F. Thomas Chapel, named after the doctor who delivered Parton — that hosts weekly Sunday services.

Patrick Burrows, a 38-year-old scholar of theology and ethics, grew up going to Dollywood and has been more than 100 times.

"Any time there was a church outing in the Southern Baptist church that I grew up in or a day off from school or needing a mental health break in high school," said Burrows, who grew up outside of Asheville, North Carolina.

The theme park was so formative for him that he wrote a chapter about it in his dissertation while studying theology at Harvard Divinity School.

"You should not see gay and lesbian couples standing next to people with 'Jesus saved me from my sin' shirts. And yet you see it" in what Burrows refers to as the "Dollywoodverse."

"Dolly created this space for people who are very different from one another to be different from another," he said.

Burrows recalled writing dozens of pages before one line sparked an epiphany, prompting him to rewrite his entire thesis chapter: "Though I only know it in retrospect, Dolly Parton, through Dollywood, taught me how to be gay and how to be a Christian."

Pakistani investigators visiting hospital nursery where fire killed 14 newborns

By MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Investigators appointed by Pakistan's prime minister were making a visit Thursday to the hospital nursery where a fast-moving fire killed 14 newborns, as grieving families and the public sought answers about the cause of the blaze and the safety measures at the major government facility.

The fire early Wednesday was confined to the third-floor nursery and did not affect the rest of the facility. Hospital officials said the fire spread so quickly the two doctors, two nurses and other staff present were able to rescue only one baby among the 15 in the nursery.

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The scene at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences in Islamabad was somber Thursday as doctors, staff, patients and relatives mourned the newborns. Access was restricted to the third-floor area where the fire occurred.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appointed the investigating committee, led by retired federal secretary Shahid Khan. They are expected to take statements from hospital staff, witnesses and families. The committee is expected to make urgent recommendations to Sharif within 48 hours and deliver a comprehensive report within five days.

Hospital and district officials initially said an exploding air-conditioning unit caused the fire. In its preliminary report, however, the hospital said a blast involving a nebulizer sparked the blaze, which spread within minutes because of the high concentration of oxygen in the nursery. The committee has not reached its own conclusion and will independently determine the cause, the city administration said.

Authorities handed over the bodies of all 14 newborns to their families overnight.

The deaths prompted authorities to order broader reviews of fire-safety measures and firefighting equipment at hospitals. In Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province, the government instructed the Health Department to immediately review fire-safety systems and emergency-response facilities, according to a government statement.

Sharif dismissed Health Secretary Aslam Ghauri, the Health Ministry's highest-ranking civil servant, after the fire. Grieving parents have demanded answers about how the fire began and whether the nursery had adequate firefighting equipment.

The U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, said it was saddened by the deaths and called for an urgent review and strengthening of fire-prevention and safety standards at health facilities.

The fire 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.

Michigan Democrats want to fight Trump. First they have to stop fighting each other

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

SAUGATUCK, Mich. (AP) — When Democrats gathered this week in a West Michigan congressional district they're trying to flip blue, they wanted to talk about the cost of living under President Donald Trump. But it didn't take long for the conversation to turn to a controversy dividing their party.

One attendee chided U.S. Rep. Hillary Scholten for failing to support Democratic Senate nominee Abdul El-Sayed.

"Your inflammatory rhetoric has nothing to do with creating a better economic future for the people of West Michigan, and everything to do with protecting the pipeline of our tax dollars to Israel," the woman said.

The exchange captured a problem confronting Democrats as they head toward November. Party leaders believe concerns about the economy have given them an opening to win control of Congress, but internal divisions are making it harder to keep the focus there.

Nowhere is that tension more pronounced than Michigan, where Democrats are trying to regroup after a bruising Senate primary that El-Sayed won over U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens earlier this month. Disputes over Israel, antisemitism and El-Sayed's association with controversial online commentator Hasan Piker have complicated the party's effort to turn its attention to Republican Mike Rogers.

With the election fast approaching, Scholten and some other Democrats have withheld their support for El-Sayed for now.

"I think it's up to the top of the ticket to unify the top of the ticket," Scholten said Tuesday.

Democratic divisions haven't disappeared

El-Sayed, who would be the country's first Muslim senator, has denounced antisemitism while fiercely criticizing Israel for its military operations in Gaza.

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Some members of his party have balked at his rhetoric.

Michigan state Rep. Jeremy Moss, the Democratic nominee for a House seat outside Detroit, has also withheld his support. In an interview with The Atlantic's David Frum released Wednesday, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, who is Jewish, said El-Sayed should not "make excuses" for domestic terrorism.

She was referencing a video statement he put out in March following an attack on Temple Israel synagogue outside Detroit when he said "hurt people hurt people."

Some Democrats outside Michigan have gone further in criticizing El-Sayed.

"There's no way I'm ever coming out for El-Sayed, right now," New Jersey Rep. Josh Gottheimer said on CNN, adding that El-Sayed has "refused to back off his views towards Jewish Americans."

El-Sayed's appearances on the campaign trail with Piker have become a particular flashpoint in the disagreement. Piker is a popular streamer with a history of controversial remarks that include saying America "deserved 9/11."

Piker recently became embroiled in controversy again when he argued against the idea that opposing Israel is antisemitic. American Jews are not uniformly supportive of Israel, he said, but many "Jewish institutions" are "teaching people the idea that Jews are monolithic" and "it's a very dangerous mode of propaganda."

"If Jews in America keep putting this idea out there that they are singularly invested in Israel, eventually someone is going to come around and take action, not against the state of Israel mind you, but against American Jews," he said.

The backlash was swift among Democrats, with critics saying Piker was suggesting that American Jews who support Israel were inviting violence.

"Hasan Piker's dangerous and hateful language targeting Jewish Americans has no place in our civic discourse," Sen. Cory Booker, a Democrat from New Jersey, wrote on social media. "Suggesting that Jewish Americans bear responsibility for hatred or violence directed against them is wrong, dangerous, and antisemitic."

Piker rejected that interpretation in a phone interview, saying he was warning that associating American Jews broadly with Israel's actions could fuel antisemitism, much as Muslims in the United States have been associated with Islamic terrorist groups.

He said he was never particularly close with El-Sayed's campaign — despite appearing with him at various events during the primary — and said that he did not want the race to become a conversation about him. He said he did not regret the remarks, however.

"I'm just a platform, I'm just a megaphone for people's anger and frustration," Piker said. "Even if I was going to go away tomorrow, I don't think this problem would go away for our politicians."

While El-Sayed has put some distance between himself and Piker amid the controversies, he has refused to cut ties completely. In a statement, he said "nobody speaks for this campaign besides me and my campaign spokesperson."

Republicans see an opportunity in the continued dispute.

"It's great," said Republican strategist Jason Roe. "You can tell these Democrats are not going to distance themselves. Piker is to Democrats what Trump is to Republicans. You embrace him, it's not helpful, and distance is also not helpful."

Democrats try to turn toward November

Democrats who have rallied behind El-Sayed are increasingly eager to move beyond the fight.

"I am done. So don't any reporter ask me again about Hasan Piker. It's not what November is about," Democratic Rep. Debbie Dingell said Wednesday. "I don't agree with Hasan Piker on a lot of stuff."

She appeared alongside El-Sayed and U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland at a campaign event in Ann Arbor on Wednesday. The day prior, El-Sayed stood beside Eli Savit, the Democratic nominee for attorney general, and Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II, the party's nominee for secretary of state, at a press conference.

Democrats who have backed El-Sayed argue that the party is largely unified and that the remaining disagreements are a natural part of moving beyond a contentious primary. Raskin, who is Jewish, described it as a "process that we go through" after the primary.

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"The Democratic Party is a big, sometimes an unruly family, but we're all going to be together in the end," Raskin said.

Michigan Democrats from across the state are expected to gather this weekend for a convention in Lansing to finalize the party's November ticket. Ahead of the convention, all the party's nominees and party chair, Curtis Hertel, sent a letter saying that "disruptive behavior or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated."

"This convention is our moment to celebrate our candidates," the letter read.

El-Sayed at Wednesday's event in Ann Arbor expressed frustration with the continued focus on Piker.

"You would think if you turn on any media that this whole campaign is about a streamer in California," El-Sayed said at the Ann Arbor event. He added that he's "less interested in going to the sort of tabloid version of our politics where we cover this like, who's in, who's out, who's up, who's down, who's talking to who?"

But El-Sayed acknowledged that some Democrats have yet to put the primary behind them.

"There are a few people who are still nursing wounds or grievances from the primary," El-Sayed said. "I get it. Losing is hard."

Time limits and a midnight cutoff: Meta's new rules for kids go further, but critics say not enough

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Kids under 18 will soon see a host of changes to their Instagram and Facebook experiences thanks to a historic \$18 billion settlement Meta Platforms reached Wednesday with 48 U.S. states.

Besides the money, which will be paid out over a decade, Meta has agreed to strengthen its age estimates to keep kids under 13 off its platforms and teens in age-appropriate accounts, enact a hard limit of two hours a day for users under 18, block kids from the apps from midnight to 6 a.m., and hide "like" counts, among other changes.

While acknowledging the changes go further than Meta has ever gone when it comes to child safety, critics and children's advocates cautioned it will not solve its myriad problems overnight.

Arturo Béjar, a former Meta engineering director, said the settlement is a "significant milestone," but parents should not see Instagram as suddenly safe for children.

"The agreement has a big problem in that it allows Meta to define harm," Béjar said in an interview Wednesday. "It's one thing to say, 'Yeah, you only get like two hours of alcohol or two hours of cigarettes a day,' but it's still as bad for you because of what's getting delivered."

Béjar, the first witness to testify during the federal trial cut short by the settlement, would like to see Meta address the effect of content recommendations to teens, which he says can prove addictive. While teens might put their phone down when they hit the two-hour limit, they can be distressed about it because the way the platform is designed leaves them craving more.

Meta said people over 18 also can adopt versions of the new controls individually, such as daily time-limit reminders, but there will not be an option for them to opt into the overall settings for what teens experience on the platform.

Stronger age checks

To protect kids, first Meta has to know who they are. While the company has already been using artificial intelligence to determine if kids are lying about their age — either to sign up if they are under 13, which is not allowed, or to use adult accounts when they are 13 to 17 — it did not always work.

Under the proposed settlement, Meta agreed to strengthen its technology to check kids' ages, using its own as well as third-party tools, with regular outside audits on how well it is working. The agreement also includes specific goals around false positive rates — that is, minors who are identified as over 18. And if a user is identified as under 13 and kicked off the platforms, Meta will check the ages of their friends, too.

"The age assurance section is reasonably good because it has measurement, has independent testing,

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has goals," Béjar said. "Because I think Meta should be measured on effectiveness, not effort."

Meta requires users to be at least 13 years old to create an account, in line with federal child privacy law.

In his testimony last week, Béjar said Meta took a "don't ask, don't tell" approach on kids under 13 on its platforms.

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

Some safety features will be on by default

Critics have faulted Meta over many of its safety features that users have to manually turn on, or opt into themselves.

Of the host of safeguards listed in the settlement, many are on as a default. This includes the two-hour time limit, which can only be turned off with a parent's permission, as well as the night mode that blocks use between midnight and 6 a.m.

Still, under the agreement other features, such as turning off video autoplay or showing posts in chronological order rather than having algorithms decide what to show kids scrolling through their feeds, will be opt-in.

Josh Golin, executive director of online safety nonprofit Fairplay, said the deal appeared to be too focused on offering tools to parents rather than restricting harmful features altogether.

"We are disappointed that the settlement does not turn off by default recommendation algorithms that connect kids to predators and send young people down dangerous rabbit holes," Golin said.

Questions around default settings came up at the trial earlier this week when a lawyer for the states suing Meta pressed Adam Mosseri, the head of Instagram, on the low adoption rate among teens for the "take a break" feature, which prompts users to step away if they have been scrolling a while.

