

Groton Daily Independent

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Community Calendar

Volleyball CHANGE!

- Groton will now host Langford for volleyball on FRIDAY, September 25th, instead of Monday, October 19th:

4pm - 8th Grade

5pm - 7th Grade/ C Game

6pm - JV

7pm - Varsity

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Aug. 29

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

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.

CRISPR Takes on Cholesterol

An experimental gene-editing treatment lowered "bad" cholesterol and triglycerides in patients for at least a year after a single dose, according to new results released yesterday from an early-stage trial. Among those receiving the highest dose, bad cholesterol fell by an average of 53% and triglycerides by 48%.

The treatment uses CRISPR—a technology that allows scientists to make targeted changes to DNA—to switch off a gene in liver cells that helps regulate blood fats. Initial results released last November showed the approach worked for at least two months; the latest follow-up suggests the effect may be longer lasting. The trial involved 15 patients with severe cholesterol or triglyceride disorders. Researchers reported no serious treatment-related side effects, though larger trials are needed to assess long-term safety and effectiveness.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that comes in two forms, low- and high-density lipoproteins (LDL and HDL), while triglycerides are energy stored as fat in the bloodstream. Too much LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, can contribute to plaque buildup in blood vessels, increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Nepal flood death toll nears 600 as rescue efforts continue.

More than 3,700 people have been rescued as crews search for survivors following Wednesday's massive flood along the Nepal-China border. At least 579 people have been killed in Nepal and five in Tibet, while roughly 2,500 remain missing; authorities are monitoring newly formed lakes upstream for risks of further flooding.

Iran war reaches six-month mark.

Six months after fighting began between Iran, Israel, and the US, diplomatic efforts have yet to produce an agreement to end the conflict. At least 18 US service members have been killed and more than 750 wounded, while the Pentagon estimates the war has cost the US more than \$37.5B.

Norway's King Harald V dies at 89 after 35 years on the throne.

Harald died yesterday after being hospitalized with a rare blood disorder and later developing a bacterial bloodstream infection. The monarch, who took the throne in 1991, is succeeded by his 53-year-old son, Haakon; Haakon's 22-year-old daughter, Crown Princess Ingrid Alexandra, is now heir to the throne. (

Fed Chair Kevin Warsh signals interest rate hikes may be needed.

Warsh yesterday said the Federal Reserve has "work to do" if underlying inflation does not move toward the central bank's 2% target quickly enough. The comments, delivered during his first Jackson Hole speech as Fed chair, led investors to increase their expectations for a September rate hike.

Dolly Parton's music streams surge more than 2,000% after her death.

US audio and video streams of Parton's catalog jumped from 1.2 million Monday to 30.5 million Tuesday, the day the country music icon died at age 80. "Jolene" led the surge, climbing from roughly 196,000 streams to 3.3 million, while "9 to 5" jumped to 3 million. "Islands in the Stream" and "I Will Always Love You" each topped 2 million.

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Thousands rally for voting rights in Washington, DC.

Demonstrators gathered on the National Mall yesterday for the Defend the Vote march, held 63 years after Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington. The rally comes amid changes to voting rules and congressional maps ahead of November's midterm elections.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Susan W. in Richmond, VA.

"I do improv outside of work. I was in a special show themed around professional wrestling. While my coworkers are supportive, they all have lives, etc. At the show, I was flabbergasted to see nine people from my work there with signs cheering me on. It was so uplifting, and I am incredibly grateful."

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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Volleyball

Groton Area at Huron
Saturday, Aug. 29

With Ryan and
Carla Tracy and
Savannah Bible

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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Brandon Valley at 10 a.m (Arena)
Brookings at noon (High School Gym)
Huron at 1 p.m. (Arena)
Sturgis, 4 p.m. (Arena)

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



Boys Soccer

Dakota Valley at
Groton Area
Saturday, Aug. 29, 1 p.m.



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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

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Watchdogs pull away in second half to hand Tigers first loss

GROTON — Groton Area went into halftime with a one-point lead Friday night, but Beresford took control in the second half as the Watchdogs handed the Tigers their first loss of the season, 28-7.

The two teams spent much of the opening quarter trading punts as neither offense could establish much momentum. That continued early in the second quarter before Beresford's defense came up with the first big play of the night.

On third-and-15, Beresford's Landry Sims intercepted a Groton pass and returned it 29 yards for a touchdown with 6:53 remaining in the half. The extra-point attempt failed, leaving the Watchdogs with a 6-0 lead.

It was the first time the young Tigers had trailed this season, something Groton statistician Tom Woods immediately noticed from the sideline.

"It's only the second game. It's the first time we've been behind and we've got a really young squad," Woods said. "I said, 'Fellas, we need to score anyway. We can't win unless we score. So this is nothing hurt.'"

The Tigers responded exactly as Woods had hoped.

Starting at their own 27 with 6:51 remaining, the Tigers put together their best drive of the night. Groton picked up three first downs before Anthony Tracy broke loose for a 32-yard touchdown run with 1:48 left in the half.

Freshman Ryder Schwan followed with the extra point, putting Groton Area in front, 7-6.

"I'm so proud of them that they came down and followed the coaches' instructions," Woods said. "What I really love is that the coaches are always talking with each other and working on things that potentially work. They found kind of a little bit of a seam."

Woods was particularly pleased with Groton's extra-point unit, noting Schwan's kick along with the work of the snapper and holder.

"I'm so proud of the boys," Woods said. "Everybody needs somebody to cheer for them, right? We in this life, we all need to know somebody's cheering for us. And so I just want to always be there cheering them on."

Woods even jokingly put former Tiger kicker Gavin Voss on notice. Voss holds the school record with a 41-yard field goal, and Woods noted that freshman Schwan still has plenty of time to challenge it.

"Gavin, if you're listening, you better get ready because this young man's got four more years to beat your record," Woods said.

The Tigers carried their 7-6 advantage into halftime after a strong defensive performance. Other than the interception return, Groton's defense had largely kept Beresford in check through the first two quarters.

Beresford, however, began finding room to run in the second half.

After the teams exchanged punts to begin the third quarter, the Watchdogs took possession at their own 40 with 8:49 remaining. Beresford put together a sustained drive, picking up three first downs before quarterback Ashton Oberle scored on a 1-yard run. Oberle also ran in the two-point conversion, giving Beresford a 14-7 advantage with 5:45 left in the quarter.



Ryder Schelle gains a few yards before being brought down by four Beresford players. (Photo by

Paul Kosel)

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The defense stops this carry by Anthony Tracy. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton appeared to get an opportunity to answer when Beresford fumbled a Tiger punt and Groton recovered at the Watchdogs' 25-yard line. But the Beresford defense stiffened and the Tigers were unable to capitalize on the turnover.

The Watchdogs then put together what proved to be a pivotal drive.

Beginning with 1:17 remaining in the third quarter, Beresford moved into Groton territory. Facing fourth-and-15 at the Tiger 39, the Watchdogs went for it and converted, moving all the way to the Groton 15.

Early in the fourth quarter, Oberle connected with Micah James for a 10-yard touchdown pass. Isaiah Scepaniak blocked the extra-point attempt, but Beresford had extended its advantage to 20-7 with 10:51 remaining.

Groton coach Jordan Carson said the second half showed both the youth of his team and the effect injuries had on the Tigers.

"They kind of started running the ball pretty good on us, and we had a couple offensive headaches," Carson said. "You can tell that we're a little young sometimes, so we're growing still. We're growing and we're getting better, and we just got to get back to the lab and get some more reps next week."

Groton was unable to generate another scoring drive. After the Tigers turned the ball over on downs, Beresford took possession at its own 47 with 4:46 remaining.

Sims, who had started the scoring with his interception return, finished it as well. He broke loose for a 24-yard touchdown run with 3:03 remaining. Oberle connected with Evan Rosheim for the two-point conversion, giving the Watchdogs their final 28-7 margin.

Beresford finished with 255 yards of offense, including 186 rushing. Oberle carried 25 times for 116 yards and a touchdown and completed five of 10 passes for 69 yards and another score. Sims rushed nine times for 39 yards and a touchdown in addition to his interception return.

Groton Area finished with 165 yards of offense. The Tigers rushed 29 times for 105 yards, led by Tracy with 53 yards and a touchdown on six carries. Asher Johnson rushed 16 times for 38 yards and completed 13 of 20 passes for 60 yards with one interception.

Tracy was also Groton's leading receiver with six catches for 24 yards. Alex Abeln caught three passes for 13 yards, while Ryder Schelle had two receptions for seven yards. Case Reints and TC Schuster each had one reception for eight yards.

The Watchdogs held a 10-7 advantage in first downs. Groton was penalized five times for 30 yards, while Beresford had six penalties for 60 yards. Beresford fumbled three times and lost one, while Groton did not lose a fumble.

Defensively, Braeden Fliehs led Groton with 11 tackles. Gunner Hardy and Schwan each recorded seven tackles, while Johnson and Layne Johnson each had six. Sims led Beresford with 13 tackles and the interception.

Friday's meeting also had some historical significance for Groton football. Woods said it was the 851st varsity football game in program history and only the third meeting between Groton and Beresford.

The first two were considerably closer. Groton defeated Beresford 15-14 in 2017 before the Watchdogs edged the Tigers 35-32 in 2018.

Woods explained that Beresford's return to Groton's schedule is part of a significant change in the Tigers' football slate. Several familiar opponents have moved to nine-man football, forcing Groton to look farther from home for games.

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Britton-Hecla, Redfield, Sisseton and Webster are among programs that have moved to nine-man football at various points, while Baltic and Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan have also dropped back to nine-man. That has brought opponents such as Miller, Beresford and Flandreau onto Groton's schedule.

The travel will become even more noticeable next season. Woods calculated that Groton has about 295 miles of one-way travel for its road games this season. Next year, with road trips to Beresford, Flandreau, Elk Point-Jefferson and Mobridge-Pollock, that figure jumps to approximately 735 miles.

Carson, meanwhile, was more concerned Friday night with getting his team healthy. Injuries took their toll on an already young Tiger squad.

"Whenever you go into a game, you try to have as many subs lined up as you need, and sometimes you just get a little bit overrun by how many injuries you have on a given night," Carson said.

Case Reints was taken to Aberdeen after experiencing neck pain during the game.

"They were just making sure," Carson said. "They said that he had some pain in his neck, so hopefully he's doing good. We'll check on him here tonight, and hopefully he's on the mend."

Carson said the Tigers' focus heading into next week will be cleaning up the mistakes that proved costly against Beresford.

"We just got to try to cut down on our mistakes," Carson said. "I thought we had a pretty good job last week of minimizing our mistakes, and our mistakes kind of overcame us tonight."

Carson pointed specifically to penalties at critical times, including third-and-short situations.

"We had guys jumping offsides and we had holding calls that kind of hurt us from time to time," Carson said. "Some of those mistakes can overrun you when you compound that with injuries, and it makes for some pretty long days."

The loss drops Groton Area to 1-1, while Beresford improves to 2-0.

The Tigers return home next week to host Flandreau, another opponent with some history against Groton. Woods noted the Tigers played Flandreau in both 1963 and 1964, meaning Miller — Groton's season-opening opponent — is actually the only completely new opponent on this year's schedule.

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Groton Area

First Downs 7
Rushing:.....29-105-1TD
Rushers:
Asher Johnson.....16-38
Anthony Tracy.....6-53, 1TD
Case Reints.....1-8
Ryder Schelle.....6-6

Passing:.....13-20, 60 yards (1 int)
Asher Johnson.....13-20, 60 yards (1 int)

Receivers:

Ryder Schelle.....2-7
Anthony Tracy.....6-24
Case Reints.....1-8
Alex Abeln.....3-13
TC Schuster.....1-8

Fumbles:.....had 0, lost 0
Penalties:.....5-30

Defensive Leaders:

Braeden Fliehs.....11 tackles
Asher Johnson.....6 tackles
Gunner Hardy.....7 tackles
Layne Johnson.....6 tackles
Ryder Schwan.....7 tackles
Isaiah Scepaniak.....blocked PAT
Ryder Schwan.....Punt Fumble Recovery

Record:.....1-1
Next game:.....host Flandreau

Scoring:

Second Quarter: 6:53: B: Landry Sims 29 yard interception return. PAT kick no good.....0-6
Second Quarter: 1:48: G: Anthony Tracy 32 yard run. PAT kick good by Ryder Schwan.....7-6
Third Quarter: 5:45: B: Ashton Oberle 1 yard run. PAT Oberle run good.....7-14
Fourth Quarter: 10:51: B: Micah James 10 yard pass from Oberle. PAT blocked.....7-20
Fourth Quarter: 3:03: B: Sims 24 yard run. PAT: Oberle to Rosheim.....7-28

Beresford

First Downs:.....10
Rushing:.....38-186
Rushers:
Ashton Oberle.....25-116, 1 TD
Landry Sims.....9-39, 1 TD
Sebastian Castillo.....4-31

Passing:.....5-10, 69 yds, 1 TD
Ashton Oberle.....5-10, 69 yds, 1 TD

Receivers

Micah James.....2-10, 1 TD
Evan Rosheim.....1-24
Ian Henderson.....1-23
Elias Perez.....1-7

Fumbles:.....had 3, lost 1
Penalties:.....8-80

Defensive Leaders:

Landry Sims.....13 tackles, 1 Int
Dexton Miller.....8 tackles
Hayden Homandberg.....6 tackles
Sebastian Castillo.....6 tackles

Record:.....2-0
Next game:.....Bye week

The Life of Kathryn Sundling

Funeral services for Kathryn "Kathy" Linnea Sundling, 76, of Groton, South Dakota, will be 2:00 p.m., on Tuesday, September 1, 2026 at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Closed casket visitation will be held one hour prior to services.

Kathy passed away on August 27, 2026, at Sanford Medical Center in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

Kathy was born on January 13, 1950, in Aberdeen to Jack and Marjorie Mahan. She grew up in Groton and graduated from Groton High School in 1968.

Kathy married Bob Sundling of Groton, and together they welcomed their daughter, Traci. Throughout her life, Kathy held a variety of jobs, including working at Ken's Grocery Store, Duane's Standard, and the local nursing home.

Kathy had a kind and generous heart and was a wonderful caregiver to those around her. She was the type of person who would quite literally give you the shirt off her back. She loved cats, enjoyed bird watching, and was an excellent cook and baker. Her caring nature, generosity, and the simple joys she shared with family and friends will be fondly remembered.

Kathy is survived by her daughter, Traci of Groton; her brothers, Tom (Alesa) of Groton and John (Julie) of Mesa, Arizona; as well as a niece, several nephews, cousins, and other family and friends who will miss her dearly.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Jack and Marjorie Mahan; her maternal grandparents, Randall and Esther Peterson; and her paternal grandparents, Floyd and Blanche Mahan.

Kathy's life was marked by kindness, generosity, and care for others. Her family will remember her not only for the things she loved and the meals she prepared, but especially for the love and compassion she freely gave to those around her.

Turner County Fatal Crash

What: Single-vehicle fatal crash

Where: 451st Avenue and 269th Street, 6 miles northwest of Parker, South Dakota

When: 6:12 p.m., Thursday, August 27, 2026

Driver 1: 61-year-old female from Parker, South Dakota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2019 Toyota Rav 4

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Turner County, S.D.- A Parker woman died Thursday in a single-vehicle crash near Parker, South Dakota.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2019 Toyota Rav 4 was traveling northbound on 451st Avenue near the 269th Street intersection. The Toyota left the road, drove over a culvert, and rolled. It came to a rest upside down in a shallow pond. The driver 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.

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Varsity Soccer Game Saturday, August 29th, 2026 Groton Soccer Complex

Varsity Boys – Groton Area vs. Dakota Valley @ 1:00PM

- (40-minute halves, 10-minute halftime)
- We will set the clock to zero out approximately 5 minutes prior to the start of the game. When the clock zeroes out teams should head to their respective bench area to prepare for starting lineups.
- The National Anthem will begin first, followed by introductions.

LOCKER ROOMS: There will not be any locker rooms available, however, there are bathrooms located at the ice-skating warming house to the south of the field that the players could change in.

ATHLETIC TRAINER: There will be an athletic trainer on site.

AED – In top drawer of file cabinet in little shed on west side of field.

ADMISSION & SPECTATORS: Adults: \$6.00 Students: \$5.00.

PUBLIC RESTROOMS: There are public restrooms inside the warming house across the street to the south of the field. **3rd Avenue between Lincoln Street and Garfield Street (the block directly between the soccer field and the warming house/restrooms) will be closed to traffic during the games for the safety of those in attendance.

CONCESSIONS: Limited concessions will be available.

Officials: - Doug Lutz (HR) - Brayden Engleking - Michael Opp	Ticket Takers (Report @ 12:00pm): - Kyle Gerlach - Carrie Weisenburger Admin on Duty: Joe Schwan	Announcer: - Joe Schwan Scoreboard: - Alexa Sperry
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Team Benches –

Groton (dark jerseys): Northwest side of field.

Dakota Valley (light jerseys): Northeast side of field.

Lightning Delays – Teams / spectators will be expected to go back into their bus/s or cars if a lightning delay occurs.

Groton Soccer Complex – 303 W 3rd Ave Groton, SD 57445

Livestream: <https://www.youtube.com/@GDILIVE>

Thank you,
Alexa Sperry, Athletic Director
Alexa.Sperry@k12.sd.us / 605-380-7887



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Podcast: How an independent US Senate candidate wants to 'deny the majority' to get things done

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

Ep. 31: How independent US Senate candidate Brian Bengs wants to 'deny the majority' to get things done
BENGs I am one of a handful of independents running in this region of the country. ... So, we plan to deny the majority to either party if we can just get a handful of us elected. It does not have to be half; it just needs to be enough so both team red and team blue cannot form a majority and impose their will upon anyone else. So, we're going to deny the majority, and then everybody has to come to us to move something through the Senate. Or the alternative, which would also be a good outcome, I think is team red and team blue can work together to bypass us. So if we can force them to collaborate and do something productive for regular folks, or they have to come through us, it's a win either way.

O'BRIEN Welcome back to Searchlight Report, a podcast from South Dakota Searchlight that brings you up to date on policy and politics in the Mount Rushmore State. I'm your host, Meghan O'Brien.

You just heard from Brian Bengs. He's an independent running against Republican incumbent Mike Rounds for a seat in the U.S. Senate.

Bengs joined me to talk more about what it means to run as an independent and what he's focusing on in the campaign.

O'BRIEN Thanks for joining today. I'll start off a little bit and just have you explain your life before politics, where you grew up, your military service, and your jobs kind of following that.

BENGs Well, I'm Brian Bengs. I am the independent candidate for the U.S. Senate, and I grew up, what I call, Southeast River. I grew up in a very small town in north Iowa called Burt, B-U-R-T, and just a great place to grow up. It was a farming community. I had fields kind of behind my backyard. A lot of farm kids, farmers, retired farmers moved into town, lived on either side of us, and then all down the street. And about 500 people or so, give or take.

And my mom apparently knew every single one of them, so everybody knew who I was, and my friends were in town because it's just, you know, it's your typical small town. And I grew up delivering newspapers every day throughout high school. And in the summers, I would work in the fields, either doing beans or detassling corn. So, I logged a lot of hours out in the field.

And my family, my dad was a union machinist in a nearby town, so he would drive about 10 miles for his work, and he was in the National Guard, and so we were just heavily involved in everything in the church groups and the local community and everything, because we were so connected. It's a small town. So, that's why I love small towns, because it's a great place to grow up.

And I was the last class to graduate from my high school before it ceased to exist, and my family didn't have enough money for college, so I went into the Navy, followed my dad, who also served in the Navy, and signed up and went into the Navy a week after I graduated from high school, did two years there, assigned to the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk, and realized that maybe I should go to school.

So, I got out and used the GI Bill. Went to college at Iowa State, where I got a degree in history, and then I went to law school at the University of Iowa, where I graduated from, and was looking around for what I wanted to do next, and thought I'll just go into the Air Force and try to do four years in the Air Force JAG Corps, and 9/11 happened during that four years, so it ended up being two decades, and they

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just kept sending me cool places to do cool things, so it was an amazing life.

When I left the military, the Air Force made me a teacher while I was in. I picked up a master's degree in history on my own doing night classes, and they'd sent me to law school to get an advanced degree in international law, so I could come to the Air Force Academy and teach international law and the law of armed conflict, the law of war, there. And so they made me a teacher, and I was able to parlay that into running the individual legal education program for the NATO alliance at the NATO School in Germany.

And so I found that I really loved teaching, and I still love teaching, getting in front of a class and having the Q and A, so when I left the Air Force, I retired. I was looking for a teaching job, and I found there was a criminal justice position at Northern State University. So, you know, as an attorney, prosecutor, former prosecutor, and former defense counsel, I was able to get that position, and I was able to teach criminal justice, homeland security, government, counterterrorism, international law, that sort of thing, at Northern State.

We lived in Aberdeen. We settled in Aberdeen when I left the Air Force, so we were there for eight years, the longest I'd lived anywhere since I left my parents' home for the Navy, actually, was Aberdeen. So, when my youngest graduated from high school at Aberdeen Central, we thought, "Well, we don't need to be here anymore, and we really like West River."

So, we bought some property down in Hot Springs or just outside of Hot Springs, and I got a job at Wind Cave as a national park ranger up there. It was about a 20-minute drive up there every day, so that was an amazing experience.

O'BRIEN And you said that the DOGE cuts really helped motivate you — when you were working as a park ranger at Wind Cave — that really motivated you to run. Why was that? What stuck out to you about those changes?

BENGIS Well, you know, working at the National Park Service, and this is something that, you know, I've been a fan of the National Park Service, you know, throughout my life, as most people are. You go to parks because there's amazing things to do, but when you work in the Park Service, you learn so much about it and how it's treated and it falls into the overall federal structure.

You know, coming from the military, where we spent money, we had money and we spent money. You go into the Park Service, and they don't. So, they're under-resourced, and you can see that by virtue of their buildings and their staff. In terms of, you know, they're generally understaffed, and right now they're chronically understaffed, so, and the buildings need maintenance and upkeep, and the parks need maintenance and upkeep.

And so, watching that and experiencing that firsthand, and then seeing the DOGE buzzsaw coming through things, going, "Park Service is too much stuff, too many people, the government has too much stuff." Well, the Park Service is operating at a deficit to begin with in terms of it's understaffed, and so when you cut more people away, you either have to do less, or you just push more and more onto people that you're asking them to do more than what they were doing before, but, you're not giving them any extra pay, and so at a certain point you're just going to overwhelm things.

And so, when I was watching the DOGE situation take place, you know, I was spared from the cuts because I learned later that, you know, "We're not going to fire veterans. That's a bad look." And as a veteran, and the fellow individuals that were hired around the same time as me at Wind Cave were also veterans, so we were all spared from the cuts.

But, we were expecting to be fired. And with that in mind, I was thinking, "Well, gee, somebody ought to do something about this because sure as heck, Mike Rounds isn't going to do anything." He apparently does not care, and so I decided, you know, I'll step up and try to do something about this.

O'BRIEN You ran against Senate Majority Leader John Thune four years ago as a Democrat. What did you learn from that race, and why are you running as an independent now?

BENGIS Well, let me preface this by saying I registered as an independent when I turned 18. So, when George H.W. Bush was on the ballot, that was the first election I could vote for, and I've been an independent the vast majority of my life, 97% of my life, with the exception of my 13 months registered as

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a Democrat to run against John Thune, and I was motivated to do that by virtue of the fact that Chuck Schumer in the national Democratic Party was seemingly setting up to let John Thune just coast to reelection without a challenger or without a viable challenger, and he's had a coast to reelection before his first reelection campaign after his first term in the

Senate, he did not have a challenger, so that should never be the case for an office like that.

So, that was one issue, and then the other issue was the direction the country was going.

Watching the Americans beat law enforcement officers with polls and chant for the murder of the vice president on January 6, 2021, I thought somebody should speak up and try to minimize that sort of thing. So yeah, I registered as a Democrat and ran against John Thune for that reason.

O'BRIEN Are you now distancing yourself from the Democrat label, and why?

