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Community Calendar

Thursday, Sept. 3

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, mashed potatoes with gravy, winter blend, fruit, whole wheat bread

School Breakfast: Cheese breakfast bake.

School Lunch: Turkey gravy, whipped potatoes. Cross Country at Redfield, 10 a.m.

Volleyball at Sisseton: 8th at 4 p.m. and 7th at 5 p.m. at Practice Facility; C at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow at Ben Reifel Gym.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Sixth Grade football hosts Aberdeen, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 4

Senior Menu: Baked fish, baked potato, peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

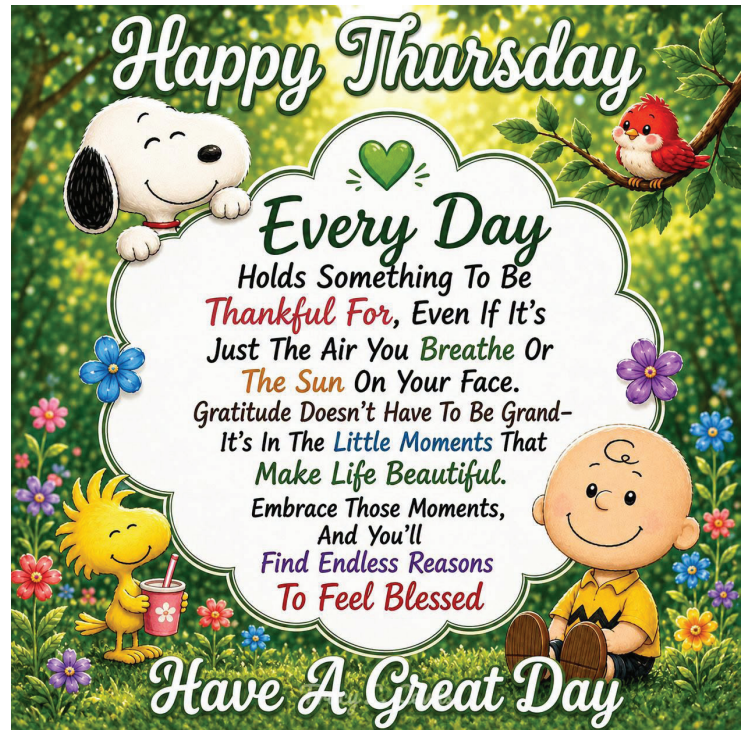
No School

Football hosts Flandreau, 7 p.m.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



Saturday, Sept. 5

JH VB tournament at Northwestern, 9 a.m.

Pickleball at Elementary Gym, 9:30 a.m.

Soccer at West Central (Girls at noon, boys at 2 p.m.)

Sunday, Sept. 6

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship 9 a.m.

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

Third Grade Basketball practice in the GHS Gym, 4 p.m.

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

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

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

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

Monday, Sept. 7

LABOR DAY

No School

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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.

Iran Strikes Escalate

Iran's foreign ministry accused the US of a war crime yesterday after shrapnel from a US missile hit a home hosting a wedding in Kuhestak, east of the Strait of Hormuz. The attack reportedly killed four people and wounded over 60.

US Central Command said it struck Iranian military targets along the country's southern coast Tuesday to counter Tehran's attacks on commercial ships and US forces. The attacks resulted in 14 other fatalities. Iran responded by targeting US military bases in Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait. Most of the missiles and drones were intercepted, and no casualties were reported as of this writing. The exchange ended a monthslong pause in military action, during which the US sought to isolate Iran through economic sanctions.

Meanwhile, the USS Abraham Lincoln docked in Thailand yesterday for a port call after 286 days at sea. The roughly 5,000-person crew will remain there until Sunday, then return to San Diego.

Meta Glasses Crackdown

Meta announced new measures yesterday to block people using its AI-powered smart glasses from filming others without their knowledge. The effort comes as demand for Meta Glasses has skyrocketed, alongside a wave of videos showing men harassing women in public.