Very few teens used the feature when Instagram first introduced it, but since launching separate teen accounts in 2024, Meta has made it the default setting for teenage users. Still, if a teen didn't want to take a break, they could simply swipe away the notification.

It may take time to see the results

Some researchers have found that many past protections Meta has rolled out are ineffective or don't work as advertised.

"It is a little premature, unfortunately, to tell if exactly all the changes we want to see are going to happen," said Yaël Eisenstat, director of policy and impact for the Cybersafety Research Center, which recently audited dozens of safety tools offered by both Meta and other social media companies and said most fell short.

Still, Eisenstat said, Wednesday's settlement is monumental in showing that alternative approaches are possible.

For years, Meta "decided to go against the advice of some of their own internal employees and continue to ignore the fact that these design features were unsafe in search of profit," said Eisenstat, who also previously worked at Meta, then Facebook, before leaving the company in 2019. The measures outlined Wednesday at the very least show that there are technically-feasible options that can make the platform safer, she said — something whistleblowers and others have already "been saying very loudly."

Like others, Eisenstat stressed that there was a lot of work left to be done — and that it will require a combination of technical solutions, market forces and government regulation.

"There's no singular silver bullet for fixing all of this," she said. "I'm just glad that at least we are catching up a little bit now."

The settlement, which also includes the District of Columbia and U.S. territories, must still be approved by a judge.

Zelenskyy's direct plea helped unlock Russia sanctions in the Senate. What's next is uncertain

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived at the U.S. Capitol hours after Lindsey Graham's funeral to an unusually attentive audience.

Half the Senate gathered for the closed-door meeting. Senators set their mobile phones down and focused their attention. Along with representatives from the House, they listened as Zelenskyy fielded questions about his country's strategy in the long war against Russia.

Zelenskyy told them how Ukraine was repelling the Russian invasion, taking the fight to Moscow, but in need of U.S. help with Patriot interceptor missiles and licensing agreements, expanded access to Elon Musk's Starlink internet — and most immediately ahead of a Senate vote that July night — a punishing Russia sanctions package to deprive President Vladimir Putin of the oil and gas revenue fueling the war machine.

"He said, 'We need this legislation,'" recalled Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in an interview. "Both the troops and the Ukrainian people need this for morale."

"You could feel palpably in the room a sense that — Zelenskyy's confidence of their ability to hold and to persevere," said Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, a former Democratic leader. "There was a sense in the room that, look, we can be successful."

The massive Russian sanctions package from the late Sen. Graham represented the most ambitious effort to support Ukraine since President Donald Trump returned to the White House. After two years of legislative inaction, it would be one of the few moves from Congress since lawmakers sent supplemental aid funding to Ukraine in 2024.

The Senate advanced the sanctions bill that night, with Zelenskyy taking a rare seat in the chamber to watch the proceedings — senators waving and flashing a thumbs-up as they cast votes. Days later, it sailed to passage, on a vote of 86-11, sending the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia Act to the House.

But next steps are highly uncertain. House Speaker Mike Johnson helms a Republican majority reluctant to tangle itself in U.S. affairs overseas. And many Democrats supportive of Ukraine warn the bill would hand Trump too much tariff authority with no real checks from Congress.

Daniel Balson, of the pro-democracy advocacy group Razom for Ukraine, is pressing Congress not to lose momentum.

"It's important not to underestimate symbolically what this would mean," Balson said. "It would show Ukrainians that, hiccups and all, there is still an international alliance that stands behind Ukraine's fight."

Zelenskyy was welcomed, but at times has been turned away

It wasn't the first time Zelenskyy arrived to a hero's welcome in Washington, and may not be the last.

But in between there have been moments of grave uncertainty in what has become a long war, longer than World War I.

Zelenskyy first appeared on a private video call with lawmakers in March 2022, days after the start of the war, when he urged the U.S. to send planes to help Ukraine defend its skies from the Russian bombardment. That winter, Zelenskyy delivered a dramatic Christmas-time address to Congress, giving thanks to "every American" in a speech evocative of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's own visit during World War II.

But Congress abandoned another round of Ukraine funds in 2023 as Republicans aligned themselves with Trump, who was on track as the Republican Party's front-runner to retake the White House.

And once Trump returned to power in 2025, action on Ukraine aid ground to a halt. Trump berated Zelenskyy during a high-profile Oval Office meeting, deriding Zelenskyy's "hatred" for Putin as a roadblock to peace.

"This has largely hinged on President Trump," said Republican Rep. Don Bacon of Nebraska, a former Air Force brigadier general, who explained that more Republicans would publicly stand with Ukraine if Trump gave the nod.

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Still, Zelenskyy kept Congress close, meeting with lawmakers abroad and returning to the U.S. Capitol as he did after Graham's funeral in Washington on July 28.

Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina said Zelenskyy has endured a "kind of a baptism by fire since he's been president in the middle of war, trying to manage confusing messages coming out of Washington."

Next steps for the bill are uncertain, despite Graham's efforts

It took Graham essentially a full year to bring Trump on board with the Russia sanctions package, and when he did he immediately shared the news with Senate colleagues last month at the NATO summit in Turkey. Graham, who then flew on to Kyiv, died days later back in Washington, likely of a torn aorta.

Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, who had partnered with Graham during the lengthy process, said Graham told him that winning Trump's approval was a "BFD," slang for a really big deal.

At its core, the bill seeks to deprive Moscow of oil and gas revenues by pressuring China, India and other customers not to buy Russian energy. It would allow Trump to impose sweeping tariffs up to 100% on goods from those countries entering the U.S.

Liberal Democrats have misgivings — not with Zelenskyy or Ukraine — but with the bill's tariff powers, which they worry Trump will deploy in ways Congress cannot control.

Rep. Gregory Meeks of New York, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Rep. Richard Neal of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee, have raised objections to the bill. More than 30 senators had supported a failed amendment to limit Trump's tariff powers.

"This is not so much a sanctions bill as it is a massive backdoor authority for President Trump to impose more tariffs, including on our European allies, that hurt American families," Meeks said in a statement.

Hoyer, who partnered with Meeks on a separate Ukraine security act that cleared the House earlier this year over Johnson's objections, is imploring his colleagues not to let this moment pass. He believes Congress and the courts will keep the president in check.

"You know there was so much negative vibes that we were sending," Hoyer said. "We've got to send a letter to these courageous Ukrainians that we're with them."

Closing arguments are set to begin in Lindsay Clancy's trial in the killings of her 3 children

By MICHAEL CASEY and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — Closing arguments are set for Thursday in the murder trial of Lindsay Clancy, a Massachusetts mother accused of strangling her three young children in a case that has drawn attention to postpartum mental health.

Proceedings are expected to resume around 9 a.m. in Plymouth Superior Court. The prosecution and defense will each have an hour to make their final case before the jury receives instructions and begins deliberating.

Clancy did not testify during the trial, which is in its fifth week. Prosecutors called more than 70 witnesses, including Clancy's then-husband, while the defense called 10 witnesses, including some of Clancy's friends and relatives.

Multiple psychologists and psychiatrists also testified about Clancy's mental health, which is the central issue in the case.

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

Clancy, 36, has pleaded not guilty by reason of lack of criminal responsibility, with her lawyers arguing she was experiencing postpartum psychosis when she killed 5-year-old Cora, 3-year-old Dawson and 8-month-old Callan Clancy at the family's home in coastal Duxbury in January 2023 before attempting

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suicide. Postpartum psychosis is a rare mental illness that is linked to the stress, sleep deprivation and hormonal changes that follow childbirth.

Prosecutors say Clancy planned the killings and understood her actions were wrong.

If convicted of murder, Clancy faces a mandatory life prison sentence. If jurors find her not guilty because she lacked criminal responsibility, she would not face prison time but could be committed to a psychiatric facility.

Testifying Wednesday as the final rebuttal witness for the prosecution, a forensic psychiatrist at the University of Virginia and a senior psychiatrist for the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit said he did not believe Clancy's account that a voice ordered her to kill the children.

Prosecutor Jennifer Sprague asked Dr. Gregory Saathoff a series of questions about Clancy's account: Did the voice tell her where to kill the children? How to kill them? What to use? In what order? Saathoff answered no each time.

All three children were strangled with exercise bands in the family's basement before Clancy jumped from a second-floor window while her husband went to pick up takeout and medication on Jan. 24, 2023. Saathoff said her ability to accomplish everything she did without direction indicated Clancy "had control, control of the sequence of what she was doing throughout."

Defense attorney Kevin Reddington asked Saathoff about Clancy's attempts to search online for information about postpartum depression, her visits to multiple maternal and mental health providers, disclosures to her mother and then-husband that she was suicidal and feared that she would harm her children, and calls to a suicide hotline — all attempts that Reddington contends establish that Clancy realized something was seriously wrong and made a sincere effort over time to get help.

Reddington, referencing the prosecutor's opening statement, asked whether Saathoff believes that Clancy decided to kill her children because she "no longer liked the life she thought she wanted" and was making "a selfish choice" to "manipulate her providers, seek out a quick and easy fix when she was feeling depressed and anxious."

"I think that statement that you read really minimizes what she was going through," Saathoff responded.

Father says college student was killed by police in Pennsylvania after he went to wrong house

By HOLLY RAMER and KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

A 22-year-old college student killed by Pennsylvania police responding to a possible burglary had just realized he was at the wrong home and was waiting for friends to come get him when he was shot, his father said Wednesday.

Police in Upper Pottsgrove Township, northwest of Philadelphia, responded around 12:30 a.m. Sunday to a 911 call about a possible break-in attempt, according to the Montgomery County district attorney's office. The office said in a statement that police found Glenwood Pysher IV at the rear of the home and ultimately shot and killed him.

Pysher's father, Glen Pysher, said his son and his friends had visited several bars earlier in the evening and were splitting up to spend the night in two homes when his son took a wrong turn in the woods. Based on what he has been told by his son's friends, Pysher believes his son mistakenly tried to enter what he thought was his friend's house. His son wasn't carrying any weapons, just a phone and backpack containing clothing and a few beers, he said.

"He tried to open the doorknob and obviously startled the homeowner," he said. "From what we understand, he announced, 'Hey! Open the door!' because he thought he was at his friend's house."

Pysher then sat down on the back porch and contacted his friends, who realized he was in the wrong place and set out to find him. But minutes later, they saw police and emergency vehicles and figured their friend would be arrested for public drunkenness. Instead, he was shot.

"At 12:32 a.m. my son was on a FaceTime call with his friends that were coming to get him," he said.

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"We were told that my son was shot at 12:35 a.m. So what kind of encounter could have ensued? What kind of communication could that officer have given him?"

A Montgomery County Department of Public Safety dispatch record shows police were dispatched at 12:30 a.m. and arrived at 12:34 a.m. Upper Pottsgrove Township Police Chief Al Werner declined to release any information, including the names of any officers involved, until the investigation is complete. The Montgomery County Detective Bureau is investigating the shooting, the district attorney's office said.

The shooting by police checking a report of a possible break-in is sharply distinguished from several other cases in which residents have shot people who mistakenly showed up at their homes.

Pysher was about to begin his senior year at Saint Elizabeth University in New Jersey, where he planned to play baseball. His goal was to become a high school history teacher and coach after graduation.

His father described him as a kindhearted, loving kid who could be a "knucklehead" but enjoyed helping others. Since the shooting, former teammates, coaches and others have been texting his father to share their memories of him.

"One young man in particular texted me and said, 'I was going through a lot of really difficult things in my life. I was going the wrong way. And your son is the one who helped me put my life on track,'" the father said. "He will be sadly missed in his community."

Pysher said police have given the family almost no information. On Wednesday, he called asking whether he could retrieve his son's favorite pair of black shoes to bury him in and was told that could be arranged.