BENGs Yes. Well, about a week, maybe two weeks after that election, I returned to the courthouse in Brown County and registered back as an independent. So, my big takeaway in 2022, was that I could go up and talk to people, and I did, going to parades and events and everything, and say, you know, "Hey, my name is Brian Bangs." Introduce myself as a candidate for the United States Senate, and tell them, "Hey, we're going to agree on at least two, but probably three big things. And then I'd run down my list talking about, you know, we need to get big money out of politics, and health care should be affordable, and you know, maybe term limits would be good to try to increase competition for the Congress," and people are nodding along, generally with all three things.

And, I get to the end and say, "Can I count on your vote? Because, hey, we just had this good conversation." And typically, the answer would be, "So what are you?" And then when you say, "Well, I'm a lifelong independent running as a Democrat," then more often than not, I got a, "I'll never vote for a Democrat," and that was the end of the conversation.

Even though we had just agreed on some pretty big issues, I couldn't keep the conversation going because people reverted to the "You're on the other team." And I was running because of ideas, that we should have a discussion about these ideas. And that is really what's wrong with our politics today is we don't talk about ideas. We just poke fingers and call people names because you're the other team. I'm an ideas guy. That was my job in the Air Force, was to talk about ideas and explain them to students or explain them to the boss and have that discussion.

And that's what I want to do with this campaign as well. And I found it is much easier to do that as an independent, where I'm dealing with my ideas and not having to defend what a party somewhere else decided that this is what they want to do. As an independent, I get to say, "Here's my ideas. I will defend them. Let's have the discussion." And it is much easier. People are willing to talk to me.

O'BRIEN Senator Mike Rounds has labeled you as a Democrat in disguise. You told CNN that you were running as an independent in disguise when you ran as a Democrat four years ago, but you've also labeled yourself as a "Teddy Roosevelt Republican" or an "old school

Republican." I guess, how do you navigate those labels, and how do you see that impacting this race?

BENGs Yeah. Well, first of all, I would say ideally our system, our political system, would not have these labels where you have to be on a team or the other. And George Washington in his farewell address in 1796 decried these ideas of like you have to be this or you have to be that.

So conceptually, I'm opposed to it, but unfortunately, our system is, you know, team red, team blue, and it has been for a while now. I, and several other independents, are trying to break that system by saying there's a third path that is just the ideas. Now, Mike Rounds is quite happy to call me names and sit behind, and I note that he has refused to debate me with the South Dakota Public Broadcasting debate. He has declined, so he's not willing to defend his ideas or his positions, which is a problem in my mind. If you can't defend them, you know, there's a problem.

I contain multitudes in the sense that I've compared myself, as I said, to Teddy Roosevelt. Over a century ago, he was saying the same things I'm saying now, because there's nothing new under the sun. We need to get big money out of politics. He was saying that we ought to have billionaires paying a higher tax rate than their secretaries. He was saying not in those words, but he was saying that, and we ought to bust

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up corporate monopolies, particularly big ag, big meat packers, which are a problem now. And he did bust up meat packers over a century ago when they were far less concentrated than they are now. So, when I say I'm an old school Republican, I mean, you know, those sorts of things. We need to get them back.

And I'm, you know, I could say like I'm also an FDR Democrat in the sense that I support Social Security. I think people have paid into it, and we should continue having it so it meets the needs of our elderly, so they can have a dignified life in retirement. So if I have to go back and pick team red, team blue pieces here and there, happy to do it. I'm also going to compare myself favorably to Eisenhower, for similar reasons.

O'BRIEN And you're an independent, you're not a Democrat, you're not a Republican, and it might not be, you know, immediately clear to some folks exactly where you stand on some policy issues. Can you just explain some of your key positions and what you're really running on here?

BENGIS Well, the single overarching issue that I am running on is the corruption of our government, corruption of our political system by big money, in the sense that, when I go out and I talk to people, I ask them whether they think that our elected officials answer to them, the voter, or if they answer first and foremost, to people who are writing them large campaign checks. And basically to a person, everybody goes, "No, they answer to money, money controls our system." And that's that's on both sides, both team red, team blue, money is playing an influence.

So, the corruption of the system is what I'm talking about, and most of our problems are a result of that because they foster ... we need distractions from the ... basically the big fight is big money versus us little folks. That's what the real issue is, and we're fighting about things on the left and the right that are largely irrelevant to, can you afford gas in your tank and your groceries and your health care? Those are the big questions that I want to have the fight about, and get beyond the standard left-right, "You're on a bad team." "No, you're bad," stuff.

O'BRIEN How do you see yourself if elected to the Senate? How do you see yourself? What actions do you see yourself taking in kind of busting up that corruption, as you say.

BENGIS Yeah. Well, I'm trying to do something unique here in the sense that I am not the only independent running. I've told people that I'm kind of in this first wave of independents, and I would note for everybody who's not been paying attention so far, nearly half of American registered voters in this country are registered independents, and it's about 27 and 27 percent each of team red and team blue, and they're losing people every day because of the dysfunctional gridlock.

So, when half of your voters are independent and we don't have independents represented in Congress, then we have a problem with the system. So, I am one of a handful of independents running in this region of the country. You've got Osborn in Nebraska, Todd Achilles in Idaho, Seth Bodnar in Montana, Bob Chew in Colorado. I'm running here, of course, and we're also connected with an individual, Ty Pinkins in Mississippi.

And we're all independents, and we're all veterans running to try to make the system work as the founders intended and the Constitution is designed, which it is not doing right now. And when I talk to people, they recognize that fact. So, we plan to deny the majority to either party if we can just get a handful of us elected. It does not have to be half; it just needs to be enough so both team red and team blue cannot form a majority and impose their will upon anyone else. So, we're going to deny the majority, and then everybody has to come to us to move something through the Senate. Or the alternative, which would also be a good outcome, I think is team red and team blue can work together to bypass us. So if we can force them to collaborate and do something productive for regular folks, or they have to come through us, it's a win either way.

O'BRIEN We'll be back with more from the interview after this break. Earlier in our conversation, Bengis mentioned that nearly half of American voters are registered independents. While polling from Gallup shows about 45% of American voters identify as independents, actual registration numbers show that among voters who declare their affiliation, there's about a one-third split between Democrats, Republicans and independents.

Also, Bengis said Senator Rounds has declined a debate invitation from South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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Rounds' campaign told Searchlight that's true, and said it's because Rounds will be in Washington, D.C., that day and is focused on traveling the state when he's home.

TRANSITION MUSIC

TUPPER South Dakota journalism is changing. Traditional, corporate-owned media outlets have reduced their staffs. Newspapers have lost pages and publication days.

That's why South Dakota Searchlight shares its work with other outlets for free. We hope local outlets republish our statewide news and commentary. And we hope that frees them up to focus on their community.

That means you might see our work at SouthDakotaSearchlight.com, in your local paper, on the website of your local TV station, or even on the airwaves of your local radio station.

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TRANSITION MUSIC

O'BRIEN Okay. If elected, how do you see yourself ... Do you see yourself caucusing with Republicans or Democrats? I guess, how do you see that role as an independent impacting your ability to represent South Dakotans at a national level?

BENDS Yeah, I've been asked that question several times in the past. So, if I was running as an independent as a solo, that I would be the only independent there, then that would pose a problem. But as I just explained, when we get a handful of us in the Senate, then we, you know, if you can't form a majority without our votes on whichever side, then we get the ability to say, "Oh, and the price is this — you know, I want this committee assignment, and my buddy Osborn from Nebraska wants that one, and my buddy Achilles from Idaho wants that one, and Bodnar from Montana wants that one, and Chew wants this one."

So, we can get the assignments that we want by virtue of being ... basically by exploiting the partisan division in the Senate. We can exploit their desire to not do anything with the other side, and get positions of influence for us. And unlike Mike Rounds, I am going to use my position of influence for the benefit of South Dakota citizens, not for the benefit of the party donors or for the party bosses. My attention and efforts will be purely dedicated to South Dakotans.

O'BRIEN Where do you stand in the conversation on data centers? Do you see yourself supporting a moratorium? Do you see yourself supporting some kind of local control mechanism? What does that look like?

BENGs Well, at this point, I think the biggest thing we need to do is pull the reins back and hit the brakes because things are out of control. So, I join the governor of Texas in calling for a moratorium until we get a good framework for ensuring that data centers and AI benefit Americans and South Dakotans, as opposed to just random billionaires and corporations. So we need a framework for this going forward. And until we get that, we should be holding off on this wild west construction streak.

O'BRIEN OK, what kind of boxes does a data center project need to check for you to kind of pass that test?

BENGs Well, again, data centers are connected directly to the AI boom that is taking place, so until we get, you know, the broader AI structure in place, then data centers should be on hold. So, you know, what sort of boxes do they need to check? Well, there's a lot of issues with AI that, you know, off the cuff here, I'm not really prepared to go into detail on ... but the single biggest issue from me, and I think probably for most folks, is that regular folks shouldn't be suffering from this. We shouldn't suffer from you know loss of water, or pollution of water. We shouldn't suffer from increased electrical power costs, and we shouldn't be suffering from the results of uninhibited AI with no regulatory structure at all, and that is the bigger piece of the picture, I would say.

O'BRIEN How do you see the war in Iran impacting Americans, and do you support an end to that effort? And what does the role of the Senate look like in ending that effort?

BENGs Yeah, well, I think every American recognizes that the war in Iran is impacting

Americans in the sense that the price of gas is going up, up, up, and up. And the Strategic Petroleum

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Reserve, which has got strategic in the name, so it is supposed to minimize big price shocks from events that take place, global events that take place, and the fact that it is getting or it is now to the lowest level has been since it was began in the 1980s in the early 1980s is a big risk.

So, if the war continues, at a certain point you cannot draw any more out of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And we also, you know, the less full it is, the more likely it is to suffer catastrophic damage and not be functional anymore. So we just wouldn't have it anymore. So the cost of fuel, the cost of gas, the cost of diesel. If you move something by a truck, which basically, if you go to a store, it got there by a truck, whether it's clothes or groceries or hardware or anything else, it got there by a truck. So, the price of everything has to go up, if it comes by a truck, and the price of food, even if it doesn't come through a truck, is going to have to go up because the price of diesel and the price of fertilizer, which are connected to that region of the world, is also going up dramatically.

So, the impact on Americans is coming, well, it's here to a certain extent. We see it, but if the war does not end soon and the restoration of the flow of oil and shipping through the Strait does not resume, at least close to the levels it was before, then we're going to be experiencing the follow-on effects of this for months and months, possibly years to come.

So, should this war have been started, is probably the better question. And my answer is no. And the reason it was able to start and continue right now is because Congress and the Senate, in particular, refuses to do its job. And the Constitution clearly defines the ability to authorize military force. That is with the legislative branch, so the Senate and the House. It is not with the executive branch, and the fact that Mike Rounds is just sitting back twiddling his thumbs while this goes on, and he wonders, like, "Well, when's this going to end? How's this going to end?" The United States Senate and he, as a United States senator, should be taking stronger action to get those answers and to rein this in. But unfortunately, the horse is out of the barn right now.

O'BRIEN Part of your platform is supporting tribal representation. Senator Mike Rounds has been a part of the Armed Services Committee, which is seeking more information about the Department of Defense's review of medals awarded to soldiers who were at the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890. The department decided to retain the medals. From our research, no South Dakota senator has ever taken the position of rescinding those medals, supporting rescinding those medals. Where do you stand on that issue, and what is your view on that?

BENGIS All right. Well, let me preface this by saying that I have served 26 years in the military in the United States Navy as an enlisted sailor and in the United States Air Force as a commissioned officer. I retired as a lieutenant colonel. I am trained, and my actual academic expertise and what I was focused on when I was in the Air Force later was in the law of war.

So, it's kind of my thing, and I will state categorically: those medals are not earned. They are not deserved. They should not stand. Their continuing standing is a dishonor to the individuals who currently hold the Medal of Honor, and the commanding general at the time of those forces called that action a disgrace. So, you trust the commander at the time. This is a political stunt that we've just allowed to continue, and I'm quite happy to have the discussion with Mike Rounds about, "Were those deserved?"

O'BRIEN Your platform also focuses on affordability in everyday life, but also in the healthcare arena. I guess how do you plan to approach those two issues?

BENGIS Well, the affordability in everyday life is the single biggest issue, probably at this point, and right now the biggest problem, as we discussed before, is the Iran conflict driving up the cost of fuel and fertilizer and everything. So, costs are just going up, and wages are not going up in correlation. So, the single best thing, or the silver bullet, if you will, is to end the war and get shipping going through the Strait again. And that will drive, you know, it's not going to be immediate, but it would drive down costs fairly quickly when the market starts to correct and the price of fuel goes down. So the daily cost there, that is how to deal with it.

Now, the healthcare system in the United States is a very immense project that has not been touched because it is very large, and they are quite happy to give money to individuals on both sides of the aisle to keep the status quo because there is a lot of money being made. I have gone out of my way to not

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accept any corporate money tied to, you know, these sorts of entities that want to keep manipulating our government and our economy for their own benefit, so bring down the costs of healthcare is one of my top priorities, and I put forth a plan to do that on the website.

The single biggest issue I would say or goal that I have to do that is to phase out the Band-Aid that is the Affordable Care Act, and to phase in its replacement, which is a Medicare buy-in. So, in essence, allow Medicare to start competing directly with private health insurers in the marketplace for plans for people to buy. And if we allow Medicare to do that, then they do not, by default, they do not have a profit margin built in. They're not looking to return money to shareholders. They're not looking to pay executives millions of dollars in compensation. So they will have a probably 15 to 20 percent decrease in costs off the top just by not having that profit margin built in.

And one of the other keys to that would be what I'm calling the Walmart option. Walmart is able to keep prices down because they use their market power to make deals and say, you know, for example, pharmaceuticals. You go to big pharma and say, it's Medicare. We want better drug prices, or we're just not going to buy your stuff anymore. When they are able to do that, the way Walmart's able to do that, the prices on prescription drugs will come down because that is the Walmart model and it works. So there's the single biggest thing. But my plan does have other parts that you can read on the website.

O'BRIEN And we kind of talked, too, about some of the independents that are running in these red states, in Montana, Nebraska, Idaho, and what that coalition might look like in the Senate. But as it is now with these campaigns going on, do you see your campaign reflected in any of those races, or do you see any key differences between you and those other races?

BENGIS Well, that is the point of being independent, is that you're standing on your own ideas, but I'd note that I am in contact with those individuals. So, we have spoken, and we speak, I won't say regularly, but on occasion we do speak about certain topics. And one of the topics I would say that we are pretty much in lockstep on is the idea of money in politics. That we need to, you know, to minimize it, to have the government operate the way it's designed and intended to operate, and you know basically the litany of things that I call myself a Roosevelt Republican for, it's those sorts of things that we're pretty much in agreement. There's going to be minor differences here and there, but on the big picture, we're pretty much in agreement on those topics.

O'BRIEN Voters will decide between independent Brian Bengis and incumbent Republican U-S Senator Mike Rounds in November.

OUTRO MUSIC

That's all we have for this episode of Searchlight Report. Audio for this episode of the podcast came from recordings by South Dakota Searchlight.

The podcast is based on reporting by South Dakota Searchlight's staff — editor Seth Tupper, senior reporter John Hult and reporters Joshua Haiar, Makenzie Huber and me. I write the scripts and produce the audio, with editing by Seth Tupper.

South Dakota Searchlight is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest nonprofit news organization. Until next time, I'm South Dakota Searchlight's Meghan O'Brien with the Searchlight Report.

COMMENTARY

Don't confuse lower Medicaid utilization with success

by Jessica Gilbertson

Healthcare is not a luxury, but a necessity.

At a time when costs are rising in seemingly all sectors of life, it would be tragic for the access to care we all need to become something that can only be afforded by individuals with high incomes and those who are more financially stable while all others must go without.

People working hard for low wages should not have to choose between seeing a doctor and the essentials required to survive day-to-day. Healthcare might not feel as immediate a need on some days as food or shelter, but there's a clock ticking on all of us and the day is always coming when our need for a

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doctor is so real that it will supersede all others. Income should not be a determining factor in access to basic care, but for far too many that is reality.

This is not hard for most people to comprehend, so when South Dakotans had the chance in 2022 to vote to expand Medicaid to folks who earned too much to qualify for traditional Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance, it was a clear decision. The health and prosperity of South Dakota has improved a great deal because of Medicaid expansion, with nearly 30,000 more enrolled in the program, gaining access to comprehensive, quality care.

As a breast cancer survivor, I can attest to the crucial nature of healthcare and not just when you are not feeling well. Regular visits to a doctor saved my life. My cancer was detected on an annual mammogram and I cannot say I would have been so diligent with screenings were I not fortunate enough to have health benefits as part of my employment. My cancer was caught early, when it was treatable, and I am doing well and have had the gift of many years of fun family times with my husband, children and friends.

This should be a story anybody can tell.

Everyone should be able to go to the doctor, not just those who can afford it. That remains the greatest challenge of Medicaid expansion — making sure those who are eligible for coverage actually get that coverage. In recent weeks, Medicaid usage has been in the news following Gov. Larry Rhoden's announcement of a budget surplus, due in part to lower utilization of Medicaid funds than anticipated.

We should not confuse low utilization with success. Stewards of Medicaid access must make sure those who need it can access coverage and can navigate the system to use it for screenings, treatments and preventive care. People who do not know they are eligible or who can't access the coverage might skip important screenings and never go to the doctor until a treatable condition becomes truly dangerous, requiring more extensive treatment or a hospital stay. This is the very thing Medicaid expansion seeks to avoid.

The need to get and keep people covered will face another challenge in 2027 when federal work reporting requirements kick in, requiring those enrolled in Medicaid expansion to report 80 monthly hours of "eligible activity."

The vast majority of South Dakota enrollees meet these standards and will continue to do so. These hardworking people's ability to report and have that activity accurately assessed by a state staff that has enough on their plates already is the problem — and those who are unable to work due to a medical condition, such as a cancer patient undergoing treatment, will trigger a separate tangle of bureaucratic red tape to prove they are exempt.

There is simply no possibility that all eligible people who need coverage will remain on the rolls when this requirement is implemented, but simply a matter of how many will be erroneously kicked off and the potentially deadly consequences when they need care but cannot afford it.

Only half of South Dakotans are insured through their jobs. That means the other half needs to gain coverage some other way and, for those working in low-wage jobs, Medicaid is a lifeline. It helps South Dakotans stay healthy, remain in the workforce and avoid suffocating medical debt. It keeps local care providers from the financial struggles that hit when serving a population with a high number of uninsured people.

Lawmakers and South Dakota Department of Social Services leadership can do a lot to help keep people covered in the coming months. They can minimize barriers to enrollment, offer robust and easily accessible educational information on the process and communicate clearly on changes coming so folks don't get caught unaware. Most people lose care because of technicalities, not because they are ineligible. If the changes are implemented in a way that minimizes bureaucracy and maximizes ease of navigation, the financial hit on South Dakotans and the state's care infrastructure can be minimized, though certainly not eliminated.

These regulations are going to be painful in many ways. Lawmakers and state staff have a huge challenge ahead and must rise to the moment before them.

Quite simply, lives will be lost if they do not.

Jessica Gilbertson is the South Dakota government relations director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

Iowa regulators investigate Black Hills Energy's high number of pipeline safety violations

BY CAMI KOONS

The Iowa Utilities Commission is evaluating potential penalties and corrective action for Black Hills Energy following a hearing Thursday on an investigation into the gas company's safety and management practices in Iowa.

Routine inspections from IUC revealed Black Hills Energy had disproportionately more instances of probable violations than the other top gas providers in Iowa over the past several years. The IUC also flagged that Black Hills has significantly longer correction times for probable violations than the other major gas providers.

Black Hills representatives acknowledged that the number of probable violation instances was high in a recent audit and said the company has a "structured continuous improvement approach" to address the commission's concerns and improve compliance.

Pete Hamell, the general manager for Black Hills Energy Iowa Gas, said that while the number of probable violations is notable, the "nature of the observations really isn't alarming."

Hamell said many of the probable violations observed by IUC were related to environmental, homeowner or business factors. That means things like oxidation of pipes over time, damage from homeowners doing landscaping projects or regulatory changes.

"We have alignment with the commission that the safe, reliable, and affordable delivery of gas service to our customers in all of our communities is a shared responsibility and priority for us," Hamell said, speaking as a witness during the hearing. "We take the commission's, not only their observations, but the commission's partnership to heart."

Volume of violations

In June 2025, IUC submitted a routine inspection report on Black Hills' Spencer Unit in northwest Iowa that had more than 100 safety issues in 16 violation categories. IUC said that while the violations didn't pose and immediate threat to the public, the high volume was cause for an investigation.

As IUC reviewed additional data with other Black Hills operations in the state, it "became increasingly concerned" about potential "company-wide safety issues" across Black Hills' operations in the state, according to a news release from IUC.

While IUC can levy civil penalties to utilities that commit violations, the commission decided to defer its final decision on civil penalties for Black Hills until it could evaluate compliance standards through the rest of the utility's systems in Iowa.

According to IUC, Black Hills is the smallest of the three major natural gas utilities in Iowa, behind Interstate Power and Light Company and MidAmerican Energy Company. According to data presented by IUC Thursday, Black Hills has just under 3,000 miles of main pipe in Iowa, compared to more than 4,500 miles operated by IPL and more than 11,000 miles operated by MidAmerican.

While smaller than the two other major operators, an IUC chart showed Black Hills' instances of probable violations between 2023 and 2025 were nearly the same as MidAmerican's. When scaled to the number of violations in the time frame per 1,000 service lines, Black Hills' violations were nearly three times that of MidAmerican or IPL.

Adam Buhrman, corporate counsel for Black Hills Energy, said the utility was not given this data prior to the hearing to verify its accuracy.

In Black Hills' July 29 filed response, it said certain inspection reports contained "a significant number of findings" but that "none of those findings involved active leaks or other immediate threats to public safety."

The findings from the recent reports pertained to issues like compliance, documentation, maintenance, corrosion prevention or facility maintenance, according to Black Hills' filing. In its response to IUC's notice, Black Hills contended that civil penalties were "not warranted" as part of the commission's review.

"The Company believes that continued implementation of its corrective action plan, together with ongoing reporting, collaboration, and evaluation of compliance performance, will provide a more effective means

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of addressing the Commission's concerns and promoting continued improvement than the assessment of civil penalties," Black Hills' filing said.

Hamell said many of the instances flagged in the Spencer report that initiated the IUC's investigation were related to what Black Hills would call "oxidation" which he said "is not necessarily bad for pipelines."

Further discussion around oxidation and corrosion in the hearing led commissioner Joshua Byrnes to say that it seems IUC inspectors are seeing instances of corrosion while Black Hills technicians see oxidation.

"How do we get to a point where we're all seeing the same thing?" Byrnes asked.

Matt Mangin, a senior specialist with Black Hills overseeing corrosion control, among other things, said the training would need to be equal between the agencies to properly identify the difference between oxidation and corrosion. Corrosion, he said, is an electrochemical reaction and has to present all four elements of corrosion.

Speediness

IUC also presented information comparing Black Hills' correction times compared to other utilities from 2023 through 2025. While MidAmerican and IPL had an average time to correct issues of about 30 days, Black Hills' average was 132 days.

Hamell said certain projects take longer to complete than others, due to things like engineering and permitting. But generally, Hamell said to his knowledge, Black Hills' response times have not "exceeded" the standards set by the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA.

Many of the questions from commissioners centered on staffing concerns at Black Hills, but Hamell assured commissioners that staffing was not currently a concern for the company.

In its June 29 order giving notice of possible civil penalties, IUC noted that Black Hills closed violations from the 2025 Spencer audit "faster than those found throughout the remainder of Black Hills' gas system." IUC said faster response time must be examined to understand why it has not been replicated in the utility's other Iowa systems.

Black Hills, in its filed response, said past closure times "needed improvement" and that its "current trend demonstrates meaningful progress in that regard."

Kevin Jarosz, the vice president of Black Hills' Iowa & Nebraska gas operations, said safety is the "highest priority" at the company.

"We firmly commit safety to our employees, our customers, and communities that we serve, and we also commit to a strong compliance program, investment in our infrastructure, and continuously improving where we need to," Jarosz said during the hearing. "We also commit to continue to work collaboratively with the commission to ensure that safe operations continue, and we will continue to provide safe, reliable service to our customers, like we have for decades and into the future."

The Iowa Utilities Commission will review the testimony and the written responses to determine applicable civil penalties and corrective actions in the matter.

This story was originally produced by Iowa Capital Dispatch, 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.

Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

Voting rights struggle continues, advocates say at March on Washington anniversary

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Just over two months from midterm elections and four months removed from a U.S. Supreme Court decision that gutted Voting Rights Act protections for majority Black U.S. House districts, and 63 years after Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech there, thousands gathered again at the Lincoln Memorial Friday.

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Organizers focused the anniversary march around a "Defend the Vote" message.

The event, co-chaired by civil rights leader Rev. Al Sharpton and King Jr.'s son Martin Luther King III and daughter-in-law Arndrea Waters King, featured appearances from union leaders, interfaith organizers, people whose parents attended the iconic 1963 march.

Elected leaders also spoke, including Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., Vermont independent Sen. Bernie Sanders, and U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., a possible 2028 presidential contender.

Demonstrators who traveled from across the country with various organizations marched from the Lincoln Memorial to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial following a four-hour program of speeches.

From behind bullet proof glass, King Jr.'s granddaughter Yolanda Renee King, 18, told the crowd she never met her grandfather, or grandmother Coretta Scott King, but she is carrying their legacy forward.

"Sixty-three years ago, my grandfather told America, 'I have a dream.' Today, I want my generation to say something back — 'We hear you,'" she said. "We know the dream was never finished, and we know you were never asking us to simply remember you. You were asking us to continue, so we will. We will pick up the baton.

Yolanda King highlighted Civil Rights Movement icons, including John Lewis, who later represented Georgia's 5th Congressional District from 1987 until his death in 2020.

"This is a marathon, run as a relay," she said. "That means nobody is expected to run the whole race. My grandfather did it. My grandmother did it. John Lewis did it. Fannie Lou Hamer did it. ... The countless people whose names we will never know did it. They ran their leg."

Lewis shared the stage with King Jr. speaking to roughly a quarter-million civil rights demonstrators at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963. Organizers also convened that demonstration to pressure President John F. Kennedy to develop robust civil rights legislation with Congress.

At the time, Lewis was a leader with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

King III said his ancestors "woke up with courage and faith to speak truth to power and get into the kind of good trouble that the late John Lewis talked about, that helped to open doors for the marginalized across the country, regardless of race, age, agenda."

Callais decision

Several speakers criticized the U.S. Supreme Court's late April decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* that overhauled Section 2 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that protected against diluting the voting power of minority citizens.

"The fact that we still have to fight to maintain and renew voting rights in this country is beyond abysmal and a truly national disgrace," King III said.

Rep. Yvette Clark, D-N.Y., chair of the Congressional Black Caucus likened the ruling to "opening the door to a coordinated attack on the Black political power and fair representation across the South."

"Since the Callais decision came down, Republicans across the country have wasted no time in their zealous pursuit for unbridled power," Clark told the crowd, highlighting mid-decade voter map redistricting efforts and a bill, titled the SAVE America Act, that is championed by President Donald Trump and would require proof of citizenship to register to vote.

Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, told the crowd, "It's time to send the SAVE (America) Act to the graveyard."

Postal Service rule

Gary Roush, 73, of College Park, Maryland, carried a sign protesting a new rule issued by the U.S. Postal Service mandating new requirements for mail-in ballot envelopes, which states say would pose serious challenges before November's midterms.

Additionally, the new USPS rule forbids the agency from delivering or collecting ballots from people who are not confirmed to be eligible voters on lists newly mandated from states by the federal government.

A federal district judge on Thursday night issued a temporary restraining order on the rule after the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday allowed the administration to implement the policy. USPS appealed the

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order Friday.

Roush, who was among the crowd at the "Defend the Vote" march, said he believes Trump has "made it crystal clear: He plans to use the post office to try to stop most mail-in ballots."

Roush's sign featured a USPS promotional character from the 1960s used in ad campaigns to encourage people to write ZIP codes on the envelopes. A message on his sign read, "Trump plans to use us to rig the election."

"He's going to create as much havoc as possible," said Roush, who added he's "extremely worried" about the upcoming midterms.

Building a movement

Sharpton's National Action Network and the King family's Drum Major Institute coordinated the day, along with nearly 100 partner organizations including sorority and fraternity chapters from historically black colleges and universities, and other national and local activist groups.

Ocasio-Cortez, who has been on a speaking tour with Sanders ahead of the midterm elections, said, "Brothers and sisters, these drum majors for justice, just as you all and countless others today, were not handed a movement. They have always had to build one."

"And when they came here 63 years ago, they came with demands," she continued. "They demanded the right to vote, an end to segregation, and fair housing. They demanded a federal jobs program, a higher minimum wage, and an end to discrimination in employment... Freedom is both political and economic."

Organizers evoked numerous founders of the Civil Rights Movement, and other anniversaries since, including the 37th commemoration of the March on Washington in 2000 when Coretta Scott King, the late widow of the slain civil rights leader, urged attendees to continue her husband's and other leaders' missions.

That anniversary march at the turn of the millenium, dubbed "Redeem the Dream," was also co-organized by Sharpton and King III, and focused on ending racial profiling and police brutality following high-profile abuse cases in the previous decade in Los Angeles, New York City and Philadelphia.

"My mother, Coretta Scott King, said that nonviolence is really the only credible response to the violence that we are seeing around the world. She was right about it both then and now," King III told the crowd.

Attendees in United Auto Workers t-shirts lined the seats at the foot of the memorial steps, another nod to the history of the movement.

The UAW, including its then president Walter Reuther, was among the coalition of activists, labor unions and religious organizations that supported the landmark 1963 march.

Other speakers and performers at the original march included folk singers Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, and Little Rock, Arkansas, civil rights activist Daisy Bates.

King and other leaders met with Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson following the march to discuss bipartisanship around civil rights legislation, according to the Martin Luther King Jr., Research and Education Institute at Stanford University.

Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in July 1964, less than a year after Kennedy was assassinated in November of 1963. Johnson subsequently signed the Voting Rights Act in August of 1965.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

Trump administration appeals latest order freezing rule on mail-in voting

BY SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's administration is appealing a federal judge's temporary pause on a U.S. Postal Service regulation that places new restrictions on mail-in voting, according to a Friday court filing.

The administration is headed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit to try to halt U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani's temporary restraining order issued late Thursday that froze for two weeks an administration plan to carry out parts of an earlier executive order to limit vote-by-mail.

Talwani's order in a Massachusetts federal court reinstated a pause she lifted after the U.S. Supreme

Court on Monday handed a temporary procedural victory to Trump on his March executive order to curb mail-in voting.

Democrat-led states and voting rights groups refiled lawsuits earlier this week to try to stop the administration from implementing a final rule that executes Trump's executive order.

They argue the rule impedes states' power to administer elections, comes too close to the November midterms to be implemented and would disenfranchise voters that depend on mail-in voting.

The administration says the rule will help secure elections, though it has not offered evidence that fraudulent mail-in voting is a major problem. The administration said in a Thursday brief the regulation did not affect election administration and dealt only with the federal mail.

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

Minnesota attorney general allows SD-based Sanford's acquisition of North Memorial Health

The agreement includes services continuing at North Memorial's Robbinsdale Hospital for 10 years

BY ALYSSA CHEN

South Dakota-based Sanford Health may move forward in acquiring North Memorial Health next month after the hospital systems signed a 10-year oversight agreement with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office.

As part of the agreement, Sanford committed to maintaining hospital and emergency services at North Memorial's Robbinsdale hospital, which is the health system's flagship safety net hospital, for the next decade. The 10-year agreement is far longer than Sanford's initial commitment to maintain core services at Robbinsdale for only two years. The agreement also stipulates that North Memorial maintain its extensive emergency transportation services across the state for 10 years.

"We've talked about the financial concerns of the hospital. We now have a path forward," said North Memorial CEO Trevor Sawallish, who spoke at a press conference Friday outside the Robbinsdale hospital alongside Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Sanford CEO Bill Gassen.

The proposed acquisition had alarmed healthcare advocates and labor leaders, who worry further consolidation will hurt patient care, drive up costs and lead to the reduction of critical services at Robbinsdale and the possible closure of one of the state's few Level 1 trauma centers there. A coalition of union organizers and faith leaders advocated for a "community benefits agreement" with worker and patient protections throughout the merger review, including at public forums held by the Attorney General's Office.

JaNaé Bates, the co-director of the progressive ecumenical group ISAIAH, said that much of what's in the final agreement was included in the coalition's original proposal.

"Robbinsdale Hospital remaining open for at least 10 years with its full services is incredible," Bates said at the news conference alongside the hospital leaders.

Citing the hospital's financial troubles, Sawallish previously said that North Memorial risks closing unless it's acquired by Sanford. The Robbinsdale hospital has been losing money, in part because many patients are uninsured or on lower-paying government insurance. The Legislature approved a cash bailout for Hennepin County Medical Center, another struggling safety net hospital, but a proposal for additional cash assistance to North Memorial was dropped by the time the bailout was passed.

The agreement binds Sanford to maintaining Robbinsdale's Level 1 trauma center, its emergency department, cardiac and cath lab services, labor and delivery, ICU, stroke care, reproductive health and gender affirming care, mental health services and oncology services for ten years.

The merger also includes protections for union contracts, \$100 million of upgrades to the Robbinsdale hospital and \$500 million in investments to North Memorial's newer, income-generating hospital in the more affluent Maple Grove area.

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The proposed acquisition of North Memorial by the \$11.7 billion Sanford Health is part of a broader trend of healthcare consolidation — hospitals and clinics combining into sprawling health systems. Evidence has shown that consolidation has led to higher prices, though effects on quality of care are less clear, according to health policy research organization KFF.

The Minnesota Attorney General's Office was bestowed with expanded regulatory powers over healthcare mergers by the Legislature in 2023. It's now able to analyze and sue to block hospital mergers if they are against the public's interest — for example, if they increase healthcare costs for patients.

Sanford has unsuccessfully tried to enter the Twin Cities before, with proposed acquisitions of Fairview Health in 2013 and again in 2022. The effort faced intense scrutiny from the Attorney General's Office, especially after the 2023 law gave the attorney general sign-off power on any out-of-state or for-profit acquisition of University of Minnesota health facilities.

In signing the oversight agreement, the Minnesota Attorney General's Office gave its blessing to the merger, though it still has the ability to intervene if Sanford doesn't meet the terms.

The Attorney General's Office has also been reviewing the proposed acquisition of the Upper Midwest's health giant Allina Health by the even bigger California system, Sutter Health.

The community benefits agreement coalition published a statement lauding the North Memorial-Sanford oversight agreement and contrasting it with Allina and Sutter's leadership's failure to meet with the coalition.

This story was originally produced by Minnesota Reformer, 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.

GOP path to retaining US House majority narrowing as midterms near

BY SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — With less than 70 days until midterm elections, Democrats remain favored to regain the majority in the U.S. House.

President Donald Trump's anemic approval ratings amid the war in Iran, concerns over the economy and a coalitional shift within the party mark some of the largest headwinds facing Republicans heading into November, according to election analysts and political scientists interviewed by States Newsroom.

Though the GOP's mid-decade redistricting push could help them shore up several seats and the battleground of competitive districts stands relatively small, Democrats maintain an edge to win the House, said Erin Covey, an editor specializing in U.S. House races for the Cook Political Report with Amy Walter.

"I would say that Republicans have a path to holding the House, but they kind of have to pitch a perfect game at this point in the cycle," Covey said.

The GOP's current House majority stands at 218-212. The Cook Political Report lists 21 House races as toss-ups, with Republicans defending 16.

Costs haven't dropped

Robert Speel, an associate professor of political science at Penn State Behrend in Erie, pointed to Trump's dismal approval ratings and the impact of the war in Iran on gas prices as among the major disadvantages facing the GOP heading into Election Day on Nov. 3.

"Trump's popularity is down below 40% in pretty much every poll now, and even in the low 30s or high 20s in some polls, and the Iran war is not even popular with Republicans, which has led to higher gas prices and his tariffs have led to inflation," Speel said.

"It seems, from some numbers, possibly job losses in the last year and a half, so the economy is not doing particularly well, and I ... expect it to drag down the Republicans in November," he added.

Just 33% of Americans approve of how Trump is handling his job as president, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released Aug. 24. The result tied for the lowest approval rating the pollster found since Trump took office in 2017.

Just 31% of respondents expressed approval of U.S. military strikes against Iran, including 69% of Republicans.

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Among registered voters, 36% said Democrats had a better plan or policy regarding the cost of living, compared with 28% choosing Republicans.

When the GOP secured a trifecta of the White House, Senate and House in 2024, voters gave the party homework to lower prices and do so right away, but Republicans failed that assignment, said Democratic campaign strategist Reed Adamson.

"Prices have gone up, and so, you're going to see them try and wiggle out of that every time, but it comes up in so many different ways, whether it is anecdotes about cost of groceries or gas or just overall cost of living or even just consumer sentiment about the economy," Adamson said.

"It is going to be really hard for them to wiggle out of it, and I think Democrats, for the most part, have been just sort of really disciplined in hammering that home," he added.

Dems confident

The Democratic Party's campaign apparatus for House races expressed confidence they will take back the House.

"Democrats are going to flip the House majority in November because we have the better message, better candidates, and strong momentum on our side," Nebeyatt Betre, a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee spokesperson, said in a statement shared with States Newsroom.

"All Republicans have to offer are higher prices families hate, unpopular rigged maps voters hate, and devastating health care cuts everybody hates," Betre said. "Democratic candidates are winning over voters because they're talking about their plans to lower costs, strengthen access to health care, and make Congress work for working people."

GOP's map, cash advantages

Meanwhile, the GOP's campaign arm for House races sees several factors in their favor, including that progressive candidates have won Democratic primaries in some competitive races.

"House Republicans are running on a more favorable map with historic fundraising, stronger candidates, and a commonsense agenda, while Democrats are saddled with a deeply unpopular agenda and radical socialist nominees hijacking the must-win districts they need to take the majority," Mike Marinella, a spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, said in a statement shared with States Newsroom.

Twenty-three Democrats are running in districts Trump won in 2024, including 21 where Trump garnered more than 50% of the vote, according to a June NRCC battleground memo.

The NRCC also holds a \$13.7 million cash-on-hand advantage over the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, as of mid-July.

And, despite low poll numbers for Republicans, their opponents have not sold voters on a clear alternative, Daniel Scarpinato, a Republican campaign strategist, said.

"Republicans face some headwinds, but Democrats actually have to say, 'Here's what we're going to do differently,' and they haven't really been able to articulate that," Scarpinato said. "It's really just been a pretty anti-Trump message, but they haven't told people, 'Here's what we're going to do.'"

He noted that in focus groups, swing voters are not "ecstatic about the Democratic Party."

Turnout problem

Republicans are also facing a challenge in getting their voters to the polls, as their coalition has transitioned to include fewer college-educated and older people, and those groups historically turn out the most in midterms, according to Ryan Owens, a political science professor and director of the Institute for Governance and Civics at Florida State University.

Trump has pivoted the party more toward blue-collar voters and away from the more affluent and educated voters whose high turnout rates buoyed the party in past midterm election cycles.

Without Trump up for reelection, the party will likely struggle to activate the coalition that twice sent him to the White House, Owens said.

"You used to see Republicans do really well in midterm elections," he said. "But now that they don't rely so much on that college-educated, white vote, their coalition doesn't turn out as much as it used to in

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midterms.

"Without having Trump on the ballot, without having a presidential election that generates that kind of enthusiasm to turn out, Republicans have been doing worse and worse during midterms," he added.

Covey, of the Cook Political Report, said Republicans' redistricting blitz and the number of pickup opportunities Republicans drew themselves across Texas, Florida, Missouri, North Carolina and other Southern states is the main reason they have any path to keeping their majority.

However, "there's a lot of variance in that because the seats that were redistricted, many of them are still quite competitive, and so, there's a world in which Democrats hold on to them this cycle, for sure," she said.

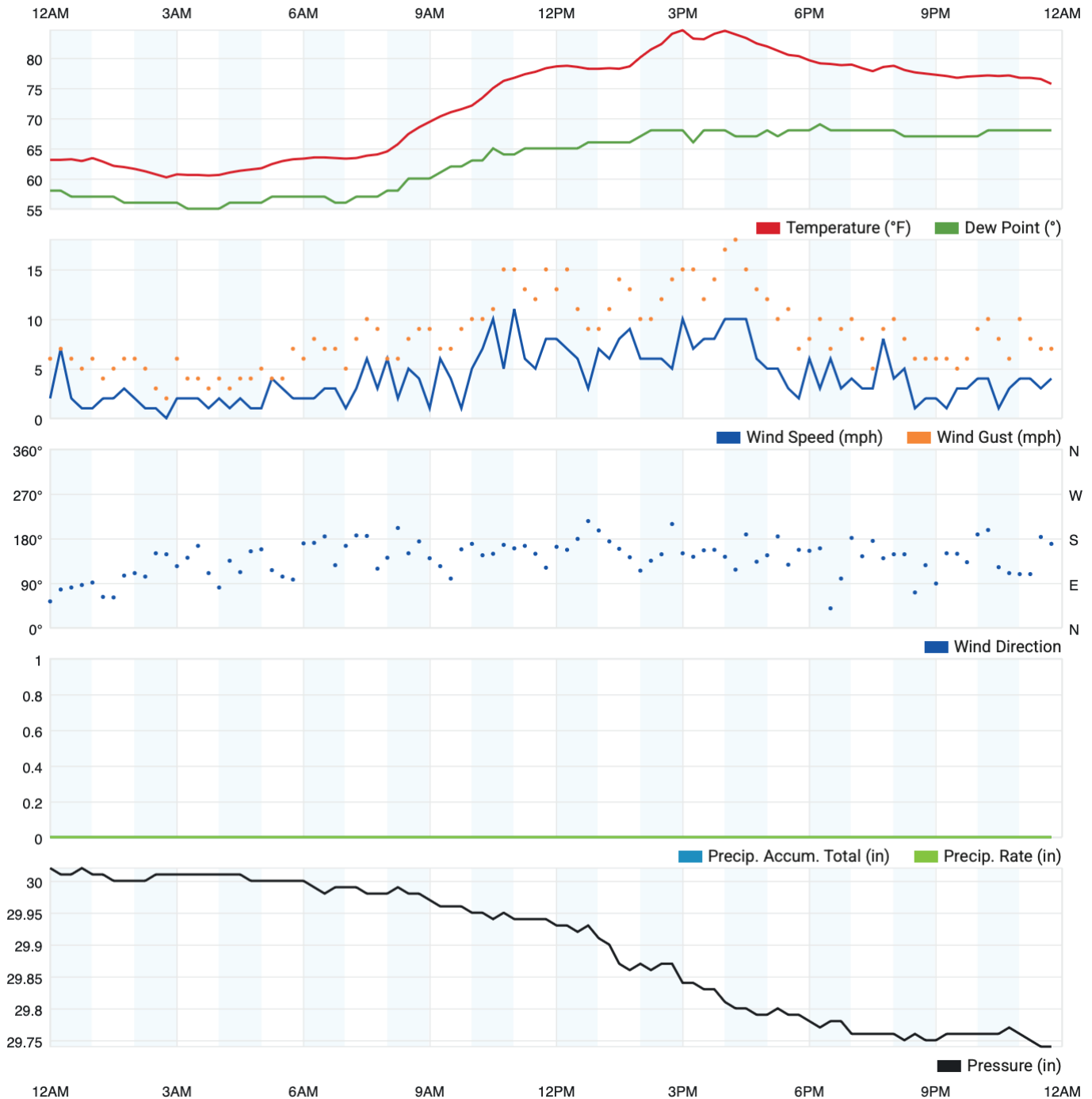
Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 28, 2026



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Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday



High: 85 °F

Slight Chance
Sprinkles



Low: 64 °F

Chance
T-storms



High: 86 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Mostly Sunny



Low: 61 °F

Chance
Showers



High: 83 °F

Sunny

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated Severe Storms Possible

Timing (CDT)

North Central: Late Evening
Central/Northeast: Overnight

PRIMARY THREATS



Quarter Sized
Hail



Winds
60 mph



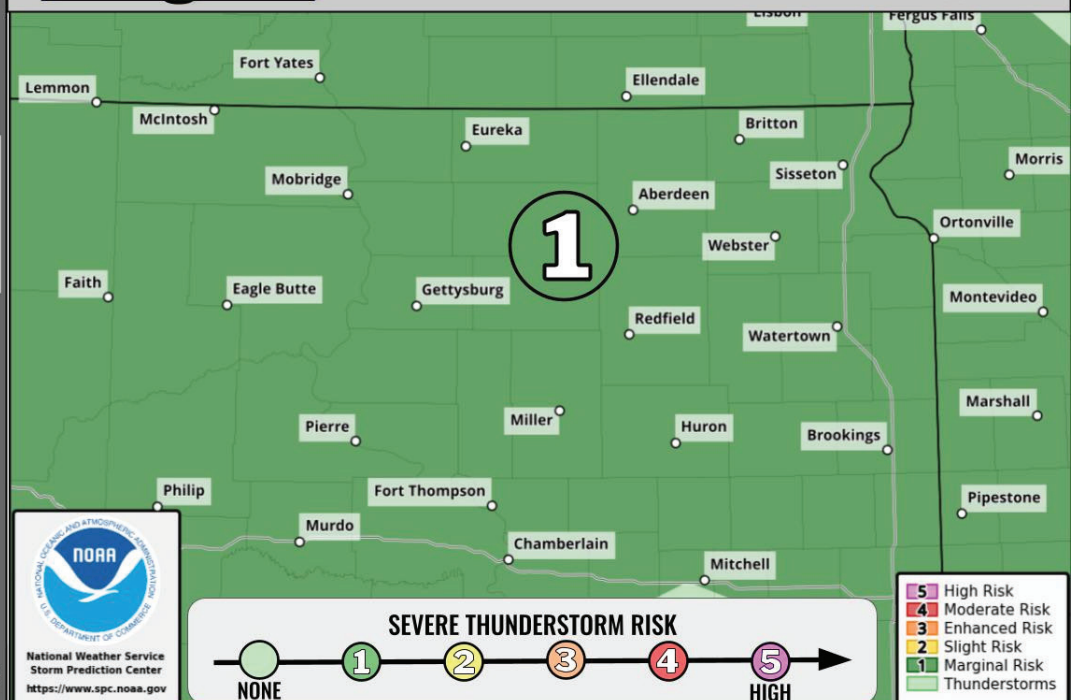
Brief Heavy
Rainfall

NWS
Aberdeen, SD



National Weather Service
Storm Prediction Center
<https://www.spc.noaa.gov>

Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Overnight



An isolated thunderstorm or two is possible from late this evening through the overnight hours. We cant rule out that these storms could generate hail to the size of Quarters and gusts up around 60 mph.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 2:51 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 2:41 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 4:22 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1961

Record Low: 30 in 1893

Average High: 81

Average Low: 53

Average Precip in Aug.: 2.10

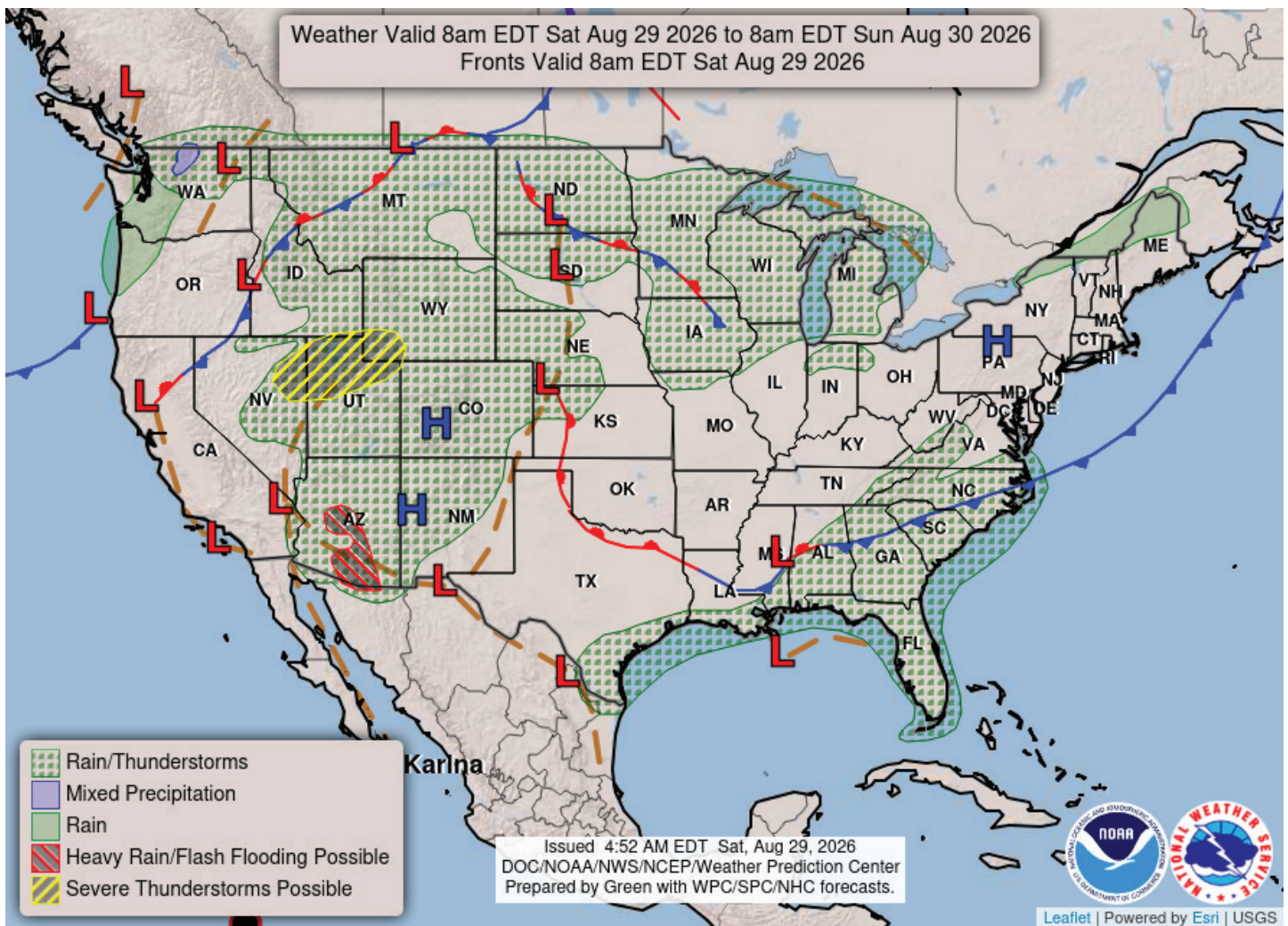
Precip to date in Aug.: 10.52

Average Precip to date: 16.20

Precip Year to Date: 19.99

Sunset Tonight: 8:16 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:51 am



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Today in Weather History

August 29, 1983: A devastating hail storm struck portions of central South Dakota. In a small part of Faulk County, hail pounded the area for two straight hours. At times, the hail was the size of baseballs. Of course, this incredible hailstorm devastated crops in the area and took out windows in area buildings. In one home, the windows were shattered, the curtains shredded, and glass shards and water ruined much of the upper floor. On some houses, the paint was peeled off by the continual pounding of the hail. Also, funnel clouds were reported just east of Lake City, and near Langford and Veblen in Marshall County. In Veblen, a pole barn was blown over, and shingles were torn off.