The company's partnerships with Ray-Ban and Oakley have succeeded where other smart glasses endeavors have failed: Last year, Meta sold more than 7 million pairs—more than triple the 2 million sold in 2023 and 2024. The market has skewed young and male, with Meta accounting for roughly 82% of global sales. However, some have criticized how easy it is for users to film people without their consent, including by covering up a light indicating recording. Now, Meta says cameras will be disabled if the glasses detect the light has been covered.

Apple and Snap are developing competing products amid predictions the sector will grow more than 60% by 2029. Google is also reentering the market, years after the failure of Google Glass.

 **Humankind:** New York City deli manager offers students cash and snack rewards if they improve their grades.

Einstein Theory Prevails

A falling quantum object is subject to the effects of gravity, a new study found yesterday. The finding for the first time confirms a decades-old prediction by Albert Einstein, aligning with his broader theory of gravity.

Physicists sought to probe whether Einstein's equivalence principle—whereby objects undergo weightlessness in free fall—applies on a quantum level. To test the question, they used an apparatus that split a quantum wave associated with an atom into two paths, holding one still while projecting the other into free fall. After the experiment, interference between the waves allowed researchers to record a tiny difference in quantum phase aligning with calculations anticipated by Einstein's theory of gravity. The finding marks the first direct measurement of its kind and suggests that the equivalence principle continues to apply at the quantum level.

While novel, the study does not reconcile the fields of quantum and classical physics.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NBA fines LA Clippers \$30M and strips team of five future first-round draft picks over salary cap violations. Tiger Woods strikes plea deal requiring \$1.5K fine and five-year license suspension after DUI charges in March.

HBO unveils new trailer for "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" series debuting on Dec. 25. "Wheel of Fortune" announcer Jim Thornton has been suspended from game show over unspecified allegations.

"Dancing With the Stars" reveals season 35 cast.

Science & Technology

Astronomers discover a 10-sided wave pattern in clouds above Saturn's south pole via Hubble Space Telescope, evoking the 1980 discovery of a six-sided storm on Saturn's north pole.

GLP-1s may slow aging in mice, as new research indicates older female mice that received semaglutide had a lifespan 12% longer than that of counterparts who did not get the obesity drug.

DNA may influence around 7%-11% of your personality, according to a new study that found over 1,200 genetic variants associated with traits like extraversion and agreeableness.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up (S&P 500 +0.5%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq +0.5%).

Southwest Airlines to debut airport lounges in Austin, Baltimore, Honolulu, and Nashville.

Google avoids breakup of ad-tech business after judge rejects forced sale; tech giant faces new rules designed to increase competition in online advertising.

Uber to cut 10% of its workforce, or about 3,300 people.

Chevron to invest over \$7B in Venezuela over five years, aiming to more than double oil production to roughly 600,000 barrels per day—more than half Venezuela's current output.

Politics & World Affairs

Jury in Lindsay Clancy case tells judge it is deadlocked again, prompting the judge to read "Tuey-Rodriguez" instructions; scroll to read.

Justice Department requires states to report undocumented immigrants in order to receive federal funding for low-income residents.

New York City temporarily bans use of AI in public school classrooms through eighth grade.

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).
=====

NOTICE: MEETING TIME CHANGE

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

September 3, 2026 – 7:00pm
City Hall – 120 North Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY
CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Department Reports
4. 2026 Baseball Report and Discussion
5. Second Reading of Ordinance No. 797 – Supplemental Appropriations
6. Review Statements of Qualifications for Architectural/Engineering Services for Park Saferoom and Award
7. Approval of Funding Agreement for 2028 Signing and Delineation Project
8. Minutes
9. Bills
10. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
11. Adjournment

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New See Saw

The new see saw has been installed at the Groton City Park. The new one is pictured above. The old one that was there is pictured on the left. The Groton Chamber of Commerce helped raise funds for the new see saw. (Photos by Paul Kosel)

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The Groton Area boys golf team went to Milbank on Tuesday for a dual competition. The Groton Area boys won the event. Pictured left to right are Bentley Ehresmann, Haden Harder, Liam Johnson, Jace Johnson, Graham Rose and Jack Schuelke. (Courtesy photo)



Volleyball

Groton Area
at Sisseton
Thursday, Sept. 3, 5 p.m.