"Then I got a call back saying they have to think about it," he said. "They don't know if they can give them to me."

Floods caused by a glacial collapse kill at least 160 people on Nepal-China border, hundreds missing

By NIRANJAN SHRESTHA and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

UDIN DHUNGA, Nepal (AP) — Massive flash floods in a border area of Nepal and China killed at least 160 people and left hundreds of tourists, workers and others missing Wednesday after suddenly sweeping through communities and halting travel in some areas. Experts said a glacial collapse caused the disaster in the warming Himalayan region.

Police in Nepal reported at least 157 dead. China's state broadcaster CCTV reported at least three dead and 265 missing in the Tibet region's Gyirong County near the national border. Drone footage showed roads destroyed and buildings buried by thundering water the color of wet cement. State news agency Xinhua reported significant casualties.

The region's steep valleys are economic lifelines and travel corridors but are precarious when disaster strikes. Images showed what appeared to be the second floors of buildings in Nepal's hard-hit Nuwakot district slathered in mud after the torrent rushed by. Debris hung from tree branches and wires, vehicles were buried and some stunned survivors were caked in mud.

There was little time for anyone to flee.

"When I reached Dhunge bazaar, in half an hour, the flood came and damaged all the market. People were preparing to go to office then," resident Shoyam Rajbhandari said. "How many people are missing or dead, we don't know."

Many missing were on pilgrimage to a sacred site

Officials in Nepal said 403 people, including 341 foreigners, were reported missing. Sunil Sharma, a tourism board spokesperson, said 133 were from India on pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in Tibet, a sacred site for Hindus. Also missing were 47 from the United States, 34 from Australia, 33 from Britain and 24 from Canada, he said. The State Department said it was aware of Americans affected.

At least 62 missing Nepali citizens were among hundreds of locals trekking in the Gosaikunda Lake area in hard-hit Rasuwa district bordering Tibet's Gyirong, coinciding with the local festival of Janai Purnima on Friday, Sharma said. Though the current monsoon season is less favorable for trekking in Nepal, it's a major season for Kailash trekking, which follows the route in Nepal's Rasuwa district.

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Nepal police spokesperson Abi Narayan Kafle told The Associated Press at least 28 police officials were missing.

Officials warned residents in several districts to stay away from the banks of the Trishuli, Bhotekoshi and Narayani rivers. At least 19 bridges and nearly 40 kilometers (25 miles) of road were swept away. The Bhotekoshi flooded around 9 a.m. Wednesday, destroying several villages and hydropower projects, officials said.

"We have asked both India and China to help us with the rescue efforts," said government spokesperson Sasmit Pokharel.

The U.S. Geological Survey first reported a magnitude 4.4 earthquake early Wednesday, about 66 kilometers (41 miles) north of Kathmandu, near the border. The USGS later updated its analysis to say the seismic event it measured was a magnitude 5.2 glacial collapse that sent debris flowing downstream with catastrophic impact on communities. It said its determination was based on data from nearby seismic stations, long period seismic waves and satellite imagery, and that no earthquake had occurred.

Countries express alarm over missing citizens

South Korean government officials said nine citizens working on building a hydropower plant in Nepal were among those reported missing. Malaysia's foreign ministry said travel agencies had lost contact with 11 Malaysians believed to be in Rasuwa district. Russia's embassy in Nepal said four citizens reportedly in the affected area were missing.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah and offered help. "India is prepared to provide Nepal with all possible types of humanitarian assistance. Our teams are closely coordinating on rescue and relief efforts," Modi said on social media.

Some United Nations bodies were deploying "in an effort to meet what will clearly be massive humanitarian need," U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

In a joint statement, Australia, Britain, the European Union, Finland, France, Norway and Switzerland expressed solidarity with people in Nepal, adding: "We encourage all those in affected areas to follow the guidance of local authorities and official safety advisories as the situation continues to evolve."

The same region saw flash floods last year

Climate experts at the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development said an avalanche from a glacier likely caused Wednesday's flash flood.

"Hydrological observations indicate the exceptional speed and magnitude of the flood wave," they said in an emailed statement, noting that water levels at one point on the Trishuli river rose by as much as 9 meters (27 feet) over half an hour.

The Lhende Khola River, a tributary of the Bhotekoshi, had maximum flooding, they said.

"The Lhende Khola has flooded twice in 14 months, this time triggered by an ice rock avalanche from a glacier on the Nepal side that blocked the river and released a sudden surge downstream," said Saswata Sanyal, a disaster risk reduction specialist at the climate research group.

He noted the importance of early warnings in "a warming Himalaya."

The region saw similar flash floods in August last year, when a glacial lake in Tibet overflowed because of high temperatures. Nine people were killed, and critical infrastructure, including a bridge connecting Nepal and China, was damaged.

The Himalayan mountain range spans several countries in South Asia and has many of the world's highest peaks and remaining glaciers. The steep slopes and the lush valleys below are especially vulnerable to flooding and landslides, and extreme weather events like intense monsoons and melting glaciers have become more common because of warming due to human-caused climate change.

Researchers in Kathmandu found earlier this year that glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalaya region are melting faster, with ice loss rates doubling since 2000.

Maryland court rules Democratic-backed redistricting amendment cannot go on November ballot

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

A Maryland court has ruled against a proposed constitutional amendment that could have paved the way for Democrats to redraw the state's congressional districts ahead of the 2028 elections.

The ruling Wednesday by a judge in the state's capital city marks another setback in Democrats' national attempts to counter a Republican redistricting movement pushed by President Donald Trump ahead of this year's elections. The judge ruled that the amendment cannot appear on the November ballot, but he paused the effect of that ruling to allow for an appeal to the state Supreme Court.

Democrats already control seven of Maryland's eight congressional seats. Democratic Gov. Wes Moore called lawmakers into a special session in August with a goal of making it easier to claim that final seat.

An amendment referred to the ballot by lawmakers seeks to sidestep a court ruling that struck down a previous Democratic redistricting plan in 2022. It would declare that a constitutional requirement for districts to be compact and take into account "natural boundaries" applies only to state legislative districts, not congressional ones.

That would allow Democratic state lawmakers to draw congressional districts that cross the Chesapeake Bay, reshaping a district east of the bay that is held by Republican Rep. Andy Harris, chair of the conservative House Freedom Caucus.

Judge says legislature did not follow the laws it enacted

Anne Arundel County Circuit Court Judge Robert Thompson ruled that lawmakers violated their own deadlines for ballot measures. Earlier this year, lawmakers passed a law signed by Moore that set a July 1 deadline for the secretary of state to certify summaries of all statewide ballot questions to the Maryland State Board of Elections.

The state attorney general's office argued that deadline didn't apply to the redistricting amendment because lawmakers wrote their own ballot summary for it, using their constitutional authority. The judge disagreed, instead siding with arguments by the conservative Oversight Project and Republican state lawmakers who sued.

Thompson also ruled that lawmakers used "intentionally misleading" wording in the ballot question by stating that it merely "clarifies" the constitution's redistricting standards. And Thompson said the amendment violates a single-issue requirement in the constitution by also including a provision that would give the state Supreme Court original jurisdiction in lawsuits over congressional redistricting.

"The court has no choice but to enjoin the board of elections from including ballot Question 3 on the general election ballot for November 3, 2026," Thompson wrote.

Redistricting dispute heads to the Maryland Supreme Court

Shortly after the ruling, the state filed a notice of appeal to the Maryland Supreme Court.

Maryland House Speaker Joseline Peña-Melnyk, a Democrat, expressed hope of eventually prevailing.

"We remain confident in the authority of the General Assembly and believe Maryland voters should have the final say," she said in a statement.

Redistricting opponents acknowledged the fight was not over.

But "today's decision is a major step in our battle against Maryland's lawless attempt at redistricting. Complete and total vindication!" Oversight Project Strategic Counsel Marshall Yates said in a statement.

Maryland is the latest state to join a national redistricting fight

Earlier this year, the Virginia Supreme Court also invalidated a redistricting ballot measure because of procedural violations by state lawmakers. In that case, voters had already approved an amendment in April authorizing mid-decade redistricting when the court ruled that lawmakers last year had waited too long to take an initial step necessary to qualify it for the ballot.

Virginia and Maryland both were seeking to follow the path of California, where voters approved a Democratic-backed amendment authorizing mid-decade redistricting. Democrats hope to gain as many as five congressional seats from California's redrawn districts, plus an additional seat from new districts in Utah.

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But Republicans hope to win as many as 16 additional seats from new U.S. House districts enacted in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas.

Redistricting typically happens near the beginning of each decade, after new census data is released. But a mid-decade redistricting battle broke out after Trump urged Republican-led states to redraw congressional districts in hopes that it might help Republicans hold onto a slim House majority in this year's midterm elections.

Iran warns of military ship ban in Hormuz under potential deal with Oman, and other Middle East news

By The Associated Press undefined

Iran won't allow military vessels to transit through the Strait of Hormuz under an agreement that the Islamic Republic is negotiating with Oman, Iran's deputy foreign minister said.

The top diplomats of the two countries met to discuss managing commercial shipping traffic in the vital waterway, which remains largely shut down nearly six months after the Iran war began.

Meanwhile, Israeli strikes in Gaza continued, testing the already fragile ceasefire with Hamas.

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

No military vessels in the strait, Iran says

Iran and Oman have reached a potential agreement for managing ship traffic in the Strait of Hormuz that would exclude military vessels from traversing the vital waterway.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi told state television late Tuesday that commercial shipping traffic into the Persian Gulf would pass through Iranian waters, while the outbound route would pass partly through Iranian waters and partly through Oman's waters.

He said the routes would be temporary, and that Iran and Oman must discuss a permanent maritime traffic plan within 30 to 60 days. U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to bomb Oman if it "gets in the way," as his administration opposes parts of the evolving deal.

Qatar's prime minister heads to Iran

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani is expected in Tehran on Thursday for talks with Iranian officials on "ways to de-escalate tensions & create the conditions conducive to dialogue," Qatar's Foreign Ministry said on X.

The discussions, confirmed by Tehran, will also address "freedom of navigation" in the Strait of Hormuz and the need to return to the pre-war status quo, according to Majed Al Ansari, an agency spokesperson.

Trump isn't in a hurry to resume talks with Iran

The U.S. president told Al Jazeera over the phone on Wednesday that he believes the United States is "winning very big" as the conflict with Iran nears the six-month mark.

"I have no time schedule; whatever it takes," he told the Qatar-based broadcaster.

In another interview Wednesday, Trump said he thinks Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Motjaba Khamenei, is "very seriously wounded," but not dead.

Motjaba Khamenei became supreme leader after his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed at the start of the war. The younger Khamenei was badly wounded in the attacks and has remained out of public view.

Israel launches a deadly strike in Gaza, health officials say

An Israeli strike on a tent for displaced people on Wednesday in southern Gaza killed one person and wounded at least four, the territory's Health Ministry officials said. The Israeli military said that it struck a "military operative," without elaborating.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have reported a surge in deadly Israeli strikes, despite a fragile ceasefire in the nearly three-year Israel-Hamas war. Israel has said that it targets Hamas and other militants.

Gaza peace board chief criticizes Israeli strikes

Nickolay Mladenov, head of Trump's Board of Peace, told the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday that the gap between what has been agreed by both sides and what is happening on the ground is the biggest

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risk to the peace process in Gaza.

"Israeli strikes have continued since the roadmap was accepted, and Palestinian civilians are still being killed," Mladenov said.

While the ceasefire is holding and casualties have fallen sharply, he added, a ceasefire where "civilians are still buried is not yet one that the people of Gaza can really feel."

Israel insists Hamas must disarm first

Israel's deputy U.N. ambassador Noa Furman told the Security Council on Wednesday that Israel is committed to Trump's 20-point peace plan but that Hamas' "disarmament must come first" before Gaza's reconstruction can begin.