August 29, 1993: A severe thunderstorm hit Groton with hail, damaging lightning, and 3.43 inches of rain which flooded some basements. At the high school, lightning spits a 30-foot chimney which fell through a large skylight and sections of the roof.

1960: The storm that would become Hurricane Donna forms near Cape Verde off the African coast. It would go on to cause 150 deaths from Puerto Rico to New England over the next two weeks. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

1962 — Hackberry, LA, was deluged with twenty-two inches of rain in 24 hours, establishing a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1965 — A national record for the month of August was established when 2.5 inches of snow fell atop Mount Washington NH. Temperatures in New England dipped to 39 degrees at Nantucket MA, and to 25 degrees in Vermont. For many location it was the earliest freeze of record. (David Ludlum)

1983 — A devastating hail storm struck portions of central South Dakota. In a small part of Faulk County, hail pounded the area for two straight hours. At times, the hail was the size of baseballs. Of course, this incredible hailstorm devastated crops in the area and took out windows in area buildings. In one home, the windows were shattered, the curtains shredded, and glass shards and water ruined much of the upper floor. On some houses, the paint was peeled off by the continual pounding of the hail. Also, funnel clouds were reported just east of Lake City, and near Langford and Veblen in Marshall County. In Veblen, a pole barn was blown over, and shingles were torn off.

1987 — Some of the most powerful thunderstorms in several years developed over the piedmont of North Carolina, and marched across central sections of the state during the late afternoon and evening hours. Baseball size hail was reported around Albemarle, while thunderstorm winds downed giant trees around High Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Cool air invaded the north central U.S. Ten cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Bismarck ND with a reading of 33 degrees. Deerfield, a small town in the Black Hills of South Dakota, reported a low of 23 degrees. The remnants of Tropical Storm Chris drenched eastern Pennsylvania with up to five and a half inches of rain, and produced high winds which gusted to 90 mph, severely damaging a hundred boats in Anne Arundel County MD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Evening thunderstorms produced destructive lightning in West Virginia. The lightning caused widespread damage, particularly in Doddridge County. Numerous trees were downed closing many roads. Fire companies had a difficult time tending to the many homes and trailers on fire. Anchorage AK reported a record 9.60 inches of rain for the month of August. The average annual precipitation for Anchorage is just slightly more than fifteen inches. Three day rainfall totals in northwest Missouri ranged up to 8.20 inches at Maryville. (The National Weather Summary)

2005 — Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Plaquemines Parish in southeastern Louisiana early on the 29th with maximum sustained winds near 125 mph, a strong category-three, and the third most-intense landfalling hurricane in U.S. history. The center of the hurricane passed just east of New Orleans, where winds gusted over 100 mph. Widespread devastation and unprecedented flooding occurred, submerging at least 80 percent of the city as levees failed. Farther east, powerful winds and a devastating storm surge of 20-30 feet raked the Mississippi coastline, including Gulfport and Biloxi, where Gulf of Mexico floodwaters spread several miles inland. Rainfall amounts of 8-10 inches were common along and to the east of the storm's path. Katrina weakened to a tropical storm as it tracked northward through Mississippi and gradually lost its identity as it moved into the Tennessee Valley on the 30th.



Evidence of Our Growth

As we draw closer to God, the evidence of spiritual growth becomes visible in our daily life.

James 4:7-8: 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

We all want to see evidence that we're growing in faith, but the signs aren't always dramatic. Most of the time, they show up quietly, in the everyday moments of life.

Spiritual growth often shows up in our relationships. We find ourselves offering forgiveness where we once held grudges. We extend patience to people who used to exhaust us. Consider our Savior, who asked God to forgive the very ones crucifying Him (Luke 23:34). That kind of love doesn't come naturally to us; it's the fruit of a life increasingly shaped by God's presence.

Growth also changes what satisfies us. Over time, we find less fulfillment in what the world offers and more in simply drawing near to God. As our trust deepens, we discover how faithful He truly is, which becomes its own invitation to trust Him more.

Eventually, obedience stops feeling like obligation. The psalmist wrote, "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). That delight is born not from duty but from love—the natural response of a heart that has come to know God's goodness firsthand.

These aren't achievements to strive for. They're signs of what God is already doing in us. Intentionally seek time in His presence and watch how good things take root.

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

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The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.26

8 10 11 12 44 2

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

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 3 Mins 11
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.26

8 17 29 42 55 2

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$160,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 3 Days 14 Hrs 48
Mins 11 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: 14 Hrs 3 Mins 11
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.26.26

1 5 10 20 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$40,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 18 Mins 11
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.26.26

6 11 15 32 58 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 47 Mins 11
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: 14 Hrs 47 Mins 10
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 21, Flandreau 0
Alcester-Hudson 42, Irene-Wakonda 0
Arlington 48, Sunshine Bible Academy 0
Avon 54, Burke 0
Bennett County 42, New Underwood 6
Beresford 28, Groton 7
Bon Homme 55, Gregory 6
Brandon Valley 10, Bellevue West, Neb. 7
Canton 21, Vermillion 7
Castlewood 14, Howard 8
Centerville 38, Elkton-Lake Benton 28
Colman-Egan 48, Gayville-Volin High School 6
DeSmet 44, Canistota 0
Dell Rapids 15, Madison 14
Dell Rapids St Mary's 62, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 12
Deuel 8, McCook Central-Montrose 7
Douglas 36, Custer 30
Estelline-Hendricks 44, Sisseton 0
Freeman 60, Chester 8
Garretson 36, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 12
Gettysburg 40, Wolsey-Wessington 0
Great Plains Lutheran 34, Webster 0
Hamlin 34, Britton-Hecla 22
Hitchcock-Tulare 42, Northwestern 14
Herried-Selby 22, Lemmon High School 19
Ipswich 50, Redfield 0
Iroquois-Lake Preston 66, Wilmot 54
Kadoka 28, Jones County 0
Lyman 27, Corsica/Stickney 8
Milbank 27, Tri-Valley 15
Mitchell 28, Brookings 13
Mobridge-Pollock 30, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 0
Parkston 30, Platte-Geddes 6
Philip 34, Harding County 12
Scotland/Menno 38, TDAACDC 12
Sioux Falls Christian 38, Lennox 20
Sioux Falls Lutheran 22, Baltic 20
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 42, Sioux Falls Lincoln 35
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 47, Rapid City Stevens 14
Sioux Falls Washington 28, Rapid City Central 0
St Thomas More 51, Belle Fourche 8
Stanley County 28, Hill City 20
Sully Buttes 26, Kimball-White Lake 22
Tea 35, Huron 32
Viborg-Hurley 32, Hanson 30

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Wagner 28, Hot Springs 3
Wall 36, Lead-Deadwood 7
Warner 17, North Central 6
Watertown 26, Spearfish 20
Waubay/Summit 42, Florence-Henry 12
West Central 37, Dakota Valley 0
White River 42, Lower Brule 6
Winnebago, Neb. 54, Pine Ridge 0
Winner 60, Miller 6
Yankton 48, Aberdeen Central 11

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

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Aberdeen Central def. Rapid City Central, 25-9, 25-20, 25-13
Mitchell def. Sturgis Brown High School, 25-21, 28-26, 23-25, 32-30
Rapid City Stevens def. T F Riggs High School, 25-11, 25-15, 25-15

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

Far-right British provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos arrested by US immigration enforcement

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

U.S. immigration officials arrested controversial British far-right commentator Milo Yiannopoulos on Thursday in New Orleans, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Immigration officials announced on Friday that Yiannopoulos was arrested at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport and accused him of overstaying after entering the United States legally in May 2019 through New York City. An immigration judge issued a final order of removal on July 22 after Yiannopoulos failed to show up for his immigration hearing, a DHS spokesperson wrote in an email.

"He chose to overstay his welcome in violation of our nation's laws," a spokesperson for DHS wrote in an emailed statement.

ICE's online detainee locator did not say where Yiannopoulos was being held, but directed family and legal representatives to the agency's office in Alexandria, Louisiana, a deportation hub for international flights.

Representatives of Yiannopoulos did not respond to a request for comment. It was unclear whether he has legal representation.

The British national has most recently worked for the rapper Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, who was scheduled to perform in New Orleans on Friday evening.

Yiannopoulos is a well-known champion of conservative causes and has frequently taken provocative public positions criticizing feminism, Islam and immigrants. He has been especially supportive of President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

"Zero immigration for the next 20 years. No ifs, no buts," Yiannopoulos wrote on the social platform X last year.

Yiannopoulos rose to fame in the early 2010s as an incendiary writer for the conservative website Breitbart News. He resigned from the company in 2017 after a video of him endorsing pedophilia resurfaced online. He later apologized for the remarks and said he himself was a victim of sexual assault as a minor.

Yiannopoulos' arrest Thursday comes amid a nationwide uptick in detentions as part of Trump's immigration crackdown.

Far-right conservative activist Laura Loomer swiftly took to social media to applaud Yiannopoulos' arrest

after years of public feuding between the two personalities.

"I was the first person to report on the fact that Milo was in the US illegally where he incited violence against President Trump and worked for Marjorie Traitor Greene," Loomer wrote on X.

Controversy around Yiannopoulos ballooned in 2017 when he carried out what he called his "Troll Academy Tour" across college campuses nationwide. Fights broke out when some students protested Yiannopoulos' appearances and accused him of hate speech, while others celebrated him as a champion of free speech. Around that time, BuzzFeed reported on Yiannopoulos' cozy relationships with self-proclaimed white nationalists.

In recent years, Yiannopoulos continued to work in the orbit of conservative activism. In 2022, he was an intern for former Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, according to the Washington Post. He subsequently ran the short-lived 2024 presidential campaign for Ye. Most recently, Yiannopoulos has worked as a spokesperson for Ye, who has been beset by controversy of his own following antisemitic comments that the rapper has since apologized for.

Nepal-China flood survivors reach safe areas as families await news of nearly 3,000 missing

By VICTORIA MILKO and SHRISTI KAFLE Associated Press

NUWAKOT, Nepal (AP) — Most arrive with nothing except the clothes they are wearing.

As rescue efforts in communities buried by catastrophic flash floods along the border between Nepal and China entered their fourth day Saturday, authorities continued finding survivors and transporting them to safety. At relief centers, as some arrive, families wait anxiously for news of their loved ones as the death toll and the number of people unaccounted for continued to rise.

After Nepali authorities updated their figures Saturday, the combined toll in Nepal and Tibet rose to 676 dead and nearly 3,000 people missing. Chinese authorities have reported seven deaths and more than 550 missing.

In Nuwakot, one of the Nepali districts devastated by the floods, helicopters resumed operations before noon Saturday after poor weather temporarily hampered aerial rescue activities.

Some helicopters were loaded with boxes and bags of aid, including clothes, instant noodles, crackers and rice. Others returned from the flood-hit areas carrying survivors.

An older man was carefully helped off one helicopter, while a soldier carried an older woman on his back to a medical tent. There, medics checked her blood pressure, breathing and heartbeat, as well as her teeth and gums.

About a dozen people emerged from another helicopter. Soldiers carried several babies who had been evacuated.

The evacuees had been brought from the nearby community of Trishuli.

Villagers return to devastated homes

As people were still leaving Trishuli, some village residents were returning to see what could be salvaged from their decimated homes.

One boy walked out of the village carrying muddy sandals from his house. Another woman, Shoba Shretha, returned to find her dog, Sweetie, who she was forced to leave behind when the floods came. Shretha sat on the ground petting her and feeding her water from a bottle.

At some point, relief coordinators cleared villagers, reporters and volunteers from the entrance to Trishuli, as excavation equipment drove into the flooded village to dig.

Families begin to lose hope

In Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, relatives and friends gathered outside the main government hospital from early morning, desperately searching for news of missing loved ones.

Many shuffled between the help desk and the hospital notice board, clutching photographs and scanning injured patients' lists in the hope of finding them.

Dil Maya Lama stood weeping outside the help desk at the hospital, searching for information about

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her missing 26-year-old brother, a driver for a hydropower company in Rasuwa. She had traveled from Ramechhap, about 130 kilometers (80 miles) away.

"I came here with the hope that I might find him," she said. "There is no information about him."

Nelza Moktan anxiously sought information about her missing cousin, who also worked as a driver in Rasuwa.

"I feel hopeless. It has already been four days," she said.

Families covered hospital walls with posters showing missing relatives, photographs and contact numbers in a desperate appeal for any clue that could bring them home.

Nearby were photographs of unidentified bodies which officials put up in hopes they could be recognized by families or friends.

Gajendra Rawat, a security official at the hospital help desk, said families had so far registered around 1,600 missing persons since the disaster struck. "People are coming from all parts of Nepal," he said.

Families search paper lists for any clue

Back in Nuwakot, military personnel taped sheets of paper listing dozens of missing people to a wall at a relief center, prompting families to crowd around them.

Some scanned lists of the missing and dead, took photos and wiped away tears as they looked through the names.

Rajesh Kumar Ram, who is searching for his son, desperately searched a list for his son's name.

"I'm hopeful, by chance, that my son is somewhere," he said, crying as he spoke. "Maybe they find him stuck somewhere. I'm waiting for that moment only."

Outside, people walked along mud-covered streets past signs of the disaster. On one street, a truck was stuck in the mud with its bed raised in the air.

As the day passed, more people gathered at the army barracks hoping to be reunited with missing loved ones or to find out information about them.

Priti Kharel stood outside the entrance to the barracks, holding a poster with a picture of her brother, Milan Kharel, who works as an engineering geologist at Doosan Enerbility. His family hasn't heard from him since the floods.

"It's already four days," said Kharel, who believes his brother could be one of the people trapped inside the tunnel of a hydropower construction site, where authorities have rescued some people. She said friends who were there told the family that Milan might still be there.

"We want the government to rescue him as soon as possible," she added.

Rescuers battle to find survivors in disaster-hit areas

Search and rescue efforts continued at several locations in Nepal and China's Tibet, including the Upper Trishuli-1 Hydropower Project in Nepal's Rasuwa district and the severely damaged Gyirong border crossing on the Chinese side.

Nepali Army spokesperson Brig. Gen. Raja Ram Basnet said rescue efforts would continue at the hydropower construction site, where authorities believe more than 100 people are trapped in a tunnel filled with thick mud.

Basnet said rescuers had used baskets and ropes to reach some people, but the operation remained difficult because of 4 to 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 meters) of mud and the limited number of places where helicopters could land.

He said rescue teams had also been forced to relocate temporarily when authorities issued warnings about possible further flooding.

Rescuers have been on high alert for more flooding from a new lake that formed high up in the Himalayan mountains after the initial floods Wednesday. Experts warned that the lake, created after a glacier collapse that triggered the floods, was starting to overflow.

Monitoring data from the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources showed late Friday that the lake had dwindled in size. The water level dropped by 10 meters (32 feet) from the high point on Thursday morning, Chinese broadcaster CCTV said.

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Aid trucks could be seen traveling from Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, toward the affected areas.

Search continues at devastated China-Nepal border crossing

The Chinese broadcaster showed images Saturday of rescuers arriving at Gyirong Port, the hard-hit border crossing with Nepal. Some reached the area by foot or via rafts, while others dropped down from drones flown to the area. "Anyone, anyone?" rescuers yelled.

It was not immediately known how many people were at the border checkpoint building when the floods hit.

On Saturday, Nepal's disaster agency said the death toll had climbed to 669 with 2,426 people missing in the country. More than 3,700 people have been rescued in Nepal so far.

The death toll in China rose to seven Friday as state media showed evacuations of villages and leaders' efforts to direct the relief response. China's state media said 554 people were missing on the Chinese side. Hundreds of the missing are foreigners who were in the area to work, trek or make a pilgrimage to a sacred peak.

Steep mountains and narrow gorges hamper rescue operations

In a news briefing Saturday, Nepalese Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal said authorities have mobilized all available resources with support from international assistance for search, rescue, relief and recovery operations, with a particular focus on locating those still missing.

"This is currently our national priority," he told reporters Saturday.

He said rescue operations are challenging because of steep, tall mountains and narrow gorges in the disaster-hit region.

Khanal said the government has sought specialized support from Nepal's neighbors in tunnel rescue, survivor-detection technology, rapid forensic and DNA analysis, as well as morgue refrigerators.

An 11-member tunnel rescue reconnaissance team from India has been deployed while a similar rescue team from China is expected shortly, he added.

The minister said Nepal has received over 57 metric tons of relief supplies from India, with additional aid arriving from China, Japan, Australia and other countries. He added that further support will be sought as need assessments continue.

Despite severe flood damage in four districts, the rest of Nepal remains open and fully accessible to visitors, Khanal said. "We welcome foreign nationals willing to visit Nepal," he said.

Russian strike near Kyiv kills 37, in one of the year's deadliest attacks

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — At least 37 people have been killed following a Russian strike close to the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, officials said Saturday, one of the deadliest attacks to hit Ukraine this year.

The attack sparked a fire in the Bucha district, west of Kyiv, that swept through homes and damaged at least 50 residential buildings, said Tymur Tkachenko, head of the local regional military administration.

Kyiv investigates warehouse targeted in attack

In a statement on the attack, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that a warehouse had been struck in the village of Myla, "followed by a detonation."

He did not give details on the site, but wrote in the same message that Ukrainian law forbade the storage of ammunition close to civilian homes and that criminal proceedings had been opened.

"Those who allowed this to happen must be held accountable for their decisions," Zelenskyy said.

The Ukrainian leader also wrote that a care home for elderly people and people with disabilities had been damaged, and that an evacuation from the area was ongoing.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Serhii Koryukha also didn't offer information on the warehouse targeted, but referenced an attack on the Kyiv suburb of Vyshneve early in July, which hit an ammunition depot, killing 22 and triggering large detonations and fires that tore through nearby homes.

"Unfortunately, we can already see that the terrible tragedy in Vyshneve did not become a lesson," Kore-

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tskyi said. "In the fifth year of a full-scale invasion, making the same mistakes is criminal negligence. And all those guilty, without exception, must be severely punished so that such situations do not happen again."

In a statement, Russia's Ministry of Defense said that it had hit a warehouse in Myla storing components and launch boosters for long-range drones. It also said that it had attacked the ports of Mykolaiv and Izmail, as well as a logistics center and warehouse facilities storing parts for Ukraine's Flamingo cruise missiles in the Kyiv region.

Zelenskyy later announced that two officials from state-owned companies, including Ukraine's largest arms producer, Ukroboronprom, had illegally allowed the storage of weapons on the site in Vyshneve and would be held accountable.

Russia bombards Kyiv with third day of nearly non-stop attacks

Three days of almost constant Russian air raids on Kyiv have choked the economy in the Ukrainian capital and severely disrupted civilian life more than 4½ years after Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

Russian strikes on the southern Kherson region Saturday killed two people and wounded 27 more, Oleksandr Prokudin, head of the region administration, said in a statement on social media.

He said that attacks had damaged homes and apartment blocks, and that one child was among the injured.

Earlier in the week, Prokudin said that Russia has intensified attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, which is about 70% under Russian control. He also urged tens of thousands of residents to move to safer regions because of the possibility of prolonged power and heating outages this winter.

Russia has significantly increased its use of jet-powered drones, and their numbers will keep growing as Moscow sees their effectiveness, said Pavlo Palisa, deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, in comments to journalists Friday that were embargoed until Saturday.

"Means of attack always outpace means of defense. We will certainly need to adapt. It will take time," Palisa said. He said interceptor drones currently available to Ukraine, which could theoretically intercept jet-powered drones, are not yet to demonstrate the expected effectiveness, though Ukraine is working on solutions.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has stepped up its long-range attacks on Russian military industries and energy facilities in recent months, using locally made drones, aiming to cut Moscow's revenue for its invasion and make Russians feel the consequences.

In his evening statement to the nation Friday, Zelenskyy said Kyiv hoped to increase its long-range strikes on Russia to reach 1000 drone launches every day.

"Right now, we average over 300 of our long-range sanctions," Zelenskyy said, his preferred term for Kyiv's long-range attacks that have also lately targeted Russian large-scale online retailers. "There must be more. We have a very specific goal, and we will achieve it."

Moscow's forces destroyed 313 Ukrainian drones overnight, Russia's Ministry of Defense said Saturday.

Ukrainian drone attacks wounded 11 people in Russia's Rostov region, Gov. Yuri Slyusar said. Writing on social media, he said that nine people were hospitalized, including four children.

As jurors deliberate in the Lindsay Clancy trial, here are key moments they may be considering

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — Jurors in the closely watched Lindsay Clancy trial began deliberating this week — but had not reached a verdict by the end of the day Friday.

They have a lot to consider.

Over the past five weeks, the jury heard testimony from doctors, first responders, relatives and even Clancy's former husband. It now weighs the question of whether she should be held criminally responsible for killing her three young children at her Massachusetts home in 2023.

Both sides agree Clancy did it. But her attorneys argue the former labor and delivery nurse was suffering from postpartum psychosis at the time, and that poor mental healthcare exacerbated her condition.

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Prosecutors argue she intentionally planned the killings.

If Clancy is convicted, her sentence could be as severe as life in prison. If she's found not guilty, she may be released or remain confined in a mental health facility.

As the jury deliberates, here are moments from the trial they may be considering.

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's former husband made anguished 911 call

Clancy's former husband, Patrick Clancy, was first to take the stand.

In emotional testimony, he described the day he found his wife after she tried to kill herself.

Lindsay Clancy had sent him out to get takeout food and medication for their daughter, which prosecutors argue was an excuse to get him out of the house.