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE

 YouTube
A production of the
Groton Daily Independent

For more info: GDILIVE.COM





C match at 5 p.m.
JV at 6 p.m.
Varsity to Follow

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

FEMA to reimburse eight South Dakota counties, three tribes for storm-related infrastructure fixes

Members of Oglala Sioux Tribe also eligible for individual assistance for flooding

BY JOHN HULT

The federal government will reimburse up to 75% of public infrastructure repair costs from storms that hit eight South Dakota counties and two Native American reservations in late June and early July, the Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Wednesday.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe, meanwhile, is in line for the same level of reimbursements for repairs to public infrastructure caused by storms in early June, and individual tribal members will be eligible for financial aid to cover some property losses from that incident.

Gov. Larry Rhoden requested a presidential disaster declaration from the Trump administration in late July, in a letter laying out \$4.5 million in public property damage from a storm system that moved through the state between June 28 and July 3.

Rhoden said, first in a Tuesday evening social media post and again in a press release on Wednesday, that President Donald Trump called him directly to tell him about approving the state's request for a disaster declaration.

On X, Rhoden shared a post from Trump in which the president wrote "South Dakota is a special place, which I won by Historic margins, three times, and I will always deliver BIG for them."

The disaster declaration for the state as a whole will reimburse public property repair costs in Beadle, Bennett, Buffalo, Day, Hand, Hughes, Hyde and Stanley Counties, along with the Crow Creek and Lower Brule reservations. Roads, power systems, parks, recreation areas and public facilities were damaged in the storm, with the heaviest impacts in Hyde and Beadle counties.

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe President Boyd Gorneau told South Dakota Searchlight on Wednesday that the tribe lost some center-pivot irrigation systems on its agricultural land in the storm.

FEMA sent a press release on disaster declarations for South Dakota on Wednesday, but the release did not include dollar figures.

A FEMA spokesperson told Searchlight the reimbursement isn't limited to the \$4.5 million in damage cited in Rhoden's request to President Trump, whose post said he'd "approved" \$3.4 million — a figure that would cover 75% of the cost to repair that damage.

The actual amount paid in reimbursement will be based on the cost to repair infrastructure, the spokesman said, provided local governments and state officials adhere to FEMA guidelines and protocols.

The same will be true for the Oglala Sioux Tribe's public infrastructure. The tribe, which requested a disaster declaration separately, was hit with flash flooding June 2-4 after a heavy rain and hail storm.

During the first round of storms, according to the National Weather Service, "6 to 7 inches of rain fell in a short period, causing streets and ditches to fill extremely quickly," in addition to strong winds and hail. A tornado touched down near Ideal in Tripp County the following day, damaging mostly agricultural land.

The individual assistance program, part of the FEMA announcement for the tribe, will allow residents to work with FEMA to obtain "grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and families recover from the effects of the disaster," the spokesperson wrote in an email.

A separate press release from FEMA on the tribal disaster declaration said that tribal members who experienced losses in the storms "should document their damage, keep any receipts for repairs, and file

a claim with their insurance provider.”

“Information on how individuals may apply for federal disaster assistance will be announced when it is available,” the press release said.

The FEMA spokesperson said the tribe has not requested a disaster declaration for a more recent hail-storm, which dropped baseball-sized hail on some areas of tribal land, damaging school buses and homes and forcing a delayed start to the school year.

The tribe’s public information officer did not immediately return calls and emails seeking comment on Wednesday.

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

Why the rushed Postal Service plan for mail-in voting has states in a panic

BY JACOB FISCHLER

President Donald Trump’s executive order placing new restrictions on mail-in voting would assign state officials a Herculean task to reach compliance before the crucial midterm elections.

The order directed the U.S. Postal Service to strictly regulate the envelope design of mail-in ballots and to collect voter data from each state through an online portal, among other things.

The Postal Service has argued in court that its rule is not an election regulation, but is within the agency’s purview as a standard for a specific type of mail.

But some state officials tasked with fitting their systems to the new regulations say it presents massive — if not impossible — challenges to reach compliance for the November midterms, when voters will decide whether to continue Republican control of the U.S. House and Senate.