She added that Israel was working closely with the U.S. and the Board of Peace to achieve this.

Children's kites in Gaza dismantled over Israeli threats

Some parents said children in Gaza are dismantling their kites after Israel threatened to ramp up strikes as the toys keep flying into southern Israel.

In the past, kites and balloons have been set aflame and launched across the Gaza border, igniting fields and property in Israeli communities. The Palestinian militant group Hamas has downplayed the danger the kites pose.

In tents near the Mediterranean Sea in southern Gaza, kids dismantled the plastic, cloth and wood contraptions as adults looked on.

"They've lost their simple dreams, their education, their childhood, the simple things they used to enjoy," lamented resident Atiya Abu Samhan.

Israel has legalized more than 100 settlements since 2022

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday that his government, in an effort to ensure Israel's existence, has legalized more than 104 settlements and established 160 farming outposts in the West Bank since he took office again in 2022.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank are largely considered illegal, but Netanyahu has made their expansion a priority in the lead-up to Israel's upcoming election. About 3 million Palestinians live alongside more than 500,000 Israeli settlers in the occupied territory, which has seen a recent spike in violence as the Israeli presence expands.

Dubai airport traffic dropped sharply during Iran war

Dubai International Airport, one of the world's busiest travel hubs, said Wednesday that it saw a sharp drop in passengers as the Iran war disrupted air travel across the Middle East.

The airport recorded 13 million passengers in the second quarter of 2026, bringing the total to about 31.5 million passengers for the first half of the year. That's down 31.3% compared to last year at the halfway mark.

Iran's top diplomat slams new US sanctions threat

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in a letter to the United Nations on Tuesday urged the world body to condemn the latest U.S. move to cut off Tehran from the rest of the global economy.

The "economic onslaught" that U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent declared this week amounts to the deliberate targeting of Iranian civilians with the "intentional deprivation of access to food, medicines, medical equipment, energy and other necessities," according to Araghchi.

"Silence in the face of such systematic coercion risks further normalizing violations of the U.N. Charter and principles of international law," Araghchi wrote in the letter, obtained by The Associated Press.

USS Lincoln stopping in Thailand after long deployment

The U.S. aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln will make a stop in Thailand after its grueling deployment in the Middle East, Thai officials said Tuesday, without specifying a date or port for security reasons.

The Lincoln's lengthy record-setting deployment during the Iran war has raised concerns about deteriorating mental health among the crew.

Dolly Parton's love of the Great Smoky Mountains helped transform her hometown

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

SEVIERVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Dolly Parton didn't just sing lovingly about her Tennessee mountain home. She spent her life elevating an often-overlooked region to showcase what long inspired her music and sparked a tourism boom that forever changed those living against the backdrop of the Great Smoky Mountains.

And it is because of that deep devotion that Parton's death has been profoundly personal to rural Sevier County. To the world, Parton was one of the world's best-known country music stars. To her neighbors, she was Tennessee's favorite daughter.

"It hit me hard. It hit me really hard," said James Gambrell, a former chef at Dollywood, the signature theme park that Parton opened decades ago after seeing families like hers unable to afford to go to Disneyland.

"If it don't affect you, then something's wrong," Gambrell said of Parton's death, adding that he became so close to her family that they adopted him as a kind of nephew.

Mourners flocked to a bronze statue of Dolly in the center of her hometown of Sevierville Tuesday night, exchanging stories and shedding tears. The town is set in the hills of the Smoky Mountains just minutes from Dollywood. Many brought flowers and drawings and other tributes to the late singer.

By Wednesday morning at Dollywood, the scent of cinnamon bread filled the air and long lines formed at a theater featuring biographical stories narrated by Parton. The park is closed Tuesdays, so Wednesday was the first chance for many to visit, including Carla Potts, who flew in from Seattle a few days earlier.

"She just consistently spread joy and hope and light, really" Potts said after entering the park on her first visit.

One of 12 children, Parton grew up in a two-room cabin with no electricity and no running water. In her music, she described life in East Tennessee as "peaceful as a baby's sigh," a place where "crickets sing in the fields nearby." She moved to Nashville shortly after finishing high school, but she once joked to the Knoxville News Sentinel that she may be the "only person that ever left the Smoky Mountains and took them with her."

It started largely with Dollywood

While the Smoky Mountains had long attracted outdoor enthusiasts to the region, Parton made a strategic decision to become co-owner of the amusement park in Pigeon Forge in 1986 and name it Dollywood. The park quickly became Tennessee's most visited tourist attraction, with Parton often opening each new season with a performance and a parade. State officials say Dollywood generates \$1.8 billion each year and is the county's largest employer.

"We had Great Smoky Mountains National Park since the '30s, and Gatlinburg was a huge destination for years, but Dollywood helped the county take that next step," said Amanda Marr, a member of the Sevierville Chamber of Commerce. "Having that business has made such an impact because it's drawn even more people to the area."

Parton didn't stop with Dollywood

By the early 1990s, Parton created The Dollywood Foundation with the goal of decreasing the high school drop out rate in Sevier County, which was hovering around 30%.

David Wear, former mayor of Pigeon Forge, said he was in 8th grade when the Buddy Program launched with the promise that students and the buddies they were matched with would receive \$500 to help cover college expenses for completing the program.

"If you and your buddy made it through high school, The Dollywood Foundation would give money to those high school graduates," he said. "I personally got the experience of her charitable giving."

According to the foundation, dropout rates eventually plummeted to 6% in Sevier County after the program was in place.

Separately, the international phenomenon that is her Imagination Library started as a local initiative to get more children to start reading. To date, kids across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom,

Ireland and Australia have received more than 330 million books since the program began.

Still, many folks get choked up the most over her response to a deadly 2016 wildfire. The fire, which began in Great Smoky Mountains National Park before invading nearby Gatlinburg, killed 14 people and caused an estimated \$2 billion in losses, including to about 2,500 buildings that were damaged or destroyed.

Parton directed her foundation to distribute funds to displaced families and provided scholarships to students impacted by the fire.

"She single-handedly, through her generosity and raising of money, changed the trajectory of our recovery," Wear said. "Her star power brought us back."

Through her work, Parton also helped shatter stereotypes often associated with Appalachian communities, said Ted Olson, a professor of Appalachian studies at Eastern Tennessee State University.

"She understood how people viewed the region, but she defied them to hold on to those negative images after talking to her and after encouraging them to travel to the region," Olson said. "And she did so graciously."

NFL owners unanimously approve the sale of the Seahawks to Vinod Khosla and his family

By CHARLES ODUM AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — NFL owners on Wednesday unanimously approved the \$9.612 billion sale of the Seattle Seahawks to Vinod Khosla and his family, currently part owners of the San Francisco 49ers.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell congratulated the family for having "great timing" in purchasing the team that is coming off its second Super Bowl victory in franchise history.

"It's not very often you can buy a Super Bowl championship team, but you've done that," Goodell said. "Many of our members struggle to find ways to get in the Super Bowl and win a trophy and you'll be walking into your new building shortly with a fresh, shiny trophy there for you."

The sales agreement was announced on July 11 and awaited Wednesday's approval at a special owners meeting in Atlanta to become official. The sale was in accordance with the wishes of late team owner Paul Allen.

Vinod Khosla thanked Allen's sister, Jody Allen, and the Allen Trust "for trusting us for this franchise."

"As Roger said, it's pretty simple when the team is functioning as well as it is today," Khosla said. "How often do you get to buy a franchise that just won the Super Bowl? So we are incredibly lucky and humbled by this gift, I would say, from the Allen Trust."

Vinod Khosla is the founder of Khosla Ventures, a Silicon Valley venture capital firm. His current net worth is \$13.7 billion, according to Forbes.

The Khosla family will be required to relinquish its ownership stake in the 49ers as part of the deal. Khosla joined the 49ers ownership group as a minority owner in 2025, purchasing 3.1% of the team.

Goodell said the family's experience with the 49ers was attractive to other NFL owners.

"They know our league well," Goodell said. "As you know, they have been ownership in the NFC West with the San Francisco 49ers. They understand the passion of the NFL, they understand the 12s, they understand this Seattle community and the NFL. And so that makes this transaction particularly attractive to all of us."

Khosla also paid tribute to the Seattle fans known as the "12s."

"Having been to Lumen Field and watching the 12s everywhere, I do want to thank them for their passion and fervor," Khosla said. "And the community in Seattle is incredibly valuable. So we hope we'll engage a lot more with the community also."

Khosla's wife, Neeru, said their son, Neal, played a role in the family's interest in buying the team. They attended Wednesday's meeting with Khosla's daughter, Nina.

"He's been a big fan of sports, and in particular, football," Neeru said of Neal. "... So he's the one who actually really pushed us into doing this. He worked really hard, so I'm really proud of him."

Vinod Khosla, who was born in India, said he was first a fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers when he moved

to the United States in 1976.

"We've been very passionate about football for a long time," he said. "I would say we've been going to home games at the 49ers since (Neal) was 5, maybe half of all home games since he was 5. And so football is definitely a passion. ... I was originally and still am a big Steelers fan. ... Little known fact, but I still watch all the Steelers games, too."

Meta reaches landmark \$18 billion settlement with states in trial over teen social media addiction

By BARBARA ORTUTAY, KELVIN CHAN and KAITLYN HUAMANI Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Meta agreed Wednesday to pay up to \$18 billion and add stronger child-safety measures to its Facebook and Instagram platforms as part of a landmark legal settlement that ended a trial over teen social media addiction and settled claims filed by nearly every state.

The settlement resolved a pivotal case years in the making that sought to hold the tech giant accountable for the role its platforms played in undermining children's mental health. The effort targeted features designed to hook young people's attention.

The agreement "institutes real change, real transparency, real protections for children and teens across the country," California Attorney General Rob Bonta said.

If approved by the court, the deal will stop an avalanche of litigation by states against Meta, although the company still faces lawsuits from individuals and school districts throughout the U.S. For the states, the settlement delivers money for mental-health programs for kids, including after-school or summer activities and digital literacy counselors.

Advocates cheered the new protections, including default time limits and the disabling of features such as "like" counts.

But "we cannot truly protect all children and teens until these protections are required on every platform and are permanent — that's something only Congress can do," said Sacha Haworth, executive director of The Tech Oversight Project.

The settlement will be paid out over 10 years. California will get the largest sum of at least \$1.5 billion, but several other states will still collect hundreds of millions of dollars each over the decade.

The settlement "will put an end to these dangerous practices and deliver meaningful relief that will protect children from online harm," Virginia Attorney General Jay Jones said.

Meta urges rivals to adopt similar safety measures

Meta said in a blog post that it was "building on our longstanding efforts to empower parents and support teens."

"Ensuring teens have a safe and productive experience on our platforms is an absolute imperative for Meta," the company said. "We want to get this right for parents and teens, and that's why we partnered with state attorneys general to set a new industry standard."

The company urged competitors TikTok and YouTube to adopt similar safety measures.

The \$18 billion settlement is a fraction of Meta's 2025 revenue of \$201 billion. Meta shares closed up about 1% Wednesday, although they rose as much as 4% during the day.

The agreement cuts short an ongoing court case involving California, Colorado, Kentucky and New Jersey, which were among 29 states that sued Meta in 2023. The federal trial kicked off last week in Oakland, California, where Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg had been among the witnesses expected to take the stand.

The lawsuit accused Meta of contributing to the youth mental health crisis by deliberately designing features that addict children to its platforms and hiding them from the public. The case also argued that Meta violated federal laws by routinely collecting data on children under 13 without their parents' consent.

The cases in other states had been expected to go to trial later, but are now resolved. The settlement covers 48 states, as well as Washington, D.C., and some U.S. territories. The only two states to be excluded are New Mexico, which went to trial in its case against Meta and won earlier this year, and Florida, where the attorney general said the settlement was not tough enough on Meta.