He came home to find the house unusually silent, before finding blood throughout the main bedroom and a window open.

Jurors listened to the 911 call Patrick Clancy made after finding his wife outside in the snow. Clancy can be heard speaking with his wife, then tells the dispatcher he's going to check on the children.

Moments later, he howls and cries after finding his children in the basement. The confused dispatcher repeatedly asks what happened.

"She killed the kids!" he yells.

Everyone knew Clancy was struggling

Clancy's mother, mother-in-law, sister, friends and co-workers testified that Clancy struggled with her mental health after giving birth to Callan, the youngest of her three children.

Clancy's mother-in-law, Susan Clancy, said she and her former daughter-in-law were close. Both worked as labor and delivery nurses. She described Lindsay as a wonderful mother.

But Susan Clancy testified that Lindsay had become anxious, paranoid and suicidal, and that the psychiatric care she was getting wasn't helping.

"She felt unwell. She had insomnia. She was losing her appetite. She was very anxious and sad," Susan Clancy said. "She was begging for help."

Lindsay Clancy's mother, Paula Musgrove, testified that her daughter was scared of sleeping alone, became paranoid and believed the medications she was taking "were destroying her mind."

"Mom, will you please come up and stay with me for a bit? I'm really sick. Something is wrong," Clancy wrote in an October 2022 text message that Paula Musgrove read in court. "I had horrible insomnia all night, and I just don't know how I am going to get through the day. ... It's just really scary, and I don't want to be alone."

The defense questioned the quality of Clancy's medical care

Clancy saw several doctors about her declining mental health, and eventually checked herself in to a psychiatric hospital.

Her lawyer, Kevin Reddington, argued that she was misdiagnosed and overmedicated.

As he cross-examined one of her psychiatrists, Dr. Jennifer Tufts, Reddington questioned her expertise, prescribing decisions and use of 25-minute video appointments with limited time for talk therapy.

At one point, Reddington implied that Tufts was a box-checking "robot."

"What did you do? You had a woman who was telling you she felt hopeless," he asked as they discussed an appointment about two months before the killings.

"I told her that this was something we could address, that there was hope, that there are treatments, that there are different types of programs," Tufts said, "so she knew that she still had options and a reason to hope."

Clancy said she heard a voice telling her to kill

Paul Zeizel, a clinical and forensic psychologist who visited Lindsay Clancy in the hospital after she killed

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the children, testified that he overheard her saying that a disembodied male voice had told her she had no choice but to kill her children and then herself. Zeizel said he believed Clancy wasn't responsible for her actions because of her deep mental illness.

Prosecutors called a rebuttal witness, forensic psychologist Kirk Heilbrun, who said he didn't believe Clancy had hallucinated voices.

"One of the things that she said when I asked about what happened, is that in the course of strangling each child, she said, 'Go to God, baby. Go to God,'" he said. "That was part of her expectation that she and the children would be together in heaven with God."

Dr. Gregory Saathoff, a senior psychiatrist for the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit, testified for prosecutors that Clancy "had the capacity to know right from wrong."

The lawyers got the last word

After testimony was complete, each side got about an hour to make their closing argument to the jury.

Reddington showed the jury a photograph of the Clancy family, looking happy, and a second one of Lindsay Clancy in the hospital.

"How does this turn into this?" Reddington asked. "How? Because of the damn medicine and the lousy medical care that she got."

Prosecutor Jennifer Sprague said criticizing the mental health system was "a distraction." She said Clancy chose to kill her children because doing so would make it easier to kill herself.

"She was depressed. She was exhausted. She was done. She didn't want to try anymore. She felt damaged," Sprague said. "But those kids, those kids were her protective factor. Those kids were keeping her from ending her misery."

6 months on, Iran's leaders are defying the US and signaling no tolerance for dissent

By LEE KEATH and DAVID RISING Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — After six months of war, Iran's leadership has coalesced around a hard core of military generals and clerics long entrenched in the ruling theocracy. They are ready for a potentially long confrontation with the U.S. and determined to prevent any unrest at home.

It's a far cry from U.S. President Donald Trump's initial hopes of toppling the Islamic Republic and his subsequent claims that "regime change" had brought more compromising officials to the fore.

Iran's new leaders evince little faith in any agreement with Trump — after coming under attack twice while holding talks — and they may be bracing for another assault once the U.S. replenishes its supplies of interceptors. They have also threatened to escalate the war as a continuing American blockade and Trump's plans for new sanctions threaten to suffocate Iran's already worsening economy.

"If (Trump) wants to do something, we will retaliate in a seismic manner," the new secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Mohsen Rezaei, said last weekend. In a post on X, he said that "if the economic war continues, not a single drop of oil will be exported" from the Persian Gulf.

Iran is determined to smother any internal unrest

Rezaei's appointment came in a recent set of decrees by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, that formally set Iran's new senior leadership, including top military posts. Khamenei's father and much of the highest echelons were killed in the bombing campaign launched by the U.S. and Israel on Feb. 28.

Perhaps most telling was the newly named head of the Basij, the Revolutionary Guard's volunteer street force, which played a major role in crushing January's nationwide protests, when thousands were killed. That post went to Hossein Taeb, a hard-line cleric and longtime intelligence chief who led one of the first major crackdowns on protests, in 2009.

His appointment is seen as a sign that the leadership is intent on preventing any new unrest as discontent over the economy spreads.

The 56-year-old Khamenei has not been seen in public, or even appeared in video or audio, since Israeli strikes killed his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who had been Iran's supreme leader for some 37 years.

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The younger Khamenei is believed to have been wounded in the strikes. His public absence could reflect the depth of security surrounding him, since he is likely in Israel's sights, or the extent of his wounds.

The supreme leader surrounds himself with hard-line allies

With the appointments announced Aug. 11 and 12, he has surrounded himself with longtime personal allies, like Rezaei and Taeb.

They are "a clique of older senior officers who've served together over the last decades," said Sascha Bruchmann, an analyst with the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Middle East office in Bahrain.

Rezaei, 71, led the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard during its formative years, through the entire 1980-1988 war with Iraq and until 1997. He has run for president as a hard-line candidate multiple times since 2009.

Brig. Gen. Ahmad Vahidi, 68, was confirmed as head of the Guard, where he has been acting commander since his predecessor was killed along with the elder Khamenei. Also confirmed in their posts were the acting commander of the Guard's naval forces, Gen. Ali Ozmaei, and the military chief of staff, Gen. Ali Abdollahi.

Bruchmann, who pointed out that Rezaei was Vahidi's commander for many years, said the emphasis appears to be on ensuring unity. "It looks like internal cohesion, as in hard core people are being pulled into the inner circle," he said.

Moderates urge restraint over economic concerns

Homayoun Falakshahi, the top oil analyst for the global commerce information firm Kpler, wrote that the appointments of Rezaei and Vahidi show "greater influence for officials associated with a tougher stance."

Still, escalation is not inevitable, and Iran could find it difficult to "escalate enough to restore deterrence without triggering retaliation that leaves it worse off," he said.

A ceasefire deal reached in June quickly fell apart amid exchanges of strikes. Iran has demanded the release of billions in frozen assets as called for under the deal — as well as formal authority over the Strait of Hormuz.

President Masoud Pezeshkian is one of the most prominent voices still calling for a negotiated solution. His allies argue Iran risks overplaying its hand by continuing the war as its economy suffers.

"It would be better to bring the war to an end, since today we enjoy power and dignity and the entire world approved our victory, and the U.S. is hated," Pezeshkian said last week. He has also defended the June ceasefire deal against hard-liners' accusations that it conceded too much.

In contrast to ultra-hard-liners who reject any talks, Rezaei has held out the possibility of a deal — if the U.S. backs down. On Monday, he told Pakistani mediator Gen. Asim Munir that the U.S. should "change its attitude and take practical action about implementing the conditions" of the ceasefire deal.

Tehran-based political analyst Ahmad Zeidabadi said there are "serious differences over the future path of the country."

Hard-liners oppose normalization with the U.S. because "their survival depends on the existence of conflict and hostility," he wrote in the newspaper Hammihan, which backs Pezeshkian.

Amid worries over unrest, a strong figure leads the Basij

So far there has been no sign of new protests even as Iranians find it harder to afford basic staples.

Taeb's appointment as head of the Basij is a sign the leadership wants to preempt any potential unrest "before it even manifests," Bruchmann said. "Putting someone from an intelligence background in charge of the people that would do the crackdown makes sense," he said.

Taeb, a 63-year-old cleric, led the Basij when it played a key role in crushing mass protests that erupted against the 2009 reelection of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Dozens were killed.

Soon after, Taeb was named chief of the Guard's intelligence apparatus. He led the agency for nearly 13 years until he was removed in 2022, reportedly in a shake-up after Israeli espionage successes.

The Basij run a nationwide network of volunteers who maintain a presence in the streets, government offices and cultural centers, seeking to ensure loyalty and ideological purity for Iran's theocracy.

In the decree appointing Taeb, Khamenei ordered him to deepen the Basij presence in Iranian social

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life, use new technologies and “promote the Basij across the world against Zionist-American arrogance” — suggesting the group may begin to form links with Iran’s proxies abroad.

The Basij boosted its presence during the war, and hard-liners have held nightly rallies in Tehran and other cities, drumming up support and intimidating any possible dissenters. It’s unclear specifically how Taeb will step up the force’s role, but in a recent speech he seemed to point to increasing control over society.

He warned that U.S. pressure on the economy aimed to create divisions within Iran. “If the mosque becomes the center of the neighborhood, the nation will protect its unity, which will be a greater deterrent than any missile.”

Jury in Lindsay Clancy trial ends second day of deliberations without a verdict

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — Jurors in the Lindsay Clancy trial ended a second day of deliberations on Friday without a verdict in the case of the Massachusetts woman charged with killing her three children in 2023.

Clancy doesn’t deny strangling her children, but her lawyer said she did it because she had lost her grip on reality due to postpartum psychosis, a rare mental illness that can follow childbirth. In the months before the killings, Clancy sought treatment for her worsening mental health, including a stay in a psychiatric hospital.

Prosecutors said Clancy knew what she was doing. They say she strangled the children because she was depressed and tired of living, and made a conscious choice to kill them before attempting suicide.

The jury began deliberating Thursday afternoon and met again Friday, asking at one point to take a look at a knife that Clancy used to cut herself and bags with empty prescription pill bottles found in her house.

Jurors are expected to return to the courthouse Monday. Members of the panel could find her guilty of murder or the lesser crime of manslaughter, or acquit her if they decide she wasn’t in control of herself due to her psychiatric problems.

US families with relatives missing in the Nepal-China floods plead for more rescue help

By SUDHIN THANAWALA and JOSH KELETY Associated Press

Mukti Patel has huddled with family and friends at her parents’ Richmond, Virginia, home since her dad, sister and two other relatives went missing in the catastrophic flash floods along the Nepal-China border.

She knows the hotel they were staying in was swept away. But as she shared memories of them on Friday, she caught herself.

“I shouldn’t talk in past tense yet,” she said. “We don’t know anything.”

As rescuers continued pulling survivors from the mud, family members of some of the more than 2,000 people missing in the disaster were still holding out hope — however dim — that their loved ones survived.

On a Zoom call Thursday night, some family members wanted to know if they could reach the site and whether a relative might be trapped inside an air pocket, said Sanket Pandey, managing director of Himalayan Glacier Adventure and Travel Company.

The tour group, which has an office in Baltimore, had organized a two-week excursion to the region with 40 guests and seven tour guides. All of them are now missing, Pandey said. Their families are desperate for any information.

“It’s really difficult to have nothing,” he said.

Patel’s family was in the Himalayan Glacier group when the floods struck on Wednesday, killing hundreds of people and leaving more than 2,000 missing. About 90 Americans are among those unaccounted for, according to the U.S. State Department.

Patel, 27, said her dad, Umesh Kumar, 56, had wanted to make the trip for many years and traveled through India to Nepal, where he was joined by her sister, Akanksha, 32, and her sister’s husband, Ishan, 32.

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Ishan's mom, Shilpa, 59, was also on the trek. Ishan and Shilpa Patel have dual Canadian and U.S. citizenship while Umesh Kumar and Akanksha Patel are Canadian citizens, according to Mukti Patel.

Akanksha Patel is a psychiatrist who wants to break stigma around mental health problems, her sister said. "Everything I've done in life has been off the blueprint of my sister," Mukti Patel said between tears in a phone interview. "There's no ounce of meanness in her."

Her father is a joyous person who helped victims of the COVID-19 pandemic, and her brother-in-law, an orthopedic surgeon, has brought great happiness to her sister's life, she said.

Ishan Patel turned 32 on Wednesday, and the family called to wish him a happy birthday. That was their last contact.

Mukti Patel said she would like more countries to help the rescue and recovery efforts.

Jiwan Jyoti, who has U.S. citizenship, also was traveling with Himalayan Glacier and was listed by the group as missing. They had stopped in Timure, Nepal, before they were set to leave for a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in Tibet, a sacred site for Hindus, Buddhists and others, her longtime friend Manmeet Singh Meet said.

Jyoti, a 50-year-old from Lexington, Massachusetts, called her family from breakfast on Wednesday as she was preparing to cross into Tibet.

Meet said the phone call ended "at around 8:40 a.m. local time in Nepal, and then I think around 8:45, this flash floods came, and then our world turned upside down."

He later heard that the hotel where Jyoti had been staying — and where her location was last recorded on the Find My iPhone app — was destroyed. Now Meet said he is losing hope that his best friend of 15 years will be found alive.

"She was essentially almost in the epicenter over there," Meet said.

Vaasavi Unnava, a 31-year-old PhD student, thought her parents had already crossed into Tibet with the same tour group when she learned about the flooding.

"I was not really that worried, but I just sent them a text like to be sure," she said. The WhatsApp message didn't get delivered.

Her father, Hanumantha Rao Unnava, and mother, Vasundhara Unnava, had set out on a retirement trip and were most excited to go spend two months in India with family after going to Mount Kailash. The couple from Woodland, California, is among dozens of U.S. citizens missing in the flood.

"They were so, so excited. My dad was talking about finally getting to spend time with his mother," Vaasavi Unnava said.

Until recently, her father was the dean of the Graduate School of Management at the University of California, Davis, and her mother lectured at the university, she said. Vaasavi Unnava described her dad as "disciplined and duty-bound" but also "a big joker." She described her mom as "spontaneous and playful" and "the smartest woman I've ever met."

"They have just changed so many people's lives for the better," she added.

Tampa Bay Rays set for new \$2.3B stadium project after county and city approve financing plan

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — The Tampa Bay Rays got county approval Friday on a financing plan that will allow them to build a new stadium, a day after city officials approved their part for the \$2.3 billion ballpark project that will replace the domed Tropicana Field.

The Hillsborough County Commission voted 5-2 on Friday to approve its \$796 million share of the mixed-use entertainment district that includes a new 31,000-seat stadium that will be near Raymond James Stadium, home of the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The Rays' new stadium is expected to open in 2029. The Tampa City Council city voted 4-3 on Thursday to approve \$80 million.

Rays CEO Ken Babby said the team's partnership with the county and city on the project secures the long-term future of Major League Baseball in Tampa Bay.

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"We now look forward to celebrating before breaking ground with Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa on a future that has long been doubted, but will indeed happen," Babby said. "By making the Forever Home a reality, the Rays are now home forever in Tampa Bay."

The Rays have committed to contributing at least \$1.3 billion, plus any cost overruns. Another \$30 million will come from federal disaster recovery funds.

The Rays ownership reached an agreement earlier this year with Hillsborough College to build the stadium and entertainment district on the campus and to renovate some of the school's buildings. The property is located next to the New York Yankees' spring training facility and across a highway from the NFL stadium.

Since the team's inception in 1998, the Rays have played at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, except for moving home games to the Yankees' George M. Steinbrenner Field in 2025 following hurricane damage at the Trop. The Rays' lease runs through at least the 2028 season. The team returned to the Trop for the start of this season.

A proposed \$1.3 billion redevelopment deal for a new ballpark adjacent to the Trop fell through last year, raising new questions about the future of the team, which was bought last September by Patrick Zalupski's ownership group.

"This has been a long and challenging process, and we know that transformational projects rarely come easily," Zalupski said Friday. "Today's vote represents an extraordinary milestone, not simply for the Rays or for a ballpark, but for the future of Tampa and the entire Tampa Bay region."

Trump says US has entered deal with Venezuela to take control of 65 billion barrels of oil reserves

By AAMER MADHANI, COLLIN BINKLEY and REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday that his administration has entered a sweeping agreement with Venezuela that, if realized, could give the U.S. access to vast amounts of the South American country's untapped oil reserves, at cost.

Trump in a social media post announcing the agreement said it was negotiated by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez.

"The United States of America has just entered into an Agreement with the Country of Venezuela on, THE BIGGEST OIL DEAL IN WORLD HISTORY!" Trump wrote.

Rodríguez's government in a statement said the deal involves the development of 17 fields with a proven potential of 65 billion barrels. It said the agreement could draw \$100 billion in investment into Venezuela's oil industry and yield over \$209 billion in taxes for Caracas.

Rodríguez in a posting on Telegram predicted the deal "will have a significant impact on our nation's revival."

The agreement allows for the United States to partner with an unnamed private operator in Venezuela to create a new private company to take hold of the reserves, according to a U.S. official familiar with the contours of the deal.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity, added that Rodríguez granted the company 100-year rights to develop the oil fields.

The deal gives the United States 55% effective output of the new private company -- including an ownership stake and rights to buy oil at cost. The company would be the second largest corporate holder of proven reserves after Saudi Aramco, according to the official.

Trump is under pressure to show he's lowering oil costs

The announcement comes nearly nine months after the U.S. military at Trump's direction carried out an operation to capture Venezuela's then-President Nicolás Maduro and spirit him to the United States to face federal narcoterrorism and drug trafficking charges.

Trump faces mounting pressure to address high gas prices as the war in Iran on Friday reached a six-month milestone with no conclusion in sight. The U.S. has tapped its strategic petroleum reserves, which in early August fell below 300 million barrels, down by more than 100 million barrels since the start of 2026.

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The U.S.-Israel war against Iran has led to a dramatic slowdown of Gulf oil moving through the Strait of Hormuz, which about 20% of the world petroleum passed through prior to the conflict.

The average price of gas in the U.S. stood at about \$4.09 a gallon on Friday, according to AAA. The average price was \$3.21 at the same time last year.

A significant drop in U.S. gas prices tied to the agreement should not be expected immediately. Experts have repeatedly warned that a substantial boost in Venezuelan oil production will not happen quickly as repairing and expanding infrastructure takes years and requires billions of dollars.

Persuading big American oil companies to return the region could face headwinds given the political uncertainty and decades of badly damaged infrastructure.

Days after the ouster of Maduro, Trump gathered oil executives at the White House and called on them to rush back into Venezuela. Executives expressed interest in the opportunity but there was also a measure of caution given their past experience in the country.

Darren Woods, CEO of ExxonMobil, the largest U.S. oil company, said at that moment he saw the country as "un-investable."

But Trump has insisted that his administration has brought a measure of stability to Venezuela.

He has argued that Venezuela stole U.S. oil when former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez moved decades ago to nationalize hundreds of foreign-owned assets, including those owned by American oil companies.

Rodríguez, in one of her early moves after taking power, signed a law that opens the nation's oil sector to privatization and reversed a bedrock tenet of the self-proclaimed socialist movement that has ruled the country for more than two decades.

Rubio said on X that the agreement would usher in billions in private investment into Venezuela and lead to lower gas prices in the United States.

"This deal is a huge win for both the American and Venezuelan people," Rubio posted.

The oil bought from the new company would go toward filling the U.S. strategic petroleum reserve and toward military use, according to the U.S. official.

Venezuela has one of the largest oil reserves in the world, with an estimated 303 billion barrels of crude oil in the ground. That's about 17% of the world's supply, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Unlike other parts of the world, where geologists have to search for untapped oil, the reserves under Venezuela's soil are largely mapped and known, experts say. But because of dilapidated infrastructure, the country only produces about 1% of the world's oil.

Maduro remains jailed in the U.S. He has pleaded not guilty.

Former White House teleprompter operator ordered to turn over profits, pay fine over insider trading

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former White House teleprompter operator accused of using inside knowledge to make bets on the prediction market Kalshi has been ordered to turn over more than \$100,000 in profits and pay a \$65,000 fine as part of a settlement with federal authorities.

The settlement with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, announced Friday, also dealt Gabriel Perez a three-year trading ban. Perez was placed on unpaid leave from his job at the White House after reports emerged that he used his position to make bets on what President Donald Trump would say in speeches.

The White House did not immediately comment on the settlement. A White House official said in July that Perez was no longer in his position but did not say if he had been fired or resigned.

The commission found that Perez made \$107,500 on prediction markets by betting on words and phrases that would appear in Trump's speeches between December 2025 and February 2026.

"In his position, Perez had access to presidential speeches prior to those speeches being delivered and

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Perez misappropriated that information — in breach of his duty of trust and confidence,” according to a release from the commission.

Perez was ordered to repay his profits in full, along with the \$65,000 civil penalty, which the commission said was a reduction because of his “exemplary cooperation.”

As details emerged July 16, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said it was “unfortunate” and “a disgrace.”

Civil rights groups make urgent plea for voting rights in DC, ahead of midterm elections

By MATT BROWN and MATTHEW JUNKROSKI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Voting rights, the work of the Civil Rights Movement and racial justice took center stage on the National Mall Friday, with protesters gathering ahead of midterm elections and following a wave of changes to voting laws and redistricting that some have condemned as detrimental to Black Americans.

Hundreds of people rallied on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial for the 2026 “Defend the Vote” March on Washington, organized by the Rev. Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King III, echoing the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1963 march. The event follows the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark April decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* that reinterpreted key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, allowing Southern states to redraw their congressional maps in a way that erodes equal representation in Black communities.

“We’ve been doing these marches for years, but this is probably the most important because this is the first year we are marching that the voting rights bill has been nullified by the Supreme Court,” Sharpton, founder of the National Action Network, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Civil rights leaders and major Democratic political figures rallied attendees before rallygoers marched past national monuments, including the late King’s memorial.

Some call it a ‘very dangerous moment in American history’

Friday’s event harkened back to King Jr.’s historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, when more than 200,000 people gathered at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial. That march, an inflection point in the Civil Rights Movement, came at a fraught moment, when economic headwinds, civil unrest, political division and the Vietnam War bitterly divided Americans.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., one of dozens of speakers at the event, said that now is a “very dangerous moment in American history” and that the “dream of a more just and equitable society has never been under greater threat than it is right now.”

He placed blame on Republican President Donald Trump and the Supreme Court’s conservative majority, listing attempts to purge voter rolls, obtain sensitive voter data, restrict mail-in and early voting, and redraw congressional districts as part of threats to voting rights.

“Today, we have a president along with the Supreme Court members he appointed carrying out the most significant assault on voting rights since segregation, targeting virtually every aspect of the electoral system,” Sanders said.

Martin Luther King III told the AP the Civil Rights Movement’s work “is further eroding” in the wake of the April ruling.

He said his father would be disappointed with the state of the country, but current civil rights advocates should be undaunted.

“Had he lived, we’d be on a totally different trajectory,” the younger King said. “These would not be issues; they would have been resolved. I don’t think he would be surprised because he understands our history and understands those who are trying to retain power. But the challenge is challenging our communities to engage even more.”

King’s Drum Major Institute, a progressive think tank and community action group, co-hosted the march with Sharpton’s group.

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Ray Turner, a 65-year-old Maryland retiree, sat Friday on the steps in front of the Lincoln Memorial. He came independently, carrying a sign that read "(Puny) Hands off our elections."

"The lies about the 2020 election being stolen continue to be sounded, even though they've been disproved," Turner said, adding, "Now they're trying to use this to prevent people who are legal citizens, legal voters, from voting."

Sharpton said the Trump administration's immigration policy for Haitians and white South Africans, as well as cuts to social programs, are unifying concerns for this year's march attendees. But redistricting efforts by Republican-led states that reduce the number of Black lawmakers in Congress loom large.

"This march is about people who refuse to be counted out. When the courts and the legislature broke apart District 6, they did not just redraw lines," Rep. Cleo Fields, D-La., said in a texted statement. "They told hundreds of thousands of Black families from Baton Rouge up through the Delta that their voice could be taken away at any moment."