Ballot designs and printing are typically done months in advance of ballots being sent to voters, which begins this week. North Carolina is set to mail out ballots for the Nov. 3 general election on Friday.

“In some States, it would be impossible at this point to comply with the last-minute rollout of USPS’ novel ballot-verification program,” more than 20 Democratic-led states suing to block the order said in a Wednesday court filing. “In other States, there will be chaos.”

The states presented a list of tasks state and local elections administrators would have to complete.

That list includes: redesigning ballot envelopes and obtaining USPS approval “on an unprecedented timetable,” purchasing new envelopes, developing technological systems to meet barcode standards in the rule, uploading voter-specific information to the USPS portal that they have not yet received access to and training state and local officials and voters on the new standards.

“Each step of this process is fraught with an extreme risk of error,” they said.

‘Courts will stop it’

Because of the unworkable timeline and a general principle not to change voting policy too close to an election, officials believe courts will ultimately block the rule from going into effect for this year.

“There’s a pretty universal feeling that the courts will stop it from happening,” Katy Owens Hubler, the director of elections at the National Conference of State Legislatures, said in an interview.

“In general, you don’t want to be changing things right before the election. So in a lot of ways, it is already too late. Part of the rule relates to the absentee ballot envelopes themselves. And ... almost universally, those have already been designed and printed.”

A Massachusetts federal judge has paused the rule from taking effect through Sept. 11 while multiple legal fights play out.

Tammy Patrick, the chief programs officer at the National Association of Election Officials, a nonpartisan industry group for state and local elections officials, said in a court declaration filed Aug. 28 the timeline was unworkable for the midterms.

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"None of the Rule's requirements can feasibly be implemented before the November 3, 2026, General Election," she wrote. "Administration of the 2026 election is already well underway, with timelines, budgets, and staffing already set, many of which are unmovable or unchangeable."

The rule's requirements "will place new and heavy burdens" on election offices whose budgets are "already constrained," she added.

Election officials and USPS began preparing for the 2026 election months ago, she said. And states already set funding levels.

"The infeasibility of the Rule for election officials is obvious when you consider the calendar and preparation for the 2026 general election next to the Rule's requirements and implementation," she wrote.

The rule would force states to push through in a matter of weeks what should take a year, Matthew Weil, the vice president for democracy and bipartisanship at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington think tank, said.

"A year of lead time is the best practice before any new policy," he said.

Envelope design

Some of the requirements themselves are not objectionable, according to experts.

The standards for envelope design, for example, largely codify best practices the Postal Service has recommended for years.

But the rule also requires that USPS approve each design, possibly through an online portal that has yet to be introduced and has reportedly seen major problems in development.

Nationwide, there are about 40 mail design analysts who would be qualified to judge mail ballot designs. Asking every state, and many counties that have their own designs, to submit them at the same time would be unworkable.

"If even a fraction of election offices has to submit their new envelopes and materials ... before the 2026 election, it would take weeks for USPS to work through the sudden volume," Patrick wrote.

A similar problem could face election offices seeking to order printing of new ballots and envelopes, she said. The turnaround time for new envelopes could stretch 12 to 16 weeks, she said.

Despite those obstacles, the rule would mean any ballots that do not fit the new specifications would be rejected, possibly stopping many voters from casting ballots.

IT problem

Like the implementation of ballot envelope standards, the rule's requirement that states electronically share voter files with the federal government has suffered from a rushed process, according to an explosive whistleblower complaint published Tuesday.

The Postal Service lacks the capacity to implement the executive order, David Becker, the executive director of the Center for Election Innovation and Research, said in a statement Tuesday.

"They secretly rushed development of the technology the order demanded, trying to piece it together in a few months rather than taking the time required for a proper rollout," he said. "This slapdash effort is guaranteed to result in significant problems just weeks before the election, potentially disenfranchising thousands of voters."

Owens Hubler said states have not yet gained access to the portal.

"It's a pretty big (information technology) project to have done very quickly," she said. "And I don't know that anybody's actually seen it yet. So, that's another aspect of putting it into place before the election that could be pretty tough."