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Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier wrote on X that the “payouts are peanuts compared to the profound harms Meta’s profit-driven addictive features inflicted on kids.”

New features to include time limits and curbs on push notifications

Under the proposed settlement, Meta agreed to adopt a series of safety features, including two-hour daily time limits that can only be disabled with a parent’s permission and pauses for children using Instagram and Facebook.

The company will eliminate push notifications during weekday school hours and bring in “robust” age-assurance measures and “age-appropriate” content controls to prevent bullying and harmful material about eating disorders and self-harm.

There will be stronger and more user-friendly parental controls and limits on social comparison features such as “like” counts.

An independent auditor will assess how Meta is implementing the safety features and how effective they are.

The company said 30% of the settlement amount — about \$5.3 billion — will be released to states only if rivals YouTube and TikTok meet two conditions: implementing similar safety features, including a one-hour daily time limit, a nighttime block and age-assurance measures; and paying the same amount, split between the two companies.

Neither YouTube owner Google nor TikTok responded to requests for comments.

Meta officials declined to comment on whether they had conversations with their competitors about those conditions, but said they intentionally designed the agreement with the states to incentivize the rest of the industry to follow suit.

Some of the safety measures Meta will implement, like disabling cosmetic surgery and extreme makeup filters, made sense regardless of whether competing platforms do the same, Meta said. Other features, like the overnight block, will function better if they are established across the board, the company said.

If industry peers sign on to the agreement, Meta will implement stronger defaults for teens’ daily time limit and the length of time for “night mode.”

Investigation was led by bipartisan coalition

The federal lawsuit was the result of an investigation led by a bipartisan coalition of attorneys general from California, Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, Tennessee and Vermont. It followed newspaper reports, first by The Wall Street Journal in 2021, that found the company knew about the harm Instagram can cause teenagers — especially teen girls — when it comes to mental health and body image issues.

Meta has since added a host of safety features to Instagram, including separate accounts for teenagers with stronger protections around messaging and privacy, along with content restrictions.

But child-safety advocates and experts, along with some former Meta employees, have long contended that the features are little more than window dressing.

Arturo Béjar, a former Meta engineering director who testified last week in the Oakland trial, called the settlement a “significant milestone” but warned that it should not be interpreted as an “all clear” sign that Instagram is now safe for children.

“The agreement has a big problem in that it allows Meta to define harm,” Béjar said in an interview. He urged the court to address that “because it’s one thing to say, ‘Yeah, you only get like two hours of alcohol or two hours of cigarettes a day,’ but it’s still as bad for you because of what’s getting delivered.”

Parents and advocates celebrated the settlement as a moment of accountability for Meta. Victoria Hinks, mother of Alexandra “Owl” Hinks, who died by suicide at age 16, said she was satisfied with the terms “as long as they enforce it properly.”

“It felt like today finally something was done,” she said outside the Oakland courthouse. “I feel like justice is possible.”

Republican nominee for Maine governor says he wants ICE agents at polling places in the state

PATRICK WHITTLE and MATT BROWN Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Maine's Republican nominee for governor recently told a crowd of supporters that he would ask a top Department of Homeland Security official to send U.S. Marshals and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to polling places in the state for this fall's midterm elections, according to audio obtained by The Associated Press.

During an Aug. 20 event in Arundel, Bobby Charles told a group of supporters that he would ask Tom Homan, the White House border czar, to send federal agents to polling places in the weeks before Election Day. The audio was first reported by the Bangor Daily News.

"Here's my secret," Charles told members of a Maine Young Republicans chapter. "I have a friend named Tom Homan. Tom and I used to get on Fox all the time together. Tom's an awesome guy."

"I'm going to ask Tom, I'm going to actually — three or four weeks before the election, maybe three — I'm going to make an appeal for ICE and Marshals to be at our voting booths," Charles said, according to the audio.

On Wednesday, he explained his comments by saying state and local authorities who manage elections should have an open line of communication with federal authorities if needed to "prevent violence at a voting place, in order to prevent intimidation at a voting place and in order to prevent illegality at a voting place."

He said his point was that Maine authorities should do everything legally possible to prevent illegal voting in the state.

"Everybody who is legally entitled to vote should be free from any intimidation and should be able to vote," he said in a statement released by his campaign. "Anybody who is not legally entitled to vote should not be voting."

Trump, Republican allies are fixated on voting by noncitizens

Charles' comments come as President Donald Trump continues to sow doubt about the security of elections in the U.S. elections and takes unprecedented measures to intervene in election administration. The Constitution gives states, and sometimes Congress, the authority to set election rules but grants no such power to the president.

A central part of his attacks is to claim widespread fraud through voting by noncitizens. But those claims are vastly overstated. Voting by noncitizens is exceptionally rare and is punishable as a felony, with deportation as one potential penalty.

Nevertheless, Trump has been pushing Congress to pass a bill that would require voters to show documentary proof of citizenship to vote in the upcoming midterms and signed an executive order directing the Postal Service to send mail ballots only to those on an approved list of verified voters.

When reached for comment on Wednesday, DHS did not address whether department officials had held or planned to hold conversations with political campaigns about election security. DHS officials have previously said they do not have plans to send ICE agents to polling places.

"Elections exist for the American people, not illegal aliens, to choose their leaders," a Homeland Security spokesperson said in a statement to the AP.

Democratic state officials have been concerned about the possibility of immigration agents showing up near polling places on Election Day or during early voting. Several states have taken actions this year to guard against it.

In February, a DHS official told a group of secretaries of state that "any suggestion that ICE will be present at any polling location is simply not true," according to several secretaries who were part of the conversation. That followed congressional testimony from the heads of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection, who both answered "No, sir" when asked if they are involved in any efforts to guard voting precincts.

Maine officials, Democrats push back on Charles' comments

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Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, a Democrat, said ICE agents are prohibited by law from being at polling places and that Maine residents can expect a free and secure election in November. Bellows ran for governor this year but lost in the Democratic primary.

"The political rhetoric coming from Mr. Charles is just politics, but it won't change the laws or the Constitution," Bellows said.

The Maine Democratic Party also criticized Charles' comments and described his plan as likely illegal. The party also criticized the timing of the comments as the state is continuing to wrestle with the killing of Biddeford resident Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero by an ICE officer earlier this summer.

The comments expose Charles as a "MAGA extremist" who will do Trump's bidding, said Maine Democratic Party Executive Director Devon Murphy-Anderson.

"His plan to ask Trump's border czar to send ICE agents to Maine polling places just weeks before Election Day is not only deeply alarming — it is likely illegal. This is a blatant attempt to intimidate voters and yet another reason Bobby Charles is too extreme for Maine," Murphy-Anderson said.

Federal law prohibits the military and federal agencies from putting troops or armed officers near polling sites, according to the Brennan Center.

DHS secretary says agents could respond to 'specific threat' at polling places

The White House has dismissed concerns that federal agents would interfere with elections and noted that there was no disruption to the election process in last year's elections, when Democrats performed well.

During his March confirmation hearing, Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin downplayed concerns about ICE agents being used to intimidate voters or interfere with election administration. But he maintained that agents had a right to conduct immigration enforcement activities at sites related to election administration.

"I don't understand what the concern is about enforcement of immigration at polling places anyways, because honestly if you're not a citizen you shouldn't be voting anyways," Mullin testified. "So technically, there shouldn't be illegals at the polling spot."

He continued: "The only reason why my officers would be there is if there was a specific threat for them to be there, not for intimidation."

Charles is an attorney who served as U.S. assistant secretary of state under President George W. Bush. He won the Republican primary for governor in June and will face Democratic candidate Hannah Pingree, the former speaker of the Maine House of Representatives, in November. Democratic Gov. Janet Mills, a Democrat, is term-limited.

Talarico wants to unearth Paxton's depositions to keep focus on opponent's past in Texas Senate race

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

James Talarico, the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate in Texas, wants to reveal depositions involving Ken Paxton, his Republican opponent, as part of an ongoing effort to keep the focus on Paxton's history of scandals.

The depositions involve a civil case where Unity Resources, a mineral assets company, was accused of fraud. Paxton was connected to Unity but not a defendant, and the case was settled.

Talarico's campaign confirmed it asked a court on Wednesday to release the documents.

The Democratic state representative is counting on voters recoiling from past accusations against Paxton, the Texas attorney general, even though similar tactics have failed in previous campaigns.

In addition to seeking the depositions, Talarico recently resurfaced video of Paxton pocketing an expensive pen at a courthouse security checkpoint. Talarico also has talked about how Paxton was impeached, although Paxton was later acquitted, and how he faced criminal charges for securities fraud, which ended with an agreement with prosecutors involving restitution payments but no admission of guilt.

Paxton has repeatedly denied allegations against him and, much like his supporter President Donald Trump, calls them politically motivated smears. It is an approach that has worked over the years, including

when Paxton defeated incumbent U.S. Sen. John Cornyn in this year's Republican primary.

Madison Cercy, a spokesperson for Paxton's campaign, said Talarico's request to the court "is nothing more than a desperate attempt to hide his own extremism and Texans will see right through it," adding that "he's now lying at every turn."

The Wall Street Journal previously reported the contents of one deposition, including that Paxton had possibly violated attorney-client privilege. That was disputed by those involved. The Journal also reported that Paxton said he could not recall the answer to a question about 90 times during the deposition.

In a draft of the court filing, lawyers for Talarico's campaign argued there is "no basis under Texas law or procedure to withhold them from the public. Keeping them secret violates Texas's constitutional guarantee that judicial proceedings be free and open to public scrutiny."

Tim Curry, iconic character actor and 'Rocky Horror Picture Show' star, dies at 80

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

Tim Curry, a character actor who created a gallery of delicious, very loony villains for stage and screen, including Dr. Frank-N-Furter in "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" and the smug concierge in "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York," has died. He was 80.

Curry, who suffered a stroke in 2012 that put him in a wheelchair, died Tuesday night at his home in Los Angeles, according to his longtime manager and friend Marcia Hurwitz. No cause was disclosed.

Known for his arch humor, a puttylike face and gift with voices, Curry earned three Tony nominations — for "Spamalot," "My Favorite Year" and "Amadeus" — and a Primetime Emmy nod in 1994.

"I like playing the more curious corners of the human mind and human behavior, partly because they're a tad more interesting," Curry told The Associated Press in 1993.

Curry burst onto the scene as the Transylvanian Frank-N-Furter in the sci-fi, cross-dressing rock musical "The Rocky Horror Show," which premiered in 1973 at the Royal Court Theatre in London. He went with it to Broadway and then starred in the 1975 cult-classic movie alongside Barry Bostwick, Meat Loaf and Susan Sarandon.

The show was ahead of its time in terms of its representation of LGBTQ+ characters and has entered the pop culture lexicon for its many iconic and memorable scenes, including the song "The Time Warp," which has been covered by handfuls of artists, and the often-quoted phrase, "Dammit, Janet!" The show was twice revived on Broadway, most recently in 2026 with Luke Evans playing Frank-N-Furter.

"He was a force, a bright fierce flame, an exquisite charm and that rich vocal tone," Evans wrote on Instagram. "I hope, wherever you are, you'd approve of one more Frank having the time of his life in those heels."

Tim Curry's take on Frank-N-Furter

Curry's Frank-N-Furter had a posh British accent, but that almost wasn't the case. He said he tried German and American accents but pivoted after he heard a British woman on a bus talking with her friend.

"I met a woman on a bus who said, 'Do you have a house in town or a house in the country' and I thought, 'That's the voice!'" he told LA Magazine in 2015.

For many years after the film's premiere, the British-born actor declined to discuss it. He didn't participate in activities promoting the film, which morphed into an interactive event at midnight shows. But he later warmed again to the project and embraced it at public events. Asked by LA Magazine how he viewed "Rocky Horror," he responded: "With a sort of bemused tolerance. It's neither a blessing nor a curse. I was lucky to get it."