Fields' district was central in the Supreme Court decision that hollowed out the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The court ruled that his district, created just one term ago to permit a second majority-Black district in a state where Blacks make up 33% of the population, was unconstitutional because it relied too heavily on race.

The court has held that maps can be redrawn for partisan reasons.

Louisiana's legislature rushed to redraw the district after the decision, reshaping it to cluster around predominantly white communities in the Baton Rouge area and southern Louisiana.

Fields has opted not to seek reelection to Congress and instead is pursuing a seat in the state Senate.

Rep. Troy Carter, D-La., said that communities in his district "have felt the pain of being the tip of the spear" of the national redistricting fight. He warned that the ruling will likely impact state and local legislative seats during the 2028 election cycle.

"The scene of the crime is Louisiana, but the reverberation of its impact will be throughout the entire country," said Carter.

Embattled Black lawmakers see need for continued rights push

Rep. Shomari Figures, an Alabama Democrat whose majority-Black district was targeted by the state's Republican-led redistricting effort, said the original voting rights fight required local movements, national figures, lots of coordination and strategy. He sees this year's march as a continuation of that legacy.

"My district includes Montgomery, which was the birthplace of it all. It started with a bus boycott in 1955 and that, ultimately, morphed into a broader struggle for civil rights and led to a more broad Civil Rights Movement," Figures told the AP.

Ahead of Friday, organizations participating in the march filed new claims in their federal lawsuit against President Donald Trump's executive order restricting mail-in voting. The Supreme Court cleared a path Monday for possible implementation of the order, though it remains unclear how much can be put in place before the midterms.

Late Thursday, a federal judge in Boston who is hearing some of the lawsuits against that executive order temporarily halted the administration from moving forward with it. Time is running short to make any significant changes to voting in the midterms, with the first mail ballots scheduled to be sent out next week.

Seneca Nation calls for reversal of Trump's 'Lake America' executive order

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and JOSEPH FREDERICK Associated Press

The leader of the Seneca Nation in upstate New York is criticizing President Donald Trump's decision to rename Lake Ontario as "Lake America," saying it violates a more than 225-year-old treaty and shows a "blatant disrespect" for the Indigenous people who gave it its name in the first place.

Seneca Nation President J. Conrad Seneca on Friday called for Trump's order to be rescinded and for the Lake Ontario name to remain as a reflection of the Indigenous people in the U.S. and Canada who lived in territory around and along the lake long before the creation of either nation.

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"The President cannot assert ownership over our culture or erase it through irresponsible political action," he said in a statement.

Trump this week signed an order directing the Interior Department to update the lake's name in the U.S. geographic naming service, part of his escalating trade war with Canada. The order showed the change is supposed to be made in 30 days.

Seneca said the renaming violated the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, which was signed by President George Washington and the Haudenosaunee confederacy promising perpetual peace and friendship. The Seneca are one of the six nations of the confederacy, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy.

The name Lake Ontario comes from the Huron Indigenous people's word "oniatarí:io," which means "lake of shining waters." The Canadian province of Ontario, founded in 1867, took its name from the lake.

In the traditional Seneca language, the lake's name is "sga:nyodai:yoh," meaning "beautiful lake," Seneca said.

Trump floated the name change in recent days as the U.S. announced it was imposing new tariffs on Canadian goods after talks broke down between the countries. Canada responded with its own retaliatory tariffs on American goods, while the country's leaders slammed the idea of changing the lake's name.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney rejected the move, noting the lake's Indigenous roots and that the name predates both the Canadian Confederation and the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Trump can't force Canada to follow along with the renaming.

Trump has argued that Canada has been ripping off the U.S. on trade and military issues and suggested Canada should be absorbed as the 51st state.

Measles deaths reported in Pennsylvania spark fight among politicians and health officials

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The recent announcement of Pennsylvania's first measles-related deaths in decades has ignited a public feud among politicians and health officials who disagree over the role of the contagious disease in the fatalities.

Independent experts say the conflict is a symptom of a social and political debate over how to frame a national surge in measles cases, the worst seen in more than three decades.

Pennsylvania officials this week reported that two unvaccinated residents died after being infected with measles, with Gov. Josh Shapiro stressing that vaccinations could have averted the deaths.

But the announcement quickly came under fire, as a clash erupted between Shapiro, a vaccine-promoting Democrat, and U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a Trump administration appointee with a history of raising alarms about established vaccines. Kennedy said in a social post the deaths "may even have been altogether fabricated."

Kennedy's attack echoed statements he made last year, when three measles-related deaths were recorded. Kennedy questioned whether one of the children who died was killed by measles.

Medical experts say the brouhaha has diverted focus from an exploding public health threat.

"Now it's turned political," said Dr. Amesh Adalja, an infectious disease doctor in the Pittsburgh area and a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. "It's no longer about getting answers and figuring this out."

The challenges of tallying measles deaths

The U.S. eliminated the domestic spread of measles in 2000 by maintaining high vaccination rates, but they have fallen in recent years to below the 95% coverage needed to prevent outbreaks. In November, international health officials will meet to determine if the U.S. and Mexico have lost their measles-free status.

Complicating the situation in Pennsylvania are questions about what counts as a measles death, which is rare in the United States. The World Health Organization counts a death when a person has tested positive for measles and when the death occurs within a month from when a rash appears and the death is not obviously due to another cause such as trauma.

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State health officials are the ones who report measles cases and measles-associated deaths. The question of defining a measles death hasn't come up much in recent decades because vaccination rates were high and measles illnesses and deaths had become rare.

Recent trends are driving conversations among health officials about how to better track the consequences of a surging problem.

"As measles infections increase, we also need to prepare for more of the tragic complications we have largely avoided in this country for decades," including not only deaths but also hospitalizations and brain injuries, said Janet Hamilton, executive director of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, in a statement.

What's known and not known about the measles deaths

In Pennsylvania, what's not disputed is that both people who died had been infected with measles and they were unvaccinated. The unresolved question is whether measles was the main cause, or a contributing cause, of their deaths.

In one of the deaths, an official has reached a conclusion. The Lancaster County Coroner, Dr. Stephen Diamantoni, said he is aware of only one death with evidence of measles infection. It was a newborn baby boy who died August 14 — someone too young to get a recommended measles vaccination.

Because one of the boy's family members had measles, investigators tested the boy's lung tissue and found evidence of measles infection, Diamantoni said.

But investigators did not see signs of a swollen spleen or other ravages from a measles infection that would have contributed to the death. The cause is being attributed to a tear in the spleen, but the coroner's office says the virus did not play a role.

The baby "did not die as a result of measles," Diamantoni said.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health initially refused to disclose any details about the two people who died. But on Wednesday night, state health officials posted on social media that one of the deaths is under investigation by the coroner's office. No information has been released about the second death.

The department said it stands by its announcement, adding that it relies on two questions to determine if a death was measles-related: Did the person have measles and did they die?

As of Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has not updated the latest national tally of measles cases and deaths. The agency said on its website that the scheduled update was delayed, but did not disclose why.

Dr. Paul Offit said he's worried that two measles-related deaths are an unusually high number in a county that reportedly has about 400 cases. The expected death rate for measles is 1 in 1,000 cases.

That suggests there are a large number of other unreported infections in the Lancaster County area, said Offit, a Children's Hospital of Philadelphia vaccine researcher.

That's worrisome, given that this is the time of year when kids go back to school, which could increase the spread of an extremely transmissible disease. Vaccination efforts need to be stepped up "to prevent what I think is a coming disaster," Offit said.

Adalja faulted Pennsylvania officials for how they announced the deaths earlier this week. It should have only been health and medical officials, stating what is known and not yet known.

"They should learn to keep the politicians out of it," he said.

Trump administration appeals latest ruling blocking his mail voting order from taking effect

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is appealing a judge's ruling that blocked limitations on mail voting before the midterm elections, the latest twist in a court fight unfolding days before the first states begin sending out mail ballots for the pivotal November elections.

The notice of appeal filed Friday comes after a federal judge in Boston handed down a new decision blocking implementation of an executive order from President Donald Trump for the next two weeks.

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The Supreme Court previously allowed the plan to move ahead on procedural grounds, but hasn't decided whether it's legal. The U.S. 1st Circuit Court of Appeals will next consider the case, though it could soon be back before the nation's highest court.

Under Trump's executive order, the U.S. Postal Service could refuse to deliver ballots from states that do not submit lists of eligible voters and follow a uniform envelope style. The White House calls the plan a set of "commonsense measures" aimed at protecting ballot security, and calls the order blocking it "un-reasoned and unlawful."

Celina Stewart, chief executive officer of the League of Women Voters, which sued to block Trump, said the plaintiffs are confident the law is on their side.

"I'm hoping that federal judges continue to hold the line on their constitutional authority and duty," Stewart said, adding, "The bottom line for voters is, right now, your right to vote has not changed."

U.S. District Court Judge Indira Talwani found that states don't have the time or money to design and produce new ballots, update their systems and train officials to upload voter data to the Postal Service in the short time before the midterm elections.

The first mail ballots of the general election to determine control of Congress are scheduled to be sent out Sept. 4.

The Thursday ruling came after Democrats and voting rights groups filed a fresh round of lawsuits to comply with the recent Supreme Court decision. They note that the Constitution grants states and, in some cases, Congress the power to make election rules — not the president or Postal Service.

The whipsawing legal battle could have major ramifications for the midterms. Nearly one-third of Americans vote by mail and election officials contend there isn't enough time to revise their systems to comply with the new Postal Service directives.

The president has long targeted mail voting, which he falsely blames for his 2020 election loss even though he himself uses it to cast his ballot. A report by the Brookings Institution published in 2025 found that mail voting fraud occurred in only about four cases out of every 10 million mail ballots cast.

Trump's executive order was challenged in court shortly after being issued in March. Talwani, nominated to the bench by President Barack Obama, agreed to block it for the midterm elections. But the Supreme Court found earlier this week that she had acted too soon. The Post Office plan has since been finalized.

Nicholas Riccardi in Denver contributed to this report.

Israeli strikes kill 5 in Gaza and 3 in West Bank, and other news in the Middle East

By The Associated Press undefined

Israeli airstrikes killed five people in Gaza and three in the West Bank on Friday, despite a fragile ceasefire brokered by the United States.

Meanwhile, thousands of sailors remain stranded in the Persian Gulf by the Iran war, while Iran is touting an energy deal with Russia and the U.S. has imposed restrictions on a major Egyptian bank for its ties with Iran.

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

Israeli strikes in Gaza kill 5

Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed five people, local hospital officials said Friday.

Two brothers and another relative died in a strike on the family's home outside Khan Younis, officials at Nasser Hospital said. Two separate Israeli strikes killed one person each in Gaza City, according to health officials at Shifa hospital.

Israel's military confirmed the Gaza strikes but said it was not aware of the one in Khan Younis.

The five deaths are among more than 1,300 Palestinians killed in airstrikes since an October ceasefire deal, Gaza health officials say.

Attack kills 3 in Jenin

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Israel's military said it killed three Palestinians in an airstrike in the West Bank city of Jenin on Friday, describing one of the dead as a Hamas operative and the two others as accomplices.

The military identified one of the targets as Qais Bitawi who was alleged to be "involved in advancing significant terrorist activity." The Palestinian Ministry of Health confirmed Bitawi had been killed, along with two others. Hamas condemned the strike as a "heinous crime."

Violence has escalated in the West Bank, where at least 87 Palestinians have been killed in attacks while three Israelis have been killed by Palestinians in 2026.

Iranian leader bans actions undermining national unity

Iran's leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, on Friday declared that actions undermining national unity in the political, security, cultural, social or economic spheres are prohibited.

He warned that even measures with some support could ultimately be harmful if their broader social consequences are ignored.

"Any statement that creates despair or weakens national and public motivation," as well as what Khamenei called false divisions such as "war or negotiations," "consensus or radicalism" and "compromise or warmongering," could damage the country.

US diplomats return to Mideast embassies

American diplomats and some of their family members are beginning to return to U.S. embassies in the Middle East after many were ordered to leave their posts during the early days of the war with Iran.

On Friday, the embassies in Doha, Qatar; Kuwait City, Kuwait; and Manama, Bahrain announced they would allow some family members of diplomats to return.

Similar measures were implemented earlier this week to all family members of U.S. government employees in Israel as well as those who are over 21 to Beirut, Lebanon.

Iran's president says negotiations between Iran and US needed

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Friday that neither Tehran nor Washington can achieve all of its demands and that negotiations are needed to bring stability and calm, state television reported.

Pezeshkian said Iran would remain committed to the Islamabad memorandum if the United States upheld its own commitments under the agreement, adding that negotiations could then continue toward a broader resolution.

He also criticized hard-liners inside Iran who oppose an agreement, favor continuing the war and argue that sanctions have had little effect on the country.

Thousands of sailors stranded by Iran war

The U.N.'s maritime agency said Friday that 19 seafarers have been killed and at least 6,000 remain stranded on hundreds of ships unable to leave the region since the start of the Iran war on Feb. 28.

There have been at least 70 attacks on international shipping in the Persian Gulf, according to the International Maritime Organization.

About 20% of the world's traded oil and natural gas passed through the vital commercial waterway at the mouth of the Persian Gulf before the war.

Iran and Russia look to revive energy deal

Iran's ambassador to Russia on Friday said the two countries are seeking to deepen links between their energy grids by reviving a plan that dates to 2022, according to Iranian state media.

Umud Shokri, a fellow at George Mason University, said the plan calls for piping 55 billion cubic meters of Russian gas annually into Iran, via Azerbaijan.

He said that would help Iran weather U.S. economic pressure by alleviating seasonal shortages of gas, though there are significant hurdles, as building out the infrastructure would be expensive and time-consuming.

US imposes restrictions on Egyptian bank

The Trump administration is taking steps to limit an Egyptian bank's operations in the United Arab Emirates.

Banque Misr, Egypt's second-largest bank, is accused of serving as an economic lifeline to Iran's leadership. But under a new rule proposed by the U.S. Treasury, the bank's Emirati branches would be severed from access to the U.S. financial system.

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The Central Bank of Egypt said the restrictions are limited to Banque Misr's branches in the UAE and relate to dollar transfers only. No other Egyptian bank is affected.

Iran objects to US economic pressure

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Friday condemned a new round of U.S. economic measures against the country, calling them "economic terrorism" and saying Tehran would use all available means to counter them.

The ministry said the sanctions violated international law and called on other countries to refrain from implementing them.

Earlier this week, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent vowed to fully sever Iran from the global economy and threatened countries that continue to do business with Iran with secondary sanctions.

'Strong support' among some at UN to extend peacekeeping in south Lebanon, 2 diplomats say

The U.N. Security Council met behind closed doors Friday and discussed a request by Lebanon's government to extend the mandate of the 8,100-member peacekeeping force, slated to end Dec. 31, two diplomats with knowledge of the discussion said.

There was "strong support" among the 15 council members to extend the mandate of the force known as UNIFIL, especially amid concern over the volatile situation in Lebanon. But support wasn't unanimous, the diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the meeting was closed.

Israel has pressed for the closure of UNIFIL for years, and last year the United States, its closest ally, succeeded in forcing its closure on Dec. 31. But that was before the latest Israel-Hezbollah war, which erupted on March 2. Despite a June 20 truce, airstrikes and clashes have continued.

The two diplomats said U.S. Ambassador Mike Waltz attended Friday's council meeting, listened to the members, and didn't say yes or no to a limited extension of UNIFIL.

By Edith M. Lederer

US revokes visa of former Iraqi finance minister who won 2022 'International Women of Courage' award

The Trump administration has revoked the U.S. visa of a former Iraqi finance minister who was honored in 2022 with an "International Women of Courage" award by the State Department.

The department said Friday it had revoked the visa of Taif Sami Mohammed Al Shakarchi, who served as Iraq's finance minister from 2022 until July and earlier this month when she was implicated by Iraqi authorities in a possible corruption scheme.

The department said her visa was revoked after the FBI added her to its "terrorism watchlist." It was not clear why she had been added to the watchlist but officials said she had left the United States before her visa was revoked.

Rescuers retrieve flood survivors caked in mud as death toll in Nepal-China border disaster climbs

By NIRANJAN SHRESTHA and SHRISTI KAFLE Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Rescuers pulled out survivors caked in dark brown mud and helicopters lifted stranded people to safety, as Nepal and China raced to respond to catastrophic flash floods that killed nearly 600 people and left almost 2,500 missing.

The rescue efforts included a team that rappelled into a severely damaged checkpoint area on the Chinese side of the border between the two countries. Rescuers were on high alert for more flooding from a new lake that formed high up in the Himalayan mountains after the initial floods Wednesday. Experts warned that the lake, created after a glacier collapse that triggered the floods, was starting to overflow.

Nepal's army was deployed to help rescue more than 100 people believed trapped inside a tunnel at a hydropower plant located in the country's worst-hit district. Like elsewhere in the disaster zone, their work was complicated by thick layers of mud that covered the site.

The rappelling rescue team descended into the once-bustling border-crossing area from wooded mountain slopes, the state broadcaster China Central Television said.

"As far as I can see, it's nothing but debris," rescue official Zou Mingqi told state media. The area where

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travelers went through border control to enter or leave China has been flattened to a muddy area, according to satellite images.

The floods have killed 579 in Nepal, the country's disaster-management authority said Friday. Nepali police later put the number of deaths at 553. There was little information on survivors on the Chinese side, where the death toll rose to seven Friday as state media showed evacuations of villages and leaders' efforts to direct the relief response.

More than 3,700 people have been rescued in Nepal so far. Meanwhile, the number of people who were unaccounted for in the country nearly doubled to 1,924 as more local residents were added to the tally. China's state media said 554 people were missing on the Chinese side. Hundreds of the missing are foreigners in the area to work, trek or make a pilgrimage to a sacred peak.

In other developments, Nepal on Friday reversed an earlier decision and said it would allow foreign teams and experts to help with rescue efforts, apparently under pressure from other countries, especially those whose citizens are unaccounted for, a leading English-language newspaper, The Kathmandu Post, reported.

Authorities warn of flooding from a new lake

Nepali police issued a fresh alert Friday after receiving information that a dam on the Tibet side had burst. Security personnel and rescue and relief workers were told to stay on high alert and move to a safe location if necessary.

It was unclear if the dam bursting was related to flooding concerns over the lake that formed after the initial flash floods. Chinese broadcaster CCTV said the newly formed lake, located more than 10 kilometers (6 miles) from Gyirong Port, the hard-hit border crossing with Nepal, sits at an elevation of 2,950 meters (9,680 feet).

Nepali and Chinese authorities earlier warned of more flooding from the lake, which was already overflowing. Rescue workers heading to the disaster zone were ordered to stop temporarily Friday due to concern the lake would release more water and debris, and people in potentially affected areas were urged to move to safer ground.

Monitoring data from the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources later showed that the lake had dwindled in size. The water level dropped by 10 meters (32 feet) from the high point on Thursday morning, the state broadcaster said.

Some 680 rescuers eventually reached the Gyirong area by foot and via rafts. Some were dropped down from drones flown to the area, CCTV footage showed. "Anyone, anyone?" rescuers yelled, according to footage by the broadcaster.

It was not immediately known how many people were at the border checkpoint building when the floods hit.

Thousands of people have been evacuated while others await rescue

In Nepal's Rasuwa district, Nepali army rescuers struggled to help more than 100 people believed to be trapped by thick mud in a tunnel that's part of the Upper Trishuli-1 Hydropower Project. The army said it had rescued 350 people from the tunnel so far.

Video from the scene showed rescuers helping a man covered in mud out of the tunnel by pulling and pushing.

"It is complicated to find the entry and exit points of the tunnel because everything has been covered by mud," Army spokesperson Brig. Gen. Raja Ram Basnet said.

Nepal's disaster-management authority said 3,253 people had been airlifted by helicopter from the disaster area.

The search-and-rescue efforts have been supported by an outpouring of financial support from neighboring countries, including small, poorer countries like Sri Lanka, said Kanni Wignaraja, the United Nations development agency's regional director for Asia and the Pacific.

"Sri Lanka has its own huge fiscal problems, but it has just sent \$1 million immediately to the Nepal government," Wignaraja said.

Some felt the ground shake, then saw a 'black storm'

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Scientists who studied satellite images said bedrock underneath a glacier high in the Himalayan region had collapsed, taking part of the glacier with it. The rockfall was so extreme that it registered as magnitude 5.2. The rocks and melted water then swelled the rivers in the valleys below, causing a torrent of water that swept buildings, bridges and earth downstream in Tibet and Nepal.

Customs officer Karbir Gaire was among some of the survivors in Timure, the closest Nepalese village to the border with China, where some 1,500 people had lived.

Gaire reached his office around 8 a.m. Wednesday and was working on his computer when he first felt the ground shake.

"Right after the shake, I noticed a black storm coming towards us," he recalled from Kathmandu, where he is back with family. "We all immediately started running out, and within a few seconds, we were climbing uphill on the opposite side of our office building. I think those 10 or so seconds saved some of us."

Fifteen of Gaire's colleagues are missing. "It was like a Hollywood movie scene. I don't call it a flood. It was a tsunami."

Families around the world hope for news of loved ones

Nepal's tourism board has said that among the missing are more than 500 foreigners.

While the Nepal government shared a public list of people they rescued, there was little information about victims on the Chinese side of the border.

Chinese government officials stuck to their tight media controls. Information about major disasters is typically released with a delay and without personal stories of victims. State media has focused on stories of rescuers working to reach the disaster site or reporting on instructions from top leaders.

About 90 Americans were unaccounted for.

Some of the missing may have been on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in Tibet, a sacred site for Hindus, Buddhists and others.

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

Vishnuram Ramaswamy, who works at a private company in the southern Indian city of Puducherry, said that he spoke to his mother and two sisters who were on that pilgrimage Wednesday morning. It was a highly anticipated trip, something his mother had always wanted to do, he said.

"This was the last we spoke to them," he said. "They have been unreachable since."

The bond market prepares for a hike to interest rates, while US stocks drift lower

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The bond market swung Friday as investors built bets that the Federal Reserve may hike interest rates soon to get the nation's high inflation under control. U.S. stocks, meanwhile, dipped but not by much after economists said a speech by Chairman Kevin Warsh helped strengthen faith that the Fed will do what's needed to bring inflation down, even if it causes pain for the economy in the short term.

The S&P 500 fell 0.2% after flipping between modest gains and losses through the morning. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 9 points, or less than 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite slipped 0.5%.

The reaction was stronger in the bond market following Warsh's first speech as chairman of the Fed at an annual economic symposium held in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The mountain setting has been the backdrop for major Fed policy announcements in the past, and the pressure was on Warsh.

Worries had grown that his tough talk about getting inflation down to the Fed's 2% target may be just that, unless the Fed backs it up with action. The Fed could hike short-term interest rates to get inflation under control, but it could also feel deterred from doing so because that would slow the economy and hurt prices for investments. And President Donald Trump, who appointed Warsh, has been vocal about wanting interest rates to be lower rather than higher.

Warsh was adamant again on Friday that he wants to give financial markets fewer clues about what

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the Fed plans to do with rates for its two jobs of keeping inflation low and the job market strong. He has said he wants markets to react to what incoming data says about the economy and inflation rather than what the Fed says.

But Warsh also said Friday that "short-term interest rates are the predominant tool" for the Fed to do its job. And he said, "I would be hard pressed to describe broad financial conditions as restrictive," an implication that short-term interest rates may not be high enough to tamp down the economy and inflation.

The yield on the two-year Treasury, which closely tracks expectations for what the Fed will do with its federal funds rate, jumped to 4.35% from 4.22% just before the speech.

That's a big move for the bond market, and it was because traders upped their forecasts that the Fed will hike its federal funds rate as soon as next month. They're now betting on a nearly 58% probability of that, up from the 35% seen a day earlier, according to data from CME Group.

Longer-term yields also rose following some initial zigzags, but not by as much as shorter-term yields. The 10-year Treasury yield climbed to 4.72% from 4.67% late Thursday, and the 30-year Treasury yield got to 5.21% from 5.19%.

All the moves, including the modest ones for stocks even though higher interest rates tend to hurt them, indicate investors "pricing a more credible Fed," according to economists at Bank of America led by Aditya Bhawe.

"The positive market reaction highlights that investors place a premium on policy clarity, even when that clarity carries" a message implying higher interest rates, according to Seema Shah, chief global strategist at Principal Asset Management.