The Bipartisan Policy Center predicted the difficulty in building the portal in a July 6 comment on the notice of proposed rulemaking by the USPS. The center noted that state and local officials would have difficulty complying.

"Whether election officials can meet this burden at all depends on the successful deployment of a tool that does not yet exist," the group wrote. "Building, testing, deploying, and training election officials to use a portal before October 4 (the beginning of the 30-day window during which election officials will be supplying lists to USPS) will be an enormous undertaking, and the risk of delay in the deployment of this

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portal is significant.”

The Postal Service did not respond to a message seeking comment Wednesday.

In a Tuesday statement, a spokesperson said the agency was finalizing the portal’s development, and called it “just one part of a broader, year-round effort” to ensure election mail is properly handled.

“The Postal Service is now finalizing the portal and will soon make it available to election officials who voluntarily wish to familiarize themselves with the platform,” the spokesperson said. “USPS will also provide tools, presentations, and other resources to help election officials understand the platform and make informed decisions about whether and how they wish to use it.”

Universal mail states

States that already mail ballots to every registered voter, and the large jurisdictions within those states, may have an easier time meeting the standards, Owens Hubler said. If they are not already in compliance, they likely have a relationship with a commercial printer that could possibly handle a short order.

But smaller, less-resourced counties and states that don’t have a robust mail-in voting program may have more trouble finding last-minute fixes.

The eight states that have universal mail voting — California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont and Washington — “will be affected, but everyone’s affected,” Owens Hubler said. “And I think it is important to think of the ones that just don’t have to do this as often. They may, in the end, be more affected.”

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

Crow Creek tribal member to be South Dakota’s next Missing and Murdered Indigenous People liaison

BY JOHN HULT

A Fort Thompson resident and member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe who has more than two decades of experience working with crime victims will serve as South Dakota’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous People specialist.

Marlys Big Eagle will fill the role vacated earlier this summer by Allison Morrisette, who in 2022 became the first to serve in the position.

Attorney General Marty Jackley, under whose office the liaison serves, announced Big Eagle’s hiring in a press release Wednesday.

“Marlys has spent her career helping victims of violence and families looking for missing loved ones,” Jackley said in the release. “Her credibility with tribal communities, law enforcement, and prosecutors makes her an outstanding choice.”

Big Eagle worked with crime victims for the U.S. Department of Justice for 27 years. For 23 of those years, she worked as the supervisory victim witness coordinator for the U.S. Attorney’s Office in South Dakota. For the past four years, she’s worked for the department’s Washington, D.C., executive office as the agency’s first Native American outreach services liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People cases occurring in tribal areas.

The job of state-level liaison was created by the Legislature in 2021 but not funded. Initially, Morrisette’s salary was paid by a nonprofit organization. Jackley successfully lobbied to make the position permanent and state-funded shortly after she was hired.

The liaison works to connect family members to resources and the law enforcement agencies investigating their loved ones’ cases. In June, Morrisette told South Dakota Searchlight that serving as the first MMIP liaison for the state was an honor, but that the new position she accepted, working with juveniles for the Unified Judicial System, was a better fit for her growing family.

In the press release on her hiring, Big Eagle said she’s “deeply honored” to have been selected to work

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with families "as they seek answers and confirmation about what may have happened to their loved ones."

"I look forward to working alongside other MMIP stakeholders and partners to help bring answers, support, and justice to these important cases," Big Eagle said.

Nationwide, Native Americans are more likely than non-Natives to die by homicide. In 2023, homicide rates for Native Americans were nearly five times higher than for non-Hispanic whites, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Native Americans are also disproportionately represented in missing people cases. South Dakota maintains an online clearinghouse for all people reported missing to a law enforcement agency within the state's borders. Consistently, 60% of the cases involve Native Americans, while around 8.5% of the state's population is Native.

As of Wednesday afternoon, 58 of the state's 93 missing people were Native American. Thirty of the 48 missing women were Native American.

The South Dakota liaison position was created the year after state lawmakers voted to create that public-facing missing people site in 2020. A few months later, Congress passed the Not Invisible Act, which created a commission to investigate the underlying causes and identify improvements to help address the overrepresentation of Native Americans in missing people cases and violent crimes.