Curry's Broadway career included starring in Tom Stoppard's "Travesties" in 1975-76, playing Mozart opposite Ian McKellen's Antonio Salieri in Peter Shaffer's "Amadeus" and King Arthur in the 2005 production of "Spamalot." The New York Times said his "stalwart, plummy-voiced Arthur wears a smile as inflexible as armor." He also played Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol," at the Theater at Madison Square Garden in 2001.

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His screen credits included starring as the child-killing monster in the 1990 miniseries version of Stephen King's horror novel "It," as a medical officer in "The Hunt for Red October" in 1990 and the double-dealing Cardinal Richelieu in 1993's "The Three Musketeers" with Kiefer Sutherland, Charlie Sheen and Chris O'Donnell.

"Tim Curry was someone I cared deeply about, he was someone I loved working with and I am so lucky to have these memories," Sutherland said in a statement.

In his 2025 memoir, "Vagabond," Curry warned readers that while there were scraps of his nature in his characters, he was none of them. "The distinctions between who I really am and who I've pretended to be as an actor have proven to be a source of great disappointment to some audiences. It has not caused me much personal distress beyond the periodic necessity to deter stalkers," he wrote.

Tim Curry's life and career began in England

Born in Cheshire, England, Curry was the son of a Navy chaplain and a school secretary. He was 12 when his father died and his mother subsequently went to work. Young Tim learned to cook his own breakfast, resulting in a lifelong passion for cooking, and sharpened his humor muscles.

"My father was a Methodist chaplain in the Navy, and we moved pretty much every 18 months," he said. "So I had to make my mark in new schools and new playgrounds pretty quickly. And a sense of humor is the best way to do that. I was always a kind of mimic, one of those awful, relentless children, I should think."

Acting did not occur to him until his middle teens, when he attended a school for the sons of Methodist ministers.

"I was lucky that it was a liberal kind of school; many of them in England are rather Dickensian," he recalled to the AP. "There was a lot of theater, and I sang, too; I had been singing in church from the age of 7. I had enormous opportunities to express myself in that way. I just got hooked, really."

His training continued in 1965 when he entered the University of Birmingham, at that time one of three English universities with a drama department. "I took an academic course, which I largely ignored, I'm afraid, and just acted all the time," he said.

He then went down to London and talked his way into his first job, "Hair," in the West End. Curry went on to the more formalized theater of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Court Theatre, where he was enlisted for "The Rocky Horror Show."

Tim Curry's other roles

He went on to futilely try to stop Macaulay Culkin's Kevin McCallister from taking advantage of New York's swanky Plaza Hotel in "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York." Curry also was Wadsworth, the unhinged butler with a secret past, in the quotable "Clue." He played a wealthy philanthropist in 1995's "Congo" and a baddie opposite Carol Burnett in the movie "Annie."

"Nobody could play lovable villains better than he could," Burnett wrote on Instagram. "He was a dear friend. I was blessed to know him."

In later years, Curry lent his baritone voice to many voice-acting roles in children's TV series, including "Star Wars: The Clone Wars," "The Wild Thornberrys" and "The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron, Boy Genius."

He won a Daytime Emmy in 1991 for voicing Captain Hook in "Peter Pan and the Pirates" and earned a Grammy nomination in 2002 for the audiobook of the first "Lemony Snicket" novel, "A Series of Unfortunate Events."

After a yearslong break from live-action roles, Curry played a plague doctor-masked man in a wheelchair in 2024's "Stream," something the film's director Michael Leavy called a dream come true.

Curry, who never married and had no children, was deeply private about his personal life. But he wrote in his memoir that he was convinced to tell his story thanks to so many moving encounters with fans.

"The notion that my experiences might resonate helps me persevere — if they strike a chord with only one teenager, alone with a book in his room, as I so often was; or that young woman reading this on an interminably long bus ride; or that older queen, hopefully still in his fishnets, who saw 'Rocky Horror' upstairs at the Royal Court; or that middle-aged mother who organizes 'Clue' watching parties and refuses

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entry to anybody out of costume; or that buttoned-up bank clerk who relishes musicals; or that woman who kicked me out of the Waverly for being myself," he wrote.

Three Secret Service officials have been placed on administrative leave pending investigation

By The Associated Press undefined

Three U.S. Secret Service officials were placed on administrative leave Tuesday, pending the outcome of an investigation by the agency's professional standards office.

The three were operating in non-law-enforcement capacities and were being investigated for potential misconduct, the agency's public information office reported. However, the cause for the action remained unclear as the Office of Professional Responsibility was beginning its review.

The Secret Service has been under scrutiny as President Donald Trump has been the subject of at least three assassination plots in the past two years. In April, police said an armed man breached security at the Washington Hilton during the White House Correspondents' Association dinner, which Trump was attending.

The Secret Service has also found itself in the spotlight after other recent incidents.

The Justice Department last month subpoenaed New York Times journalists after they reported on security concerns involving the new, Qatari-gifted Air Force One. The subpoenas, which were later withdrawn, came after The Times reported that Trump was urged to leave Turkey on the old Air Force One at the urging of the Secret Service.

Then, Trump earlier this month acknowledged that he had actually slipped away from Air Force One as he departed Turkey because the Secret Service and military wanted him on a "different plane" due to concerns that he was being targeted for assassination by Iran.

Trump only confirmed he slipped away after The Washington Post reported that he had taken part in the elaborate ruse in which some of his staff, Secret Service and journalists flew on the old model Air Force One while he was snuck onto an alternate military aircraft to get out of Turkey.

Last month, the Secret Service also confirmed that one of its agents serving on Vice President JD Vance's security detail was being investigated over allegations tied to a suspected news leak. The Secret Service said the investigation was tied to a July MS NOW report detailing some of its agents' frustration over last-minute travel requests from Vance and his family.

Judge removes one hurdle for Trump mail voting order as states file new challenge before midterms

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

A federal judge on Wednesday lifted a major obstacle to President Donald Trump's executive order limiting mail voting, even as Democratic state officials filed a new court challenge with the midterm elections fast approaching.

The fresh round of legal wrangling comes just two days after the Supreme Court handed down a procedural ruling in Trump's favor, and could mean the issue lands before the high court again before the pivotal contests for control of Congress. The first mailed ballots are set to be sent out next week.

U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani in Boston agreed to lift an order prohibiting the U.S. Postal Service from carrying out Trump's order for November's elections. She wrote that she was "compelled" to do so after the Supreme Court's conservative majority ruled that a similar injunction she granted in a separate case was premature.

Talwani nevertheless said the executive order could unleash "chaos" and referred to it as "likely unconstitutional."

The administration can now move forward and implement a Postal Service rule published late Friday. It would require states to follow a uniform envelope style for mail ballots and to give the Postal Service a list of voters eligible to receive them.

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A new chapter in high-stakes litigation

The new lawsuit, filed by about two dozen Democratically controlled states against the U.S. Postal Service, marked a new phase in the high-stakes litigation.

It came after the Supreme Court ruled against them in a separate case, but did not say Trump's order was legal.

The high court majority found the initial Democratic lawsuit was premature, but that was before the Republican administration issued a rule governing Postal Service delivery of mail ballots.

Election officials warn it will be impossible to implement before the first wave of mail ballots are sent out next week.

"Across the country, states are already deep into preparations for the 2026 elections. Now, at the last moment, the federal government is attempting to meddle in those preparations and potentially threaten countless Americans' right to vote," New York Attorney General Letitia James, one of 25 Democratic attorneys general filing the lawsuit, said in a statement. "USPS has no authority to decide who can and cannot vote by mail."

The Trump administration plan faces a third lawsuit originally filed in May in the nation's capital, though courts there have so far declined to block it.

All previous challenges were filed before the administration published its mail ballot rule Friday night.

White House spokesperson Lauren Bis on Wednesday said the Postal Service's proposals were "commonsense measures that protect the security of mail-in ballots" and that the administration would continue to work to implement them to boost "the safety and security of our elections."

The Postal Service said it would not comment because of the pending lawsuit.

National Democrats on Tuesday cited the rule in asking the federal judge in the Washington case to block Trump's order after he declined to do so last spring, saying the administration at the time had not taken concrete action.

In Boston, Talwani also found that the administration had violated a separate injunction she had placed on the Postal Service in drafting the new rule, although she did not take any action against the government. The League of Women Voters originally filed that lawsuit, and on Wednesday they also asked for a new court order blocking the mail voting plan.

Voting by mail has long been on Trump's radar

Trump has long targeted mail voting, which he falsely blames for his 2020 election loss and is disproportionately used by Democrats as a result of Trump's condemnations. Since returning to power, Trump has tried to claim authority over election rules, saying he thinks Republicans should "take over" vote counting in Democratic areas.

He issued his first election executive order just months after retaking office, attempting to require documentary proof of citizenship to vote, among other changes. He has also been pushing a sweeping election bill that has stalled in the Senate amid opposition from Democrats and even some within his own party.

US-Canada animosity could impede an end to a trade war neither country wants

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.

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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 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

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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."

A Wildberries depot in Russia is destroyed as Ukraine extends its drone campaign

By The Associated Press undefined

Long-range Ukrainian drones struck a major warehouse belonging to Russia's biggest online retailer, burning it to the ground, local authorities said Wednesday.

The depot in the Tambov region southeast of Moscow had been hit on July 18, killing seven people. That attack was the start of Ukraine's aerial campaign that has delivered repeated blows to Russian e-commerce giant Wildberries. The company's size and commercial importance brought comparisons with Amazon.

Ukraine's cutting-edge drone capabilities developed since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his full-scale invasion in 2022 have allowed Kyiv to hit Wildberries facilities across the country in recent weeks. Ukraine says goods sold by the company include equipment and technical components that are used by the Russian military, which the company denies. The attacks have unsettled Russians living far from the front and hurt small businesses.

Ukraine also has targeted oil facilities that are the backbone of the economy in Russia, which is one of the world's largest energy producers.

Ukraine's General Staff said its forces struck a Lukoil refinery overnight in Kstovo, in Russia's Nizhny Novgorod region. The facility, which has an annual processing capacity of about 125 million barrels, was set ablaze in the attack, a General Staff statement said.

Nizhny Novgorod has been targeted repeatedly by Ukraine. Gov. Gleb Nikitin confirmed the attack and said an unspecified "industrial facility" was damaged, without elaborating.

The relentless barrages prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin to decree that the state can temporarily seize control of critical infrastructure facilities if private owners don't protect them from Ukrainian

drone attacks or don't rebuild them after the strikes. Analysts said the move aimed to compel companies to pay for their own security and bring damaged assets back into service, despite the cost.

Russia has hit Ukraine with ballistic and cruise missiles, powerful glide bombs and jet-powered drones, killing thousands of civilians. A woman and a 4-year-old were killed in a strike on a residential building in northern Ukraine's Chernihiv region, emergency services said Wednesday.

Ukraine has launched hundreds of drones at Russia almost nightly, hoping to overwhelm air defenses. The Russian Defense Ministry said that its forces overnight shot down 426 Ukrainian drones over 15 Russian regions as well as the Crimean Peninsula, which was illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014.

Ukraine struck Russian oil facilities, airfields, logistics and infrastructure, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a social media post Wednesday. He didn't elaborate on the targets.

Also on Wednesday, Zelenskyy awarded Elon Musk Ukraine's Order of Freedom, one of its highest honors, for his "outstanding personal merits" in protecting human life and freedom and strengthening ties with the United States.

Musk is one of the most influential, and contentious, private sector figures in Ukraine's war effort. His satellite internet network Starlink has become deeply embedded in Ukraine's military operations, with commanders and soldiers relying on satellite connectivity to communicate and coordinate operations.