Yields had gotten so high for longer-term bonds this summer, in part because of worries about inflation staying high in the future, that the U.S. Treasury Department made an unusual move last week and said it would buy back more bonds, though analysts said it will likely have only a limited effect.

On Wall Street, Gap jumped 12.9% after the retailer reported stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It also said Michael Francis, an industry veteran who began his career on the retail sales floor, will take over as head of its Old Navy stores.

Marvell Technology fell 10.3% even though the chip company reported profit and revenue for the latest quarter that edged past analysts' expectations. CEO Matt Murphy said its business related to artificial-intelligence technology is strong, and it raised its forecasts for upcoming revenue growth.

But analysts said much of that optimism may have already been baked into Marvell's stock price, which came into the day with a surge of 184% for the year so far.

After rocketing higher for years because of the frenzy around AI, stocks across the industry are confronting skepticism that they shot too high and that booming demand for AI chips may fade if the AI revolution does not produce as much profit as promised.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 19.23 points to 7,711.76. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 9.45 to 53,559.99, and the Nasdaq composite sank 138.93 to 26,402.42.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across much of Europe following a mixed finish in Asia. South Korea's Kospi fell 1.8%, and France's CAC 40 rose 1% for two of the world's bigger moves.

She was a pain specialist to top athletes. Her opioid prescribing alarmed the DEA

By JOSHUA GOODMAN, JIM MUSTIAN and EDDIE PELLIS Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Joan Rubinger overcame a catastrophic biking accident that left her paralyzed to become an influential pain-relief specialist helping top-tier athletes get back on the field after acute and chronic injuries.

Her website touts a client list that includes 169 NFL Pro Bowl selections, 29 NBA and WNBA champions and 15 Olympic medalists. Among some of her most notable patients: NBA All Stars Kobe Bryant and Dwyane Wade, as well as MLB All Star Fernando Tatis Jr.

But behind the scenes, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration alleged in court filings, Rubinger doled

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out thousands of illegal prescriptions for highly addictive painkillers, a "covert and slinking" scheme the nurse practitioner likened to selling hamburgers at a fast-food restaurant. Over a four-year period, federal authorities said, the nurse practitioner prescribed 260,000 pills containing controlled substances to patients in more than 20 states.

Citing what an administrative law judge called egregious conduct, the DEA last month revoked Rubinger's ability to prescribe opioids. That action followed Rubinger's agreement in March to pay \$1.4 million to settle a parallel Justice Department civil complaint that accused her of dispensing controlled substances like oxycodone, Percocet, and Xanax on hundreds of occasions without any legitimate medical purpose. Rubinger did not admit any wrongdoing as part of that settlement and agreed to never again prescribe controlled substances.

While authorities announced the settlement earlier this year, federal court papers unsealed at the request of The Associated Press provide new details of a medical provider who the DEA says was furtively enriching herself even as she put the health of her patients at risk.

The scheme, the DEA alleged in a seizure warrant, expanded over the years "from professional athletes" to a wide-range of other clients, including members of an Ohio-based street gang, a confessed New Jersey drug trafficker and a New York City model. Along the way, federal authorities alleged, the nurse practitioner took steps to avert DEA suspicion, coaching clients over an encrypted messaging app on ways to avoid having their prescriptions flagged by pharmacies.

The DEA described how two former athletes received illicit prescriptions from Rubinger, including former All-Pro Carolina Panthers linebacker Thomas Davis, whose wife alerted the agency to the nurse practitioner's activities, according to the court records and an interview with the player's now ex-spouse.

Rubinger started prescribing Davis opioids as he was bouncing between teams before he retired after the 2020 season, according to his wife. In all, authorities alleged, he received more than 13,000 oxycodone and Percocet pills between November 2019 and March 2024.

Davis did not respond to requests for comment and no one answered his door in North Carolina when visited by an AP reporter.

The DEA identified another former reserve NBA guard who, along with his wife, paid Rubinger more than \$50,000 for illicit prescriptions well after he left the league. He could not be reached for comment.

Rubinger's case did not result in criminal charges

A spokesman for Rubinger, Erick Mullen, did not answer questions about the nurse practitioner's treatment of Davis or any other athlete, citing medical privacy laws.

"Joan's case was not a criminal matter but a civil action," he wrote in an email. "No raids with blue windbreakers carrying agency initials, and no loss of liberty at stake."

He said "no administrative or disciplinary actions" had been taken by nursing boards in California and New York, where she is licensed to practice.

Mullen also did not address AP's questions about Rubinger's alleged ties to the Ohio-based Loyal to Brothers street gang but suggested they represented "actual harm" to his client. "You'll have to imagine what kind of people threatened, intimidated, bullied and cajoled a paraplegic nurse practitioner and single mother into this kind of situation," he wrote.

Federal prosecutors declined to comment on why they did not pursue criminal charges even as they accused Rubinger in court filings of violating federal drug statutes and regulations 900 times.

James Rafalski, a retired DEA investigator, said he worked many cases that ended in criminal charges and involved far larger volumes of pills. But Rubinger's conduct stood out as especially flagrant, he said, adding he was surprised it did not result in a criminal prosecution.

"Most doctors who abuse their DEA registration just write scripts without a thorough examination of the patient," said Rafalski, who reviewed court records in the case. "She knowingly took steps to evade detection by the DEA and instructed her clients to do the same."

Prosecutors weigh a variety of factors in deciding whether to bring criminal charges, from the strength of the evidence to how a jury is likely to perceive a defendant.

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Eric Grant, the U.S. attorney in Sacramento, said in a statement to AP that "the significant financial penalty" and ban on Rubinger prescribing controlled substances "grants the public meaningful protections against the unlawful dispensing of dangerous drugs."

A nurse practitioner to the stars

Like many of her clients, Rubinger, 49, was once an elite athlete. As a child, she competed internationally in gymnastics. Years later she rowed and pole vaulted at Syracuse University.

After graduating, she coached women's rowing at Indiana University, worked alongside elite NBA trainers and even assisted China's Olympic volleyball team.

"My sculpted physique and bronzed, sun kissed skin were fruits of very hard labor," she boasted in a personal blog. "Earned. Day after pavement-pounding day."

She started All Pro Sports Medicine around 2010, describing her company as a niche service that offered athletes discrete medical attention at all hours of the day. In 2014, she was licensed as a nurse practitioner in California, which would've made it possible for her to prescribe medication.

Justice Department lawyers described her practice as "highly unorthodox" because it often operated out of hotel rooms, devoid of any medical records or a physician's supervision.

Rubinger filled her website and social media accounts with testimonials from athletes praising her sports medicine practice. Among those she featured in her feeds were the NFL's Drew Brees and Saquon Barkley, as well as the NBA's Wade and Bryant. Major League Baseball's Manny Machado also offered praise. There's no suggestion in court records that Brees, Barkley, Bryant, Machado or Wade committed any wrongdoing or were even aware of Rubinger's alleged prescription practices. Their statements of support all predated the Justice Department complaint. Representatives for the athletes did not respond to requests for comment. Bryant died in a helicopter crash in 2020.

Tatis, a teammate of Machado's on the San Diego Padres, confirmed he had also been a client of Rubinger but was not aware she had been accused of issuing illicit prescriptions.

"We were always clear on what I wanted," he told AP. "It was hydration and stuff to keep me on the field, and we were really professional and it was really clear on my side."

The buzz surrounding Rubinger's practice stemmed, in part, from "The Goo," a pain-relieving gel she created. Rubinger marketed "The Goo" as a "wonder cream" and "Pro Athletes' Best Kept Secret." It contains the same active ingredients found in over-the-counter pain-relief gels like Bengay.

"I could literally submerge my whole body in a bathtub of Goo, man," Davis, the linebacker, said in a 2022 video promoting the pain relief treatment.

Recovery from bike accident inspires top athletes

Rubinger's life took a near tragic turn in 2015 when she plummeted 20 feet over the edge of a cliff while riding a mountain bike. The crash broke more than a dozen ribs, punctured her lungs and left her with spinal cord injuries that left her in a wheelchair.

"I don't know who I am anymore," she wrote in the blog chronicling her recovery. "I've lost my identity. It terrifies me."

She initially struggled with simple tasks like brushing her teeth. Nevertheless, she returned to work in just three months. Following Rubinger's comeback, several NBA players, including Wade, wore orange wristbands in her honor on the court.

"You would look at Joan sitting quietly in her wheelchair and never know that she is the secret weapon behind the best athletes in the world," Atlanta Hawks guard Buddy Hield wrote in one of several testimonials featured on her company's website.

Hield did not respond to requests for comment made through the Hawks.

Nurse practitioner allegedly took steps to avert DEA attention

The DEA alleged that Rubinger went to great lengths to conceal her illicit operation.

New clients had to follow specific steps Rubinger outlined in a document she called "THE RULES," court records show, threatening to cut off anyone who slipped up.

"I put these rules in place for a reason: to minimize the attention we attract from the DEA," she told one

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prospective client, according to the seizure affidavit, which allowed agents to confiscate nearly \$170,000 in what it deemed "crime proceeds" from her bank account.

Investigators say Rubinger collected hundreds of thousands of dollars through a digital money transfer app to provide clients with prescriptions for painkillers. She made them pay up front, the DEA said, distributing a price list for painkillers.

Getting a prescription, she told clients in "The Rules," was "like at McDonald's, you gotta pay for your burger before they hand it to you."

In early 2024, the DEA said it inspected a Stockton, California, doctor's office where Rubinger had registered her practice. The office belonged to an orthopedic surgeon Rubinger had shadowed years earlier. The surgeon told authorities he had no role supervising her work nor any knowledge of her prolific prescribing activity, according to the DEA order revoking her prescribing registration.

Many states, including California, require nurse practitioners in most circumstances to work under a physician's supervision when prescribing opioids.

In social media posts, Rubinger and her athlete clients regularly refer to the nurse practitioner as "Dr. Joan." Nurse practitioners, however, are not considered doctors.

Her website claims she holds a Ph.D., and her LinkedIn profile lists an unspecified "doctoral degree" from the Ohio State University.

A spokesperson for the university said it has no record of Rubinger attending or working at Ohio State. Mullen, her spokesperson, did not answer questions about her graduate studies.

Rubinger holds master's degrees in nursing and kinesiology from Indiana University and The George Washington University.

Wife of NFL linebacker tips off DEA

The DEA began investigating Rubinger in 2022 after being tipped off by the wife of Davis, the former NFL linebacker.

Kelly Davis told authorities and the AP that she visited an emergency room in 2022 near her home in Charlotte, North Carolina, complaining of chest pains. As she was being evaluated, a doctor informed her she had been flagged for receiving excessive pain medication prescriptions.

Unbeknownst to her, Rubinger had written 23 oxycodone prescriptions for her husband over a two-year period listing her as the patient, according to the DEA and Kelly Davis.

In court documents, the DEA said Rubinger took such steps with her clients "to obscure her excessive prescribing and avoid law enforcement detection."

"These individuals are not the intended recipients of the prescriptions, often do not even know they are being prescribed controlled substances," the DEA wrote, "and have not been examined by Rubinger, much less have an established doctor-patient relationship with her."

Kelly Davis said she was stunned by the revelation and immediately confronted Rubinger through Instagram.

"This is insane," the football player's wife wrote to Rubinger, according to the DEA's revocation order. "You clearly know he has a problem. Why would you do this?"

Kelly Davis said the nurse practitioner was well liked by players and recalled running into another professional athlete the one time she met Rubinger while accompanying her husband to a 2020 appointment at a Marriott in Charlotte.

NFL has long struggled with painkillers

The NFL has well-documented problems with painkillers. A 2011 study found that 52% of the league's retired players used opioids during their career. More recently came a 2020 investigation of the head trainer for the Washington Commanders for illegally distributing oxycodone to players. The trainer accepted a \$10,000 fine under a deal with the Justice Department to avoid prosecution if he stayed out of trouble. An attorney for the trainer declined to comment.

The NFL has put in place more diligent accounting of drug prescriptions. Players are allowed to go outside their teams for medical care, though since 2019, they've been required to report any prescriptions they receive from outside their team.

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Shortly after reporting Rubinger to the DEA, Kelly Davis shared her suspicions with the NFL Players Association and the California Board of Registered Nursing. The Players Association declined to comment; the NFL said it had no awareness of Rubinger; and the California nursing board said it does not discuss any disciplinary actions until they are finalized.

Kelly Davis said her husband's use of opioids contributed to the demise of her marriage. The couple divorced last year.

In a May interview on The Pivot Podcast, Davis blamed his opioid abuse for wrecking his home life.

"There's a lot of shame and guilt," he said, holding back tears. "I've always been a person and a player that said that I would never allow anything to control me."

Fed Chair Warsh signals rate hikes may be needed with US inflation stubbornly elevated

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

JACKSON HOLE, Wyoming (AP) — Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh said Friday that inflation is still too high and suggested the central bank may have to raise interest rates in the coming months to bring it down, a clearer signal than he has previously sent about his economic outlook.

In his first high-profile speech at the Fed's annual conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Warsh acknowledged that recent U.S. reports show that inflation has cooled a bit, but "they do not tell me that underlying trends have meaningfully improved."

"We must be confident that underlying inflation is moving to our objective, clearly and at sufficient speed," Warsh said. "Otherwise, we have work to do."

The comments from the new Fed chair appeared to reassure Wall Street that fighting inflation remains the priority for the central bank. Warsh did not imply that a rate hike is imminent, but he appeared to dismiss perceptions that inflation is no longer a threat.

He pointed to data showing that inflation remains stubbornly above the central bank's 2% target. Warsh replaced Jerome Powell in late May after his predecessor's term ended.

The U.S. stock market held steady after the speech, but expectations are building in the bond market for the Fed to hike interest rates. The yield on the two-year Treasury, which closely tracks expectations for what the Fed will do with its federal funds rate, moved from 4.22% to 4.30%, a sign that investors expect short-term yields to move higher.

Longer-term yields on 10-year and 30-year Treasuries were mostly flat, suggesting investors aren't worried that higher rates will be needed for a long stretch of time to fight inflation.

Jon Faust, an economist at Johns Hopkins and a former adviser to Powell, said Warsh succeeded in conveying a tougher approach on inflation while avoiding the kind of detailed guidance from the Fed that he has disparaged.

"He found a way to convey that if necessary he would support raising rates, which is one thing people were concerned about," Faust said.

Yet Michael Strain, director of economic policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, said the Fed chair has talked tough on inflation before without hiking the Fed's key rate. His Friday remarks don't provide any clearer guidance on the timing of any Fed moves, he added.

The Fed chair faced high stakes with his speech as questions swirled around Wall Street about whether he was sufficiently focused on fighting inflation. At a press conference July 29 he sowed confusion about whether he would back up his previous tough talk on rising prices with any action, such as lifting the Fed's short-term rate, which is currently about 3.6%.

Those concerns may have contributed to rising bond yields, which can increase the cost of borrowing for the government and everyone else. Yet Warsh has said he doesn't want to provide what analysts call "forward guidance" about whether the Fed will hike or cut rates or stay on hold at upcoming meetings. He argues that it limits the Fed's flexibility by committing it to a specific policy.

Yet some economists have argued that he could say more about his views on Fed policy without tipping

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his hand about future actions.

Warsh on Friday reiterated his skepticism about providing such guidance or even outlining his broad approach to interest-rate policy.

But he did suggest that interest rates currently aren't restricting economic activity, pointing to robust business investment in AI equipment and infrastructure and strong consumer spending. As a rule of thumb, interest rates often need to be high enough to limit borrowing and spending to cool inflation.

The Fed next meets Sept. 15-16, and Warsh's remarks don't necessarily signal that the central bank will raise rates then. Wall Street investors now see the chances of a rate hike at the Fed's Sept. 15-16 meeting as basically a coin flip, according to futures pricing tracked by CME FedWatch, up from about one-third before Warsh spoke.

Warsh said inflation data "are more concerning" than trends in the job market, where the unemployment rate is low. He also argued that inflation is unlikely to move back to the target on its own.

Warsh noted that in the past year, more than half of goods and services tracked by the government have seen price increases of 3% or higher. While that is down from the pandemic peak, it is "well above" the roughly one-third that saw such increases in the two decades before the pandemic.

Inflation cooled in June and July after spiking in May from soaring gas prices, yet it remains above the central bank's target. According to the Fed's preferred measure, it was 3.7% in July.

Warsh also sought to clear up some areas of confusion that arose after his remarks at the July 29 news conference, when he made vague remarks about what metric the Fed would use to track inflation and whether short-term interest rates were the Fed's main tool to combat higher prices.

On Friday, he specified that short-term interest rates are the Fed's "predominant tool," and added that the central bank is using the same gauge it has long followed to measure inflation.

Previous Fed chairs have often used speeches at Jackson Hole to address broad questions about interest-rate policy and the economy, or to signal upcoming changes in their approach. In 2022, with pandemic-era inflation having soared to 9.1%, Powell signaled the Fed would continue to sharply raise interest rates in a fight against runaway prices, and he acknowledged that such maneuvers would bring "pain" to consumers and businesses.

Questions about Warsh's approach have intensified amid President Donald Trump's continued calls for lower interest rates. While Trump has continued to defend Warsh, whom he appointed, the president has criticized other Fed officials for supporting higher rates.

Trump has also renewed his efforts to remove Fed Governor Lisa Cook, who was appointed by former President Joe Biden. Replacing Cook would enable Trump to appoint a majority of the seven-member board. Trump tried to fire her last year but was temporarily blocked by the Supreme Court.

Longer-term rates have steadily risen in recent weeks because of a range of factors, including burgeoning U.S. government deficits and outsize borrowing by tech firms building AI infrastructure.

The rate on the 30-year Treasury bond reached the highest level in 19 years last week, prompting an unusual effort by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to buy back bonds and push yields lower.

Trump used to say he saw a quick end to his Iran war, but 6 months later he claims he's in no hurry

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump arrives at an awkward moment for his presidency on Friday as the U.S.-Israel war against Iran reaches the six-month mark, a notable milestone for a conflict that the Republican leader repeatedly assured Americans would be a "little excursion" lasting a matter of weeks.

The war isn't over, though Trump claims that through bombs and blockade, he has already devastated Iran's leadership, military and economy.

And this week his administration said it would turn its focus to increasing economic pressure — rather than military action — to try to finish off Iran. The shifting strategy centers on threats to punish any country or entity that continues to conduct business with Tehran.

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The turn to using sanctions as the cudgel of choice comes as the administration weighs diminished munitions stockpiles after months of war, sparking concerns that the prolonged conflict could undermine U.S. military readiness in other parts of the globe.

As the conflict grinds on, Trump's talk of finding a quick end to the war also appears to be fading. He stressed this week that he's "not in a hurry" to get Iran back to the negotiating table, and he continues making the case that the Islamic Republic's leadership is on the ropes.

"They're not paying their troops. They're in deep trouble. They have very little capacity," Trump told reporters Thursday. "We don't want to speak to them. We're not looking to meet or anything," he said.

It's unclear how — or if — Trump will address the six-month anniversary of a conflict that has already cost the United States more than \$37.5 billion and done damage to his popularity ahead of critical November elections for his party. The president is spending Friday in Houston, where he'll honor the Artemis II NASA crew for their 10-day mission around the moon earlier this year.

Trump is declaring 'mission accomplished' — a phrase that hurt a Republican predecessor

On its face, the moment is complicated for the "America First" leader who fiercely criticized his White House predecessors for wasting American taxpayer money and U.S. troops' lives in Middle East conflicts and vowed on the campaign trail to keep the military out of "endless wars."

But Trump has bristled at suggestions that this war — in which no American troops have deployed into Iran — can be compared with the yearslong wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in which more than 7,000 Americans were killed.

His Republican predecessor, President George W. Bush, was widely mocked for a 2003 speech aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln beneath a White House-produced banner that read "Mission Accomplished." It came to symbolize a premature declaration of victory for the Iraq War, which would go on for nearly nine more years. More than two decades later, there are still U.S. troops stationed in Iraq.

Trump's war has stretched on far longer than he told Americans it would. It didn't stop him from sharing a social media post this week declaring "MISSION ACCOMPLISHED 2026." The AI-generated image features Trump against a backdrop of U.S. fighter jets, a warship and American flags above smaller images of Bush and former Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in an Israeli strike in the opening salvos of the war.

Trump has consistently emphasized that the U.S. and Israel campaign has been devastating for Iran's navy and air force. Iranian officials have said the country has suffered \$270 billion in direct and indirect damage. Israeli military strikes in the first weeks of the war wiped out much of the theocratic government's leadership structure, including Khamenei.

But Iran has found leverage through its own strikes in the critical Strait of Hormuz, where relatively few vessels carrying oil and liquefied natural gas are risking passage. Trump again declared Thursday that the "Strait of Hormuz is open," saying 24 vessels passed through a day earlier. That's a fraction of the roughly 130 vessels that passed through the vital waterway daily before the war began.

Trump is showing little interest in talks

Mediators Qatar and Pakistan continue to press for a diplomatic off-ramp from the two sides. Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, was in Tehran on Thursday to discuss a proposed plan between Iran and Oman to boost traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

But in Washington, Trump has shown little interest in getting back to the preliminary deal reached in June that aimed to reopen the strait and launch talks about Iran's nuclear program. That deal fell apart within weeks after Iran started attacking ships.

At the same time, Trump says the U.S. effort to economically choke off Tehran is working, with a U.S. naval blockade preventing Iranian oil from making it to market as the trickle of vessels carrying oil from other Gulf nations pass through.

"We have control and we have the blockade," Trump said. "Iran is not getting anything. Nothing is going through."

Iran is badly battered, but has a history of showing resilience

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There's no doubt that the strikes combined with decades of international sanctions have battered Iran, said Aarathi Krishnan, a geopolitical risk analyst at RAKSHA Intelligence Future.

But as Trump tries to turn to a new chapter in the war, Krishnan argues the Republican may be misguided in concluding that more pressure on Tehran — which has spent decades adapting to international economic sanctions — will produce the political outcome he wants.

Indeed, Iran's economy in the run-up to the start of the war was mired in surging inflation, according to the International Monetary Fund. National income per person had fallen from about \$8,000 in 2012 to \$5,000 in 2024, according to World Bank data.

But Tehran has also shown resilience, selling discounted oil and establishing opaque shipping and financial networks, Krishnan said.

"This administration has completely underestimated the Iranian resolve," Krishnan said. "This is not new to the Iranian regime."

Trump must decide how far he's willing to go with sanctions

Richard Goldberg, who served as a senior adviser on Iran at the National Security Council during Trump's first White House term, argues that Iran now finds itself in "uncharted waters" if the administration follows through with a truly biting campaign to pressure Iranian trade partners.

"What we should be seeing is an attempt to seal off every escape hatch the regime has left," said Goldberg, who is now at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a hawkish Washington think tank. "Use the economic power of the United States to layer a naval blockade with an air and land embargo while dropping the hammer on anyone who gives the regime access to hard currency — whether that's in the Middle East, China or even Europe."

But it remains to be seen how far the administration is willing to go.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent this week unveiled a campaign the White House calls "Operation Economic Outcast," but only issued warnings to nations to cut trade and has yet to announce any secondary sanctions. Bessent told reporters the administration wanted countries to have a chance to shift away from Iran before it was too late — and acknowledged there was economic risk to the U.S., too, in moving ahead.

The Treasury Department announced on Friday that it was taking steps that could lead to eventually severing Banque Misr, Egypt's second-largest bank, from the U.S. financial system. The department accused the bank of serving as an economic lifeline to Tehran's leadership.

China, which is Iran's biggest trade partner and oil buyer, responded earlier this week to the Trump administration's broad threats of going after countries and firms that still do trade with Iran by expressing its opposition to "illegal unilateral sanctions."

Pressed Thursday about why he wasn't already sanctioning Chinese banks, Trump offered a cryptic response.

"Who said I'm not? You don't know if I'm doing it," Trump said. "I don't have to announce everything, do I?"

Washington chemical tank was called unfit for service before deadly failure, investigators find

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

An inspection contractor found a chemical tank at a Washington state paper mill "not fit for continued service" 10 months before it failed in May, killing 11 in one of the deadliest U.S. workplace disasters in recent decades, according to a federal report released Friday.

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board's update about the May 26 failure in Longview, which expelled enough caustic liquid to blow out building walls, is part of an ongoing investigation. The federal agency said it is still determining the cause of the failure.