Nine tribal nations share borders with the state of South Dakota, which has one of the highest per-capita populations of Native Americans in the U.S.

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

Trump's newest order on birthright citizenship blocked in federal court

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

A federal judge in Maryland Wednesday blocked President Donald Trump's second attempt to redefine birthright citizenship.

In a preliminary injunction, U.S. District Judge Deborah Boardman barred the Trump administration from carrying out the president's executive order that would deny citizenship to babies born in the United States to parents deemed part of a designated terrorist organization or to parents who purposefully came to the U.S. to gain citizenship in what critics call "birth tourism."

The executive order also aimed to deny citizenship to children born to foreign diplomatic staff and children born in U.S. territories where Congress has not passed a law granting citizenship, which is only American Samoa.

In her order, Boardman said this summer's Supreme Court ruling affirmed the country's long understanding that babies born on U.S. soil were guaranteed American citizenship.

"The 2026 Executive Order is almost certainly unconstitutional as applied to the certified class for the simple reason that the Supreme Court in *Barbara* already decided that the children in the class are citizens at birth," she wrote, referring to the earlier case. "This Court must, once again, preliminarily enjoin enforcement of the President's most recent attempt to strip the right to citizenship from them."

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

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

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SNAP cuts could lead to kids losing free school breakfast and lunch

BY KEVIN HARDY

Cuts to the nation's largest food assistance program will likely spill over into schools, causing students to lose access to free breakfast and lunch.

More than 1 million American children have lost access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, following a recent federal law. Now, as schools gear up for a new term, a portion of those children could be at risk of losing free meals — viewed as crucial supports for both childhood hunger and classroom learning.

But the changes in cafeterias could affect even families who have never participated in the federal food stamp program.

Many students who receive free school meals automatically qualify because of their household participation in SNAP or Medicaid. So a reduction in those social service programs can directly threaten their eligibility for free school meals.

And many schools offer free meals to all students. Those schools qualify for federal funding that is tied to rates of SNAP participation. The complicated federal funding formula means even a slight change in SNAP enrollment could jeopardize free meal funding for entire schools and districts.

"Cuts to SNAP are not going to stop at the grocery store," said Clarissa Hayes, deputy director of child nutrition programs and policy at the Food Research & Action Center, a nonprofit working to combat hunger. "They really are going to threaten children's access to school meals, which is obviously going to increase hunger at home and in the classroom, and is going to have that negative ripple effect across children's health and academic performance."

The threat to school meals comes during a period of upheaval for federal safety net programs and growing hunger across the country amid rising grocery prices. Last year's One Big Beautiful Bill Act implemented new eligibility and work requirements for SNAP as well as pushed new costs onto states. Already, millions have lost food stamps, but the threats to schools are just coming into focus.

"We are really only starting to see the beginning," Hayes said.

The free school meal program allows previously qualified students to remain enrolled over a 30-day grace period. And some students who lost SNAP coverage may still qualify for free meals at school if their families submit certain paperwork.

Many low-income families are struggling to keep their kids fed, according to a recent survey from the nonprofit No Kid Hungry. In that survey, parents said back-to-school season creates impossible choices: More than two-thirds worried they would have to choose between paying bills or buying healthy food for their kids. Already, more than half reported cutting back on groceries given the high prices.

More than a quarter of the nation's public schools currently offer universal free meals. Aside from the obvious financial benefit to families, those schools have reduced the stigma of free lunch and improved efficiency in the lunch line and the office since no one is paying up front for meals or working to track down unpaid meal debt, said Carolyn Vega, senior program manager at No Kid Hungry.

But federal changes could halt the important progress made in expanding universal access.

"Then all kids at all incomes would suffer," Vega said.

Importance of school meals

For Tennessee parent Anthony Bonner, this year's first day of school delivered instant relief. It meant that his 14-year-old son was ensured a free breakfast and lunch every weekday, leaving worry only about dinner each night.

"School starting has definitely alleviated some of that stress, that worry and that concern," said Bonner, a 38-year-old campaign organizer and barber in Memphis.