Starlink doesn't currently operate over Russian territory, but Zelenskyy wants Musk to reconsider and allow Ukrainian forces to maintain satellite connectivity for longer-range drone attacks targeting Russia's military and economic infrastructure.

The overnight attack on the Wildberries facility in Tambov was confirmed by the company, which said the depot was evacuated. It didn't say the extent of the damage.

Tambov Gov. Yevgeny Pervyshov said the fire destroyed the logistical center and injured two people.

Elsewhere, two people were killed and two others were wounded in Russia's Lipetsk region, south of Moscow, after a drone fell on a house, setting it ablaze, Gov. Igor Artamonov said.

Heat makes emergency rooms busier. Study shows which illness and injuries rise during hot spells

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the temperature heats up, so do emergency rooms, according to a massive study of Chicago hospital and urgent care records, which found increased accidental gunshot wounds, kidney complaints, skin problems, varicose veins and even mental health issues related to marijuana use.

Northwestern University medical school researchers pored through records of 916,404 visits to hospital emergency rooms and urgent care centers in Chicago from 2011 to 2023 to see if they could spot trends in illnesses and injuries when the temperature hits 92.6 degrees (33.7 degrees Celsius) or higher. They found when it gets hot, more than a dozen broad categories of injuries and illness become more frequent, including some that most people don't associate with heat, according to the study in Wednesday's Science Advances.

While the study looked only at Chicago, outside experts said it highlights underestimated health problems and rising costs that infect much of the warming world.

"The sound of the city is the sound of ambulances," said study senior author Dr. Abel Kho, an internal medicine professor at Northwestern. "Hot days are just like, something's going to happen."

How heat multiplies medical problems

"When there's heat, there's a much higher likelihood of people having external injuries, as well as complications of certain conditions, specifically those related to kidney disorders or things like exacerbations of drug effects, like cannabinoids," said Kho, a former emergency room physician.

Some problems doubled, tripled or, in the case of accidental gunshot wounds, jumped more than 30-fold compared to days under 92 degrees, the study said. Unspecified injuries from assault showed an even bigger increase, the data showed.

This study "helps confirm that we've been underestimating health risks from heat exposures," said Dr.

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Jonathan Patz, chair of health and environment at the University of Wisconsin, who wasn't part of the research.

"It also is a reminder that the price of climate change is increased illness, strain on our health care system and health care costs," said Dr. Courtney Howard, a Canadian emergency room physician, chair of the Global Climate and Health Alliance and president-elect of the Canadian Medical Association. She was not part of the study.

Northwestern researchers looked through all the records to see what became more frequent, instead of just focusing on known heat-related problems.

"Heat-related illness is undercounted when studies only search for explicit heat codes like heat stroke," said Dr. Nicholas Cozzi, president-elect of the Illinois College of Emergency Physicians. He wasn't part of the study.

Researchers found an association between high temperatures and individual medical problems, but that's not the same as a cause-and-effect, Kho said. The data had more Black people and women represented than the general population, but University of Washington climate and health scientist Kris Ebi said that's another positive part of the study because those groups are often underrepresented in medical studies.

"We know that heat waves are becoming more frequent, more intense, and lasting longer," said study co-author Daniel Horton, a Northwestern climate scientist. "So a study like this indicates that those heat waves have real effects on people, not only on the likelihood of mortality, but of morbidity as well. So all the other things, the bad things that happen on the way up to dying, may also increase."

The importance of taking heat seriously

Cozzi said that the study has an important message for the public: "Don't wait for heat stroke symptoms to take heat seriously. If you have a chronic condition — kidney disease, MS, venous issues — treat extreme heat days as a trigger for extra caution, not just an outdoor-activity problem."

Many of the diseases that saw an uptick in heat had to do with kidneys and the renal system. The skin issues are known by doctors but not often seen in non-medical literature, Kho said.

With the marijuana mental health issues, Kho said doctors have long known that when a body is "under physiologic stress, some medications will have greater effects." That's why, he said, when it gets hot "maybe people need to be a little more careful if they're going to be using certain things."

Yet cardiovascular problems, which are commonly connected to heat in other studies, don't show up in this research as spiking during extra hot days. That's probably because people suffering cardiovascular issues often have other problems at the same time, such as kidney or fluid issues, that determine how their records are coded, Kho said.

Dehydration or "changes in fluid status can then contribute to cardiovascular disease as the heart works harder to pump more concentrated blood to the skin in order to support sweat-related ways to cool the body down," Canada's Howard said.

Kho said the study had him thinking back to the nights when he worked the emergency room: "When it's hot out, it's going to be a busy night. That's just how it goes."

Meta joins a list of corporations that have settled cases for billions of dollars

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Tech giant Meta this week agreed to pay \$17 billion as part of a settlement to end a landmark trial related to safeguards for younger users of social media. It is one of the largest such settlements ever, though it represents only a fraction of the \$201 billion in revenue that the company booked last year.

Here's a look at some other notable corporate settlements.

BP and the Deepwater Horizon disaster

Oil giant BP agreed to pay \$20 billion for the Deepwater Horizon disaster that became the worst offshore spill in the nation's history.

The settlement, first announced in 2016, included \$5.5 billion in civil Clean Water Act penalties and bil-

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lions more to cover environmental damage and other claims by the five Gulf states and local governments. The money is to be paid out over roughly 16 years.

Enron and its massive accounting scandal

Enron, once the nation's seventh-largest company, filed for bankruptcy protection in 2001, after years of accounting tricks could no longer hide billions of dollars in debt or make failing ventures appear profitable. The energy company's collapse put more than 5,000 people out of work and wiped out more than \$2 billion in employee pensions.

Twenty-four Enron executives, including former CEO Jeffrey Skilling, were convicted for their roles in the fraud.

A class-action lawsuit led to the recovery of more than \$7 billion in funds.

WorldCom hid falling profits in one of the worst cases of accounting fraud

WorldCom Inc. collapsed and went into bankruptcy in 2002 following revelations of an \$11 billion accounting fraud that included pressure from top executives on subordinates to inflate numbers to make the company seem more profitable. The collapse caused losses to stockholders, including those who had invested through retirement plans.

In 2005, the company agreed to pay shareholders about \$750 million in cash and stock, while major banks and accounting firms settled for about \$6 billion.

WorldCom's former CEO, Bernie Ebbers was convicted in New York in 2005 on securities fraud and other charges and received a 25-year sentence. He died in 2020, just over a month after his early release from prison.

After its collapse, WorldCom reemerged under a new name, MCI. It was taken over by Verizon and relocated its operations to Ashburn, Virginia.

JPMorgan, Bank of America and the housing bets that shook the world

JPMorgan Chase & Co. agreed to pay \$13 billion in a landmark settlement in 2013. The firm acknowledged that it misled investors about the quality of risky mortgage-backed securities ahead of the 2008 financial crisis.

The agreement also included settlements with New York, California and other states.

JPMorgan was among the major banks that sold securities that plunged in value when the housing market collapsed in 2006 and 2007. Those losses triggered a financial crisis that pushed the economy into the worst recession since the 1930s.

A year later, Bank of America reached a \$16.65 billion settlement with the government over the same issue. Its deal called for the bank, the second-largest in the U.S., to pay a \$5 billion cash penalty, another \$4.6 billion in remediation payments and provide about \$7 billion in relief to struggling homeowners.

Johnson & Johnson and the marathon legal fight over talc

Johnson & Johnson agreed in July to pay \$5.5 billion after fighting lawsuits for almost two decades over talc products that plaintiffs claimed had caused ovarian cancer.

The drugmaker, which has been fighting talc-related lawsuits for more than a decade, said that the settlement is conditioned on at least 95% of remaining claimants participating.

A U.S. bankruptcy court judge denied a \$9 billion settlement proposed by company subsidiary Red River Talc last year that would have been one of the biggest mass tort settlements in history.

Johnson & Johnson decided not to appeal that ruling and instead fight on in court.

As part of the proposed settlement, Johnson & Johnson will make an initial payment of no more than \$3 billion next year. It has no additional payments due until 2028.

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

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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 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 a 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.

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"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.

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."

Zelenskyy gives award to Elon Musk for Starlink's role in Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday awarded Elon Musk Ukraine's Order of Freedom, one of its highest state honors, for his "outstanding personal merits" in protecting human life and freedom and strengthening ties with the United States.

Musk, the founder of the aerospace company SpaceX, has become one of the most influential, and contentious, private sector figures in Ukraine's war effort. His decision to provide access to Starlink, SpaceX's satellite internet network, was a lifeline for Ukraine after Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 and remains critically important.

Starlink has become deeply embedded in Ukraine's military operations, with commanders and soldiers relying on satellite connectivity to communicate and coordinate operations.

Musk's decision-making could shape Ukraine's future military capabilities. Starlink doesn't currently operate over Russian territory, but Zelenskyy wants Musk to reconsider the policy. That would allow Ukrainian forces to maintain satellite connectivity for longer-range drone attacks targeting Russia's military and economic infrastructure.

Musk made no immediate comment on the award, which was announced by presidential decree.

Musk has restricted Starlink use in Russia

The technology has been integrated into Ukraine's drone operations, helping operators maintain links with drones and navigate them over longer distances. Ukraine's access to Starlink is the main reason

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for the early successes of its middle-strike drone campaign, which caught Russian forces off guard and undermined their logistics lines earlier this year.

The campaign has put pressure on Russian logistics in Crimea, giving Ukrainian forces a degree of battlefield momentum that Kyiv has not enjoyed since its successful counteroffensives around Kherson and Kharkiv in late 2022.

Musk has allowed the Ukrainians to use Starlink inside their own territory, including in Russian-occupied regions, but has restricted use of the satellite system inside Russia.

Earlier this year, SpaceX blocked unauthorized Starlink terminals being used by Russian forces in occupied territory, strengthening Ukraine's position.

Musk's oversized influence over Ukraine

Musk is both a crucial partner for Kyiv and a potential source of vulnerability. As Starlink has become embedded in its wartime communications, Musk and SpaceX have significant influence over how the technology can be used, making it important for Kyiv to preserve a positive relationship.

Zelenskyy has sought U.S. help in persuading Musk to permit Ukraine to expand its ability to use Starlink beyond its borders. Musk has said he believes that would be a significant and dangerous escalation, Zelenskyy told reporters last week.

Musk's influence has spilled into politics

A reported mix-up over whether SpaceX had approved Ukraine's use of Starlink for operations inside Russia contributed to tensions between Zelenskyy and then-Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, who was the government's main interlocutor with Musk.

Fedorov was dismissed in July as part of a broader government shake-up.

Zelenskyy said inaccurate information from the Defense Ministry that SpaceX had approved the bid had contributed to an awkward exchange with U.S. President Donald Trump, who accused the Ukrainian president of deceiving him. He did not say when that occurred.

That contributed to "some of the steps" taken against Fedorov, Zelenskyy told reporters last week, without explicitly accusing him of deliberately providing false information.

Fedorov's dismissal also highlights the political element of Musk's role in Ukraine's war effort.

Dolly Parton's philanthropy was based on 'her belief in the goodness of people'

By JAMES POLLARD and GLENN GAMBOA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Dolly Parton didn't think her philanthropy made her special. She thought it was just part of being human.

"I think it's important for everyone to do their share to help their fellow man," she told The Associated Press in 2022, adding, "I get paid more attention than maybe some others that are doing more than me."

Fans across generations and places may disagree, saying it will remain a pillar of the music legend and multimillionaire businesswoman's legacy, following her death Tuesday at the age of 80. One of her most enduring images is that of the charismatic humanitarian, whose good humor and straightforward generosity lifted the well-being of communities in her home state and beyond.

Weeks after Hurricane Helene devastated the American South in 2024, she donated \$1 million of her money, matched by her Dollywood companies and their partners, to the flood-ravaged community in her native Tennessee. The Library of Congress called Parton a "titan of children's literacy" for the millions of free books provided monthly through her Imagination Library.