The board found that the contractor provided Nippon Dynawave Packaging Company with recommendations for internal inspections and shell repairs, but the company did none between a July 2025 inspection and the May 2026 failure.

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"Because the investigation remains ongoing, we will not comment on individual findings or documents at this time," an emailed statement from Nippon spokesperson Sam Jefferies said Friday. "Our focus remains on supporting affected families and employees and taking the necessary steps toward fully reopening the Longview facility."

Jefferies said the company will continue to cooperate fully with the board.

The Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers released a statement on Friday saying the board's findings were "deeply troubling."

"The update raises urgent questions about how technical findings and recommendations concerning the tank were communicated, evaluated and incorporated into decisions about its continued operation," the statement said. "The families and workforce deserve a complete accounting of that process."

Lawyer for family of 2 brothers who died says accountability is needed

A lawyer representing the family of two brothers who were killed, Tyler and Bradley Covington, said the board's findings are "nothing short of alarming."

"When safety inspections and recommendations don't lead to action, danger becomes a reality that causes devastation to human life," lawyer Kyle Findley said in a statement Friday. "We will continue to work tirelessly to ensure those responsible for this horrific accident are held accountable and their families receive justice."

Democratic U.S. Sen. Patty Murray said in a statement that the community deserves answers and "every worker has the right to come home safely at the end of the day."

Multiple inspections found safety problems before tank failure

In July 2025, the contractor found "significant thinning" below the minimum safe thickness in the lower regions of the tank after an external inspection, according to the board's report. The minimum safe thickness is a threshold that measures a tank's ability to contain the pressure of the liquid and support the tank's weight, the report said.

The same contractor inspected the exterior of the tank in October 2025 and February 2026 and both times identified that "large portions of the tank remained thinner than the calculated minimum safe wall thickness."

"The company also did not remove the tank from operation or derate the tank for reduced service," the board said.

The tank failure released roughly 900,000 gallons (3.4 million liters) of a liquid known as white liquor that is used to break down wood for making paper products and is capable of causing severe burns. In addition to the workers killed, several others and one firefighter were injured.

Official questions why paper company didn't act

The board's Chairperson Steve Owens said in a statement "we are greatly concerned that the tank was not promptly removed from service or properly repaired after the clear findings in the inspection report."

In an excerpt of the July 2025 inspection included in the board's update, the recommendations were noted as "Priority 1: Not fit for continued service unless corrected," with a "high likelihood/consequence of failure (or) critical code/standard deficiency."

"Owner should plan to have an internal inspection performed in order to determine the extent of the required repairs. It's likely that the entire shell course should be replaced," the inspection excerpt says.

The inspection was completed by Applied Technical Services LLC. The federal report did not specify why the company was conducting the inspections.

A message was left seeking comment from Applied Technical Services.

Tank failure occurred as employees started to arrive to work

The catastrophic failure hit just minutes after employees began arriving around 7 a.m., the board's report said.

Shortly before 2 a.m., a vessel at the facility called a digester was removed from service for repairs. As a result, the tank stopped sending white liquor into the digester. But more white liquor continued to flow into the tank, causing it to approach full capacity around 6:20 a.m. It failed less than an hour later, the report said.

After flooding the courtyard, crushing vehicles and destroying part of one of the surrounding buildings, the liquid flowed into the buildings' lower floors, where workers were holding morning meetings.

All eight workers in the electrical maintenance shop as well as a worker in the courtyard were killed. In the mechanical maintenance shop, five employees and the foreman escaped, but two were killed from exposure to the chemical, the report said. Two of the people who escaped were seriously injured due to chemical burns.

The company radioed for its medical emergency response team but didn't explain that white liquor had been released, according to the report. A member of the team waded into a pool of white liquor to try to rescue an employee, thinking it was water, and was seriously injured from chemical burns.

Earlier this week, the Washington Department of Ecology issued notice of 35 environmental violations to Nippon Dynawave. The state agency oversees the facility's air and water quality permits and compliance with environmental waste laws.

The board said its investigation is ongoing and that its complete findings will be included in its final investigation report.

Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo spreads to 2 new health zones with a total of 60 areas now affected

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — The fastest-growing Ebola outbreak in history has spread to two new health zones in eastern Congo, with a total of 60 now affected, according to the latest government figures published on Friday.

The two new zones affected are Biena and Manguredjipa in Congo's North Kivu province, where the case fatality rate is much higher than the overall rate of 48%, due in part to delayed response efforts, according to Congo's Ministry of Health data.

It said the outbreak has recorded 5,794 confirmed cases, including 2,786 deaths, as it is spreading at an unprecedented speed, faster than efforts to track and slow it.

The outbreak is spreading under extremely difficult conditions, fueled by insecurity, displacement, a health workers' strike and intense population movements. The World Health Organization has said that it remains out of control and is on track to surpass the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak, the deadliest on record, which killed more than 11,000 people, primarily in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Aid group Doctors Without Borders said on Friday it had opened a new treatment center in Beni in North Kivu to enable a faster response in what it said was one of the hardest-hit areas.

While the large majority of cases are concentrated in northeastern Ituri province, North Kivu has an Ebola fatality rate of close to 69%, one of the highest in the country, according to the latest government figures.

The new center "enables the rapid treatment of patients, strengthens contact tracing and supports the health authorities in their efforts to contain the spread of the virus," Doctors Without Borders said in a statement.

On Thursday, Congo began vaccinating health workers and other front-line workers with the Ervebo vaccine that was effective in past Ebola outbreaks caused by a different, more common type called Zaire.

Clinical trials are underway to find a licensed vaccine for the rare Bundibugyo virus that is causing the current outbreak and which has no approved vaccines or treatments.

Although the current outbreak was declared in mid-May, officials believe it had been spreading since February. It has spread from three health zones to nearly 60, with most cases and deaths occurring outside the network of monitored contacts and within communities.

Efforts to bring the outbreak under control — from limited public gatherings to social distancing and airport closures — have disrupted life in the six affected provinces, particularly Ituri, which has been ravaged by rebel violence.

The government has introduced measures, including installing health and sanitary equipment at some locations, but advocacy groups say more needs to be done to build trust within the community.

While neighboring Uganda declared itself free of Ebola last month, the risk of further cross-border spread remains, WHO said Wednesday.

WHO expert Marie Roseline Belizaire said that the Central African Republic is now considered the country at highest risk of spillover, followed closely by South Sudan, as the outbreak in eastern Congo has expanded toward border areas.

Norway's crown prince becomes King Haakon VIII after his father's death

By JAN M. OLSEN and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — Norway has a new king, whose tasks will include stabilizing the Scandinavian country's monarchy and boosting the royal family's popularity after his wife's past contacts with deceased sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and his stepson's rape conviction.

Crown Prince Haakon, 53, became King Haakon VIII when his father, Harald V, died Friday at 89. Haakon adopted the motto, "All for Norway," that dates back to his great-grandfather. His wife became Queen Mette-Marit, while his oldest child became Crown Princess Ingrid Alexandra and the heir to the throne.

Haakon knows the ropes. As his father aged and his health began to fail in recent years, the prince stepped in as the country's regent on several occasions.

Norway's monarchy has old roots, tracing its origins to King Harald Fairhair in the ninth century. When Norway regained its independence from Sweden in 1905, three-quarters of voters in a national plebiscite approved restoring the monarchy. Today, the role is largely symbolic as the power lies with an elected parliament, but the country's royal family retains celebrity and a role in promoting the wealthy nation around the world.

Haakon is the younger child of Harald, born two years after his sister, Princess Märtha Louise. As the oldest male, however, he became heir to the throne when his grandfather, King Olav, died in 1991. The Norwegian Constitution was altered in 1990 to allow future firstborns — regardless of gender — to take precedence in the line of succession. However, it was not applied retroactively.

Haakon said in a 1998 book that as a child he dreamed of owning a toy shop, but he soon realized that his path was already paved and one day he would become king.

He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California at Berkeley and a master's degree in development studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science, with a specialization in international trade and Africa. In 1995, he graduated from the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy, and he also completed the Foreign Ministry's trainee program for diplomats.

An avid surfer, skier and sportsman, he told Norwegian broadcaster NRK that if he hadn't been a royal, he would have been a surfer. A music lover — he likes rock and rap — he attended festivals across Europe as a youth.

Haakon sought the king's permission to marry

Haakon knew his relationship would face an uphill battle for acceptance when he met Mette-Marit Tjessem Høiby at a popular music festival in Norway in 1999. She was a single mother whose son's father had been sentenced to prison for cocaine possession, and she had been seen at parties where illegal drugs were used.

The country was divided. Some cheered for love, others were skeptical. The Norwegian newspaper VG wrote in 2000 that Haakon "lives closer to the people than any other heir to the throne before him."

In a May 2000 interview with NRK, Haakon said that in the early 1990s, "a youth culture emerged in Oslo" and he acknowledged that Mette-Marit was "an active part of this environment at the time."

"It is clear that there is relatively extravagant partying there," Haakon said.

Nevertheless, he won permission from his father, who had also married a commoner, to wed Mette-Marit. And despite her background, the Norwegian people found much to like about this statuesque blond woman with striking eyes and a ready smile, a down-to-earth manner and an undisguised love for Haakon.

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They wed in August 2001 at the Oslo Cathedral. The couple's popularity soared thanks to a carefully cultivated blend of the common touch and the glamour and grace demanded of royalty. They were constantly on the covers of gossip magazines, yet tried to live relatively normal and private family lives.

They have two children, Ingrid Alexandra and Prince Sverre Magnus. Haakon also became the stepfather of Mette-Marit's son, Marius Borg Høiby, who has no royal title.

Royal family's reputation took a hit from Høiby's trial

In June, Høiby was sentenced to four years in prison after being convicted of rape. He was found guilty of two of the four rape charges he was facing and acquitted of the other two. He was also convicted of assault and abuse in a close relationship. Høiby's lawyers said he will appeal the convictions.

The trial unfolded amid renewed scrutiny of the royal family following disclosures about Mette-Marit's past contacts with Jeffrey Epstein, the deceased sex offender. She has publicly apologized for the association and said she exercised poor judgment in maintaining contact with him. She isn't accused of any wrongdoing.

In a television interview in March, she said she was manipulated and deceived by Epstein and felt unsafe during a 2013 encounter with him at his Palm Beach, Florida, mansion.

In 2018, the royal palace announced that Mette-Marit had been diagnosed with a rare form of chronic pulmonary fibrosis, meaning she sometimes must take a break from her official duties. The incurable condition made breathing increasingly difficult, and she had a dry cough and fatigue, weight loss and loss of appetite. She received a lung transplant in June.

In connection with the couple's 50th birthdays in 2023, NRK interviewed Haakon and aired an old video of him playing guitar, with Ingrid Alexandra and Mette-Marit singing, and another one where he and his children mimic the moves of a Norwegian rapper. He watched the clips and burst into laughter, saying that they showed that "I am all in."

One task for the new king will be to shore up popular support for the royal family. While a majority of people still support it, the proportion has declined in recent years and took a battering this year as Høiby's trial played out. Critics of Haakon's sister, Märtha Louise, who has written books in which she claimed to have contact with angels, also blame her for the family's reputational troubles.

Märtha Louise, who was previously married for 14 years, in 2024 wed Durek Verrett, an American who describes himself as a shaman and a healer on his website. In 2022, she announced that she would no longer officially represent the Norwegian royal house, following "many questions relating to me and my fiancé's role."

A poll published by Norway's Dagbladet newspaper in late 2022 showed 68% of respondents saying they wanted to keep the monarchy. When NRK asked the same question in 2017, support for the royal house stood at 81%.

Russian drones batter Ukraine's Kyiv region, hitting apartments and warehouses for a second day

By HANNA ARHIROVA and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces on Friday resumed their drone barrage of Ukraine's Kyiv region, hitting more than a dozen apartment buildings and storage depots in a second straight day of aerial attacks, officials said.

Prolonged air raids in Kyiv on Thursday essentially locked down the Ukrainian capital for 15 hours, the Foreign Ministry said, choking the economy and severely disrupting civilian life more than 4½ years after Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor. Even longer alerts are a daily reality in regions closer to the front line, the ministry said.

Russian drone and missile attacks are also taking aim at the power grid in what Ukrainian officials say is an annual campaign to "weaponize winter." In Ukraine's southern Kherson region on the Black Sea, where glide bombs a day earlier forced a combined heat and power plant to shut down, officials predicted a winter of extended outages and told people to move elsewhere if they could.

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Russian attacks aim to paralyze Kyiv, Ukraine says

Russian strikes in the Kyiv region damaged 14 warehouses, 16 private houses, three apartment buildings and 16 vehicles, Tymur Tkachenko, head of the Kyiv regional military administration, said Friday.

A second drone hit one location after emergency crews were deployed, the State Emergency Service said, in what is termed by the military as a "double tap" that targets first responders.

The attacks killed one person and wounded two others, according to officials.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that its forces overnight struck a warehouse in the Kyiv region that stores Ukraine's Flamingo cruise missiles and fuel for rocket boosters.

Ukrainian officials didn't immediately confirm the Russian claim, and The Associated Press couldn't verify it. Recent strikes have damaged numerous warehouses across Kyiv and the wider region, including facilities storing books, food and other consumer goods.

The attacks stretched into daylight hours, and Tkachenko urged residents to stay in safe locations and heed air raid alerts.

Russia is launching small numbers of fast-moving jet-powered drones in waves in an attempt to paralyze the capital, according to Andrii Kovalenko, head of Ukraine's Center for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defense Council.

"The goal is to exhaust air defenses and the population," he said on social media on Friday.

Kyiv region authorities said that air quality worsened because of the attacks and warned people in some areas to keep their windows closed and limit their time outdoors.

Four Russian glide bombs destroyed a sorting center belonging to the postal service Nova Poshta in the northern Sumy region, and a drone smashed one of its depots in the Kyiv region, the company said.

Kherson officials advise residents to move away from the region

In the southern Kherson region, which is about 70% under Russian control, officials urged tens of thousands of residents to move to safer regions because of the possibility of prolonged power and heating outages this winter.

"Kherson may be without electricity and heat not for hours or days, but for a long time. And we need to prepare for this now," said Oleksandr Prokudin, head of the Kherson regional military administration, in a social media post late Thursday.

Russia has intensified attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, with 170 glide bombs dropped on the Kherson region since July 1 — more than in the first six months of the year, Prokudin said.

Russia has also launched more than 1,700 attack drones over the past two months, increasingly using jet-powered Shahed and Gerbera drones against critical infrastructure, he said, and attacks by smaller drones rose to 6,500 in the past week alone.

Authorities will offer help with evacuation, transportation, resettlement and social support for those who decide to leave, he said.

Russia and Ukraine keep up their dueling aerial attacks

Russia fired 164 drones at Ukraine overnight, Ukraine's air force said. It didn't mention missiles, which usually are part of Russia's aerial attacks.

A 61-year-old man was killed and seven other people were wounded Friday in a Russian glide bomb attack on the northern Sumy region, said Oleh Hryhorov, head of the Sumy regional military administration.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that its air defenses overnight shot down 512 Ukrainian drones over 18 Russian regions, as well as over the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula and the waters of the Black Sea.

Ukrainian forces struck the Slavneft-YANOS refinery in Russia's Yaroslavl region overnight, causing a fire, Ukraine's General Staff said, as Ukraine continued its campaign against the Russian oil sector.

A fire broke out at the site, which is around 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) from the border with Ukraine, the General Staff said. The plant produces gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel, fuel oil, lubricants and other petroleum products, it added.

A Ukrainian drone attack on Friday morning in the Yaroslavl region killed one person and wounded 27 other people, Gov. Mikhail Yevrayev said. Ten of those were wounded when drone debris fell on a bus, he said.

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He said that unspecified "industrial infrastructure," residential areas and unidentified retail facilities were hit. In the Moscow region that surrounds but doesn't include the Russian capital, a drone hit a supermarket, damaging it and shattering windows in a nearby outpatient clinic, Gov. Andrei Vorobyov said on Telegram. In the port city of Sevastopol in Crimea, a five-story residential building suffered significant damage from a drone, according to the Russian-installed governor of Sevastopol Mikhail Razvozhayev. Four people were wounded, he said. He posted images of a charred building with windows and balconies knocked out.

Beloved New Orleans hospital, wracked by floods and grief in Hurricane Katrina, to get a makeover

By JACK BROOK Associated Press/Report for America

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — In the chaos of Hurricane Katrina, Charity Hospital in New Orleans became a scene of heartbreak and heroism, with doctors scrambling to keep patients alive without power or functioning medical equipment while floodwaters trapped them inside its darkened halls for days on end.

The massive hospital, a New Orleans landmark that long cared for the city's most vulnerable residents, was shuttered after the last patients and staff were rescued in 2005. Now, as Louisiana marks the storm's 21st anniversary Saturday, the long-vacant storm-damaged building is on the brink of new life.

New Orleans landmark is to become a medical research hub

Tulane University announced this summer that it is spearheading a \$500 million effort to convert Charity Hospital into a pioneering medical research facility, transforming the 1930s-era art deco building into a downtown hub of biomedical innovation. Construction is expected to start this fall.

Local leaders have embraced the project in a city where some hospitals have haunted New Orleans since Katrina. Dozens of patients died at the former Memorial hospital, now known as the Ochsner Baptist Medical Center, after floodwaters trapped them inside in sweltering conditions without power. Demolition crews this month began tearing down another complex, the Lindy Boggs Medical Center, which had sat blighted and vacant for more than 20 years after Katrina.

One of the deadliest and most destructive hurricanes in U.S. history, Katrina killed nearly 1,400 people across five states and racked up an estimated \$200 billion in damage, flattening homes along the nearby Gulf Coast and swamping entire neighborhoods with ruinous floods.

Tulane leaders say reviving the iconic landmark marks a major stride in putting behind the hurricane's dark days.

Charity Hospital "reflected the sort of commitment of New Orleans to the healthcare of the community," Tulane President Michael Fitts said. "Now it's being brought back in a way that makes the same commitment to the community."

Past moves to redevelop the art deco building fizzled

For generations, the Charity Hospital system served as New Orleans' safety net, treating all patients regardless of whether they had health insurance. The million-square-foot (93,000-square-meter) main building has remained empty since Katrina. In the intervening decades, various redevelopment gambits have fizzled.

The hospital was run by Louisiana State University, which determined that Katrina left the building too damaged to reopen — an assessment that was disputed by some hospital staff and community members. Instead, LSU used federal disaster relief funding to open a new hospital.

After Katrina made landfall in Louisiana, the failure of New Orleans' federal levee system inundated about 80% of the city in floodwaters.

A doctor recalls canoeing through the flooded city to check on hospital patients

Dr. Lee Hamm, dean of the Tulane University School of Medicine, recalled canoeing through the submerged city to check on the welfare of patients and health care staff.

"Everyone was exhibiting a lot of courage at the moment," Hamm said. "People were going about doing what they needed to do."

The new medical research hub is scheduled to be completed in 2029.

Plans include providing space for medical and public health programs as part of what Fitts called "the largest, most significant initiative in the history of Tulane." The new accommodations will also include labs for hundreds of researchers, space for biomedical startups, and classrooms.

Hamm said he hopes the hub will spur medical advancements that benefit the entire Gulf South.

Anticipating a bright, new future for the Charity Hospital building, New Orleans Mayor Helena Moreno called the redevelopment "a welcome step forward and an opportunity to put this historic property back to productive use."

Judge says Pentagon's measures against Anthropic were 'illegal and baseless'

By KAITLYN HUAMANI AP Technology Writer

A federal judge has ruled in favor of artificial intelligence company Anthropic in its legal battle against the Pentagon after the government labeled the company as a supply chain risk earlier this year.

U.S. District Judge Rita Lin issued a written order Thursday night that the Pentagon acted illegally by punishing the AI company for its criticism of the Department of Defense's views on AI use. The government is expected to fight the ruling.

The dispute between the AI company and the government broke out in February when President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth accused Anthropic of endangering national security and designated the company a supply chain risk. Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei refused to back down over concerns the company's products could be used for mass surveillance or autonomous armed drones.

Lin wrote that the government's actions "were based on a desire to make a public example out of Anthropic for its 'arrogance' in criticizing the government, not based on any articulable basis to believe that Anthropic would actually sabotage its model."

An Anthropic spokesperson said in a statement that they welcome the judge's ruling: "We remain focused on working productively with the government to harness AI for our national security so all Americans benefit from this technology."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In the 59-page ruling, Lin, an appointee of former President Joe Biden, wrote that neither the Constitution nor the federal statute the government invoked allows them to "impose sweeping penalties based principally on Anthropic's critique of the Administration's views."

Anthropic sued the Pentagon over the supply chain risk designation in March for what it called an "unlawful campaign of retaliation" over its refusal to allow unrestricted military use of its technology.

The legal challenge intensified an unusually public dispute over how AI can be used in warfare and mass surveillance. Anthropic's primary tech industry rival, ChatGPT maker OpenAI, made its own deal to work with the Pentagon just hours after the government punished Anthropic for its stance.

Anthropic and OpenAI are each ramping up for buzzy initial public offerings.

Anthropic has also filed a separate and narrower case that is still pending in the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C. That case involves a different rule the Pentagon is using to try to declare Anthropic a supply chain risk.

Earlier in the legal proceedings, Lin had temporarily blocked the Pentagon from labeling the company as a supply chain risk and blocked enforcement of Trump's social media directive ordering all federal agencies to stop using Anthropic and its chatbot Claude.

In a hearing July 30, Lin had said that the government's position was "really troubling" to her and that it seemed "at odds to me with the First Amendment." She also said she believed the record had "gotten worse for the government" over time.

In that same hearing, Department of Justice lawyers argued that the nature of AI models is "so staggeringly enormous and opaque" that the Defense Department cannot evaluate it in the same way it would a physical piece of hardware.

Anthropic lawyer Michael Mongan said in that hearing that the government's actions "profoundly harm

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Anthropic" and that they "threaten more broadly to chill speech and debate on a very important issue."

Today in History: August 29, Hurricane Katrina strikes Louisiana

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Aug. 29, the 241st day of 2026. There are 124 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the U.S. Gulf Coast in southeast Louisiana, breaching levees and spurring floods that devastated New Orleans. Katrina caused nearly 1,400 deaths and an estimated \$200 billion in damage.

Also on this date:

In 1814, during the War of 1812, Alexandria, Virginia, formally surrendered to British military forces, which occupied the city until Sept. 3.

In 1825, the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro was signed by Portugal and Brazil, officially ending the Brazilian War of Independence.

In 1862, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing began operations at the United States Treasury.

In 1944, 15,000 American troops of the 28th Infantry Division marched down the Champs-Élysées in Paris as the French capital continued to celebrate its liberation from the Nazis.

In 1949, the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb, ending the U.S. monopoly on atomic weapons.

In 1958, the U.S. Air Force Academy opened in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In 1966, the Beatles concluded their fourth American tour with their last public concert, held at Candlestick Park in San Francisco.

In 2004, marathoner Vanderlei de Lima was attacked by a spectator during the Olympic marathon in Athens; de Lima, who was leading the race at the time, eventually finished third and received the Pierre de Coubertin medal for sportsmanship in addition to his bronze medal.

In 2008, Republican presidential nominee John McCain picked Sarah Palin, a maverick conservative who had been governor of Alaska for less than two years, to be his running mate.

In 2013, in a sweeping new policy statement, the Justice Department said it would not stand in the way of states that wanted to legalize, tax and regulate marijuana as long as there were effective controls to keep marijuana away from children, the black market and federal property.

In 2021, Hurricane Ida blasted ashore in Louisiana as one of the most powerful storms ever to hit the U.S., knocking out power to all of New Orleans, blowing roofs off buildings and briefly reversing the flow of the Mississippi River.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Elliott Gould is 88. Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin is 88. Olympic gold medal sprinter Wyomia Tyus is 81. Olympic gold medal long jumper Bob Beamon is 80. Animal behaviorist and autism educator Temple Grandin is 79. Dancer-choreographer Mark Morris is 70. Actor Rebecca De Mornay is 67. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch is 59. Singer Me'Shell NdegeOcello (n-DAY'-gay-OH'-chehl-oh) is 58. Actor Carla Gugino is 55. Actor-singer Lea Michele is 40. Actor Eduardo Franco is 32.