Also well-known is the \$1 million gift she made to Vanderbilt University's Medical Center to help develop Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine. The not-for-profit Dolly Parton Children's Hospital recently received an undisclosed sum to improve pediatric care across eastern Tennessee.

Then there's the quieter giving that the public was still uncovering in her final years. Internet sleuths realized she'd long paid for many Tennessee high schools' band uniforms. She bought a Nashville strip mall with her "I Will Always Love You" songwriting royalties to support the surrounding Black neighborhood.

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"I just give from my heart," she said in a 2022 speech accepting the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy. "I never know what I'm going to do or why I'm gonna do it. I just see a need and if I can fill it, then I will."

Parton's simple philanthropic solutions were 'magical'

The simplicity of her solutions is what made Parton so "magical," according to Stacia West, the co-founder of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Guaranteed Income Research and an associate professor at the University of Tennessee. West studied Parton's \$12 million fund for families who lost their homes in the 2016 fires that swept through Sevier County, Tennessee. Through The My People Fund, as it was called, Parton's foundation provided families \$1,000 per month for half the year with no strings attached.

The concept of providing unconditional cash was much more "taboo" at the time, West recalled. That trust in the fund's beneficiaries to exercise their own agency is one lesson that West said philanthropy can take from Parton.

"The piece that really carries forward is her belief in the goodness of people and her ability to apply that to seemingly difficult problems," West said.

Parton applied the same framework to her reading initiative, West noted. Rather than hand out library cards that still required the time and transportation to visit a local branch, Parton simply mailed books straight to participants' doors.

The fourth of 12 children from a poor Appalachian family, Parton said her father inspired the Imagination Library. He was a "very smart man," she once recalled, and she "often wondered what he could have done had he been able to read and write." Kids across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia have received more than 330 million books since the program began.

Her Imagination Library was only part of her work to educate children

Ohio first lady Fran DeWine described Parton's "devotion to children and literacy" as "unparalleled." Over a million children had received nearly 28 million books in the state, according to DeWine.

"Her generosity and selfless spirit leave a legacy that will live on for generations to come," she said.

In addition to the Imagination Library's work, Andrew Carnegie Foundation President Dame Louise Richardson noted the Dollywood Foundation's efforts to "secure educational success for children born in poverty." Parton started the foundation to provide college scholarships for students from the county where she grew up near the Great Smoky Mountains.

"What's more, she made philanthropy fun!" Richardson said in a statement.

Parton's family asked that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Imagination Library — a fitting request given that Parton once said the initiative "meant as much, if not more to me, than nearly anything that I've ever done."

"Of course, I'll always be a singer-songwriter," she said in a 2024 appearance expanding the program in Kentucky. "But I just hope people will just say she was a good ol' girl, you know? She tried hard, she worked hard and she tried to make the world a better place and try to make people happy. And I will be doing that till I keel over."

US economy expanded at sluggish 1.5% pace in second quarter, on par with earlier estimate

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy grew at a sluggish 1.5% pace from April through June. But consumer spending stayed strong.

Growth in gross domestic product — the nation's output of a goods and services — decelerated from a 2.1% pace from January through March, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday. The second-quarter growth number was unchanged from the department's first estimate.

Still, consumer spending — which accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic activity — increased at a healthy 3.4% annual clip, up from 0.5% in the January-March period.

The reason for the lackluster growth was imports. They are subtracted from growth because GDP is only supposed to count domestic production. Imports rose at a 12.5% annual pace from April through June,

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partly due to a surge in shipments of computer chips and other products that support artificial intelligence investment, and sliced 1.64 percentage points off second-quarter growth.

Beyond the headline figures, the U.S. economy has proven surprisingly resilient in the face of fighting with Iran and the spike in energy prices it caused. Business investment, excluding housing, rose at a 8.5% pace in the second quarter, reflecting the AI investment boom. And a measure of the economy's underlying strength — which strips out volatile government spending and trade numbers — grew at a strong 4.2% rate, up from 1.7% in the first quarter.

Investment in housing rose, ticking up for the first time since the end of 2024. The housing market has been depressed by high mortgage rates.

Wednesday's report was the second of three Commerce Department looks at second-quarter GDP growth. The third and final report is due Sept. 30.

Also on Wednesday, the U.S. reported that an inflation measure closely watched by the Federal Reserve was unchanged last month in the latest sign that many Americans are still struggling with higher costs.

The Commerce Department's report showed that prices rose 3.7% in July compared with a year earlier, but the pace was the same as June. Inflation has worsened since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran in late February, when it stood at 2.9%. It's noticeably above the Fed's target of 2%.

Stubbornly high prices are shaping up to be a key issue in the midterm elections, now just 10 weeks away, particularly as the Iran war keeps gas prices high, President Donald Trump is threatening new tariffs on Canada and China, and spending on AI infrastructure has pushed up the cost of computers, gaming consoles, and semiconductors.

The Kremlin says the CIA director held talks in Moscow with his intelligence counterparts

By The Associated Press undefined

The Kremlin said Wednesday that CIA Director John Ratcliffe held talks in Moscow with his intelligence counterparts, a rare and secretive visit at a time when relations with Washington remain strained over Russia's war in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Ratcliffe did not meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was informed of the contacts that were "on the intelligence agencies' level."

"Of course, President Putin is immediately informed of everything," Peskov added, refusing to say what was discussed.

Russian state news agencies reported that a U.S. military plane landed in Moscow's Vnukovo airport on Tuesday and departed later that day.

U.S. President Donald Trump played down the significance of Ratcliffe's trip, saying it was "sort of semi-routine."

"I hate to disappoint people," he said on conservative broadcaster Glenn Beck's radio show Wednesday.

A senior Ukrainian official told The Associated Press that Washington informed Kyiv a delegation would be traveling to the Russian capital and asked it to suspend strikes until it left. The official said the request did not apply to all Russian territory, but specifically to Moscow, St. Petersburg and some northern regions. Strikes on other parts of Russia continued, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to talk publicly.

CBS News first reported on the visit.

Kremlin says US-Russia relations are in a 'profound crisis'

Peskov said that "contacts between intelligence agencies are, in and of themselves, a positive phenomenon, a positive process," but he stressed that Russia-U.S. relations remain in a "profound crisis."

He added that it was "too early to say" what impact Ratcliffe's visit would have on the ties between the two countries.

Andrei Soldatov, an expert on Russia's security services, told AP that visits like the one by Ratcliffe do

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not "happen every year."

Official channels of communication between Moscow and Washington have been kept alive since the 1980s and exist so both sides can talk if American or Russian lives are in danger or for other reasons, Soldatov said.

In 2021, Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Putin's Security Council, met CIA Director William Burns in Moscow months before Russian forces invaded Ukraine. Burns later met Sergei Naryshkin, the head of Russia's foreign intelligence agency, in Turkey in November 2022 to warn Russia not to deploy a nuclear weapon in Ukraine.

Details of Tuesday's discussions have not been revealed but such meetings normally take place only when there is a matter of pressing national security and when it is in "American national interests," Soldatov said.

Russia-U.S. relations sank to Cold War lows after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, but appeared to warm after Trump returned to office. He had promised to end the war swiftly, holding multiple phone calls with Putin and even hosting him in Alaska a year ago.

In his radio appearance Wednesday, Trump repeated that he wants to see the Russia-Ukraine war end.

Efforts to negotiate a peace deal have largely stalled, with U.S. attention turning to its war with Iran and both Moscow and Kyiv stepping up their long-range attacks on each other. Putin has rejected Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's push for an immediate ceasefire, arguing that Russia wants a comprehensive settlement, not a temporary truce.

Russia has proposed to mediate in the U.S. and Israel's war with Iran, Moscow's important ally in the Middle East.

Russia and Iran have a partnership treaty

After Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, Tehran provided Russia with Shahed drones and later licensed their production in Russia. In January 2025, Moscow and Tehran signed a "comprehensive strategic partnership" treaty. But even as it has built ties with Iran, Russia also has remained friendly with Israel, and analysts have described its relations with Iran as complex and challenging.

In March, AP reported that Russia provided Iran with information that could help Tehran strike American warships, aircraft and other assets in the region, according to two officials familiar with U.S. intelligence on the matter. The officials, who were not authorized to comment publicly on the sensitive matter and spoke on the condition of anonymity, cautioned that the U.S. intelligence has not uncovered that Russia is directing Iran on what to do with the information.

Asked at the time whether Russia would go beyond political support and offer military assistance to Iran, Peskov said there has been no such request from Tehran. Pressed on whether Moscow provided any military or intelligence assistance to Tehran since the Iran war's start, he refrained from comment.

Soldatov said it's possible Tuesday's meeting involved protecting U.S. personnel, bases or facilities in the Middle East that have been targeted by Iran. Ratcliffe could have traveled to Moscow to try to influence this relationship, he added.

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 has advanced 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 on Tuesday 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.

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

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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.

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.

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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.

"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.

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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 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

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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 Cognetti, who said “we are not for sale” when it comes to data centers. Cognetti 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.”

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-

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safety measures were in place, and evaluate the emergency response, according to a government order.

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.

Today in History: August 27, catastrophic eruption of Krakatoa

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Aug. 27, the 239th day of 2026. There are 126 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 27, 1883, the island volcano Krakatoa erupted with a series of cataclysmic explosions. The explosions (which could be heard 3,000 miles away) and resulting tsunamis in Indonesia's Sunda Strait claimed some 36,000 lives in Java and Sumatra.

Also on this date:

In 1894, Congress passed the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act, which contained a provision for a graduated income tax that was later struck down by the Supreme Court.

In 1964, the film "Mary Poppins" had its world premiere in Los Angeles, California.

In 1979, British war hero Lord Louis Mountbatten and three other people, including his 14-year-old grandson Nicholas, were killed off the coast of Ireland in a boat explosion claimed by the Irish Republican Army.

In 1982, Rickey Henderson of the Oakland A's stole his 119th base of the season, breaking Lou Brock's single-season stolen base record. (Henderson would finish the season with a still-unmatched 130 stolen bases.)

In 1990, blues musician Stevie Ray Vaughn and four others were killed in a helicopter crash near East Troy, Wisconsin.

In 2001, Israeli helicopters fired a pair of rockets through office windows in the West Bank city of Ramallah, killing senior PLO leader Mustafa Zibri.

In 2005, coastal residents jammed freeways and gas stations as they rushed to avoid Hurricane Katrina, which was headed toward New Orleans.

In 2008, Barack Obama was nominated for president by the Democratic National Convention in Denver, becoming the first Black presidential nominee from a major political party.

In 2011, Hurricane Irene made landfall in the United States; the storm would be responsible for 49 total deaths and more than \$14 billion in damage.

In 2025, a shooter opened fire with a rifle through the windows of a Catholic church in Minneapolis and struck some of the nearly 200 children celebrating Mass during the first week of school, killing two children and wounding 17 people. The attacker shot dozens of rounds toward the children seated in pews at the Annunciation Catholic School; police said he later died by suicide.

Today's Birthdays: Author William Least Heat-Moon is 87. Actor Tuesday Weld is 83. Actor G.W. Bailey is 82. Rock musician Alex Lifeson (Rush) is 73. Actor Peter Stormare is 73. Rock musician Glen Matlock (The Sex Pistols) is 69. Golfer Bernhard Langer is 69. Gospel singer Yolanda Adams is 65. Fashion designer and filmmaker Tom Ford is 65. Actor Chandra Wilson is 57. Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Thome is 56. Rapper Mase is 51. Actor Sarah Chalke is 50. Actor Aaron Paul is 47. Actor Patrick J. Adams (TV: "Suits") is 45. Singer Mario is 40. Actor Alexa PenaVega is 38. Singer-songwriter Kim Petras is 34. U.S. Olympic and WNBA basketball star Breanna Stewart is 32. Rapper/singer-songwriter Rod Wave is 28.