School meals are more important than ever since the pair lost their \$250 monthly SNAP benefit in March. Bonner said he lost his eligibility because of federal changes that ended the work requirement exemption for parents of children 14 and over. He is currently working a contract job that doesn't satisfy federal work requirements.

It's caused him to cut back on fresh proteins and produce, opting instead for cheaper frozen veggies

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and packaged foods like ramen packets.

"It's one thing to cut me off, but I should have been able to get benefits for him," he said. "I still have yet to really have enough food that I feel comfortable with that me and my son can eat for the month."

For now, his son's breakfast and lunch will continue as his entire school receives free meals.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Community Eligibility Provision reimburses schools for a portion of breakfasts and lunches using a formula based on the percentage of students that qualify for SNAP and other means-tested programs.

Kids attending schools in the highest poverty areas will likely maintain eligibility for free meals for now, said Diane Pratt-Heavner, spokesperson for the School Nutrition Association, which represents 50,000 school meal providers across the country.

But schools with more mixed economic levels could lose free meal eligibility as participation in SNAP declines.

This summer, Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida announced it would no longer offer free meals at all of its 500-plus schools because of changes to its federal reimbursement eligibility. Florida's largest school system still has universal free meals in 121 schools, but children at the remaining schools must now individually apply for free meals.

This fall, Central Kentucky's Marion County Public Schools remain in a holding pattern, said Jennifer Wheeler, school nutrition director. The school system currently offers free meals for all, but future funding may be at risk as student participation in SNAP declines.

Under its current four-year certification, the school system receives the maximum federal reimbursement for about 93% of its students. But Wheeler said current SNAP enrollment means the school system would receive the full reimbursement for about 75% of its students.

"Which then is a huge financial impact on our program," she said.

Like many school meal programs, Marion County's is self-funded, meaning it doesn't receive local tax revenue to feed its 3,000 students across seven schools. Rather, federal meal reimbursements must cover the costs of food, labor and kitchen equipment.

Wheeler said rising grocery prices have already stretched many families in her community. As evidence, she pointed to the school summer feeding program, which last year handed out about 134,000 prepackaged meals. This summer, the same program with the same offerings and logistics gave out more than 201,000 meals.

"When people would come through the lines, they would talk about grocery costs," she said. "They would talk about gas costs. So inflation, I think, is the number one driver."

Changing federal landscape

When Congress passed last year's One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Republicans who supported food stamp cuts downplayed their impact. Many, including House Speaker Mike Johnson, said the changes would help cut waste and fraud from the safety net program.

Between May 2025 and May 2026, more than 5.6 million people lost SNAP coverage, according to the latest federal data.

That 13.5% one-year decline was a much faster drop in coverage than was originally anticipated by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office that analyzed last year's legislation.

The latest federal data showed about 36.6 million people received SNAP in May with an average monthly benefit of about \$187 per person.

SNAP benefits are expected to shrink more as the law is fully implemented — raising fears that some states could even drop out of the program entirely as the federal government requires states to spend billions on administrative costs and benefits.

The White House did not respond to Stateline's questions about how the SNAP changes will impact school meals. Neither did a spokesperson for the U.S. Senate agriculture committee that oversees SNAP and school meal programs.

Currently, nine states provide free meals for all school students: California, Colorado, Maine, Massachu-

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setts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York and Vermont. Experts say students in those states, which rely on a mix of state and federal funding, should be shielded from the SNAP fallout for now.

But even states where lawmakers have specifically funded school meals could see major financial upheaval.

In Maine, for example, the state spends \$64 million per year to supplement federal meal reimbursements. But federal funds are based on how many low-income families schools serve. And those calculations will likely change as more children lose food stamps.

Already, more than 15,000 Mainers have lost SNAP coverage since last July, according to the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The changing landscape could force the state to spend much more to supplement school meals, Maine Morning Star reported.

"Free meals for all was already a big ask when it first went into law, and that was when the federal government was giving more money," Allison Leavitt, nutrition director of the Lisbon School Department and president of the Maine School Nutrition Association, told the Morning Star. "Now the feds are giving less money and it's like, how do we do this?"

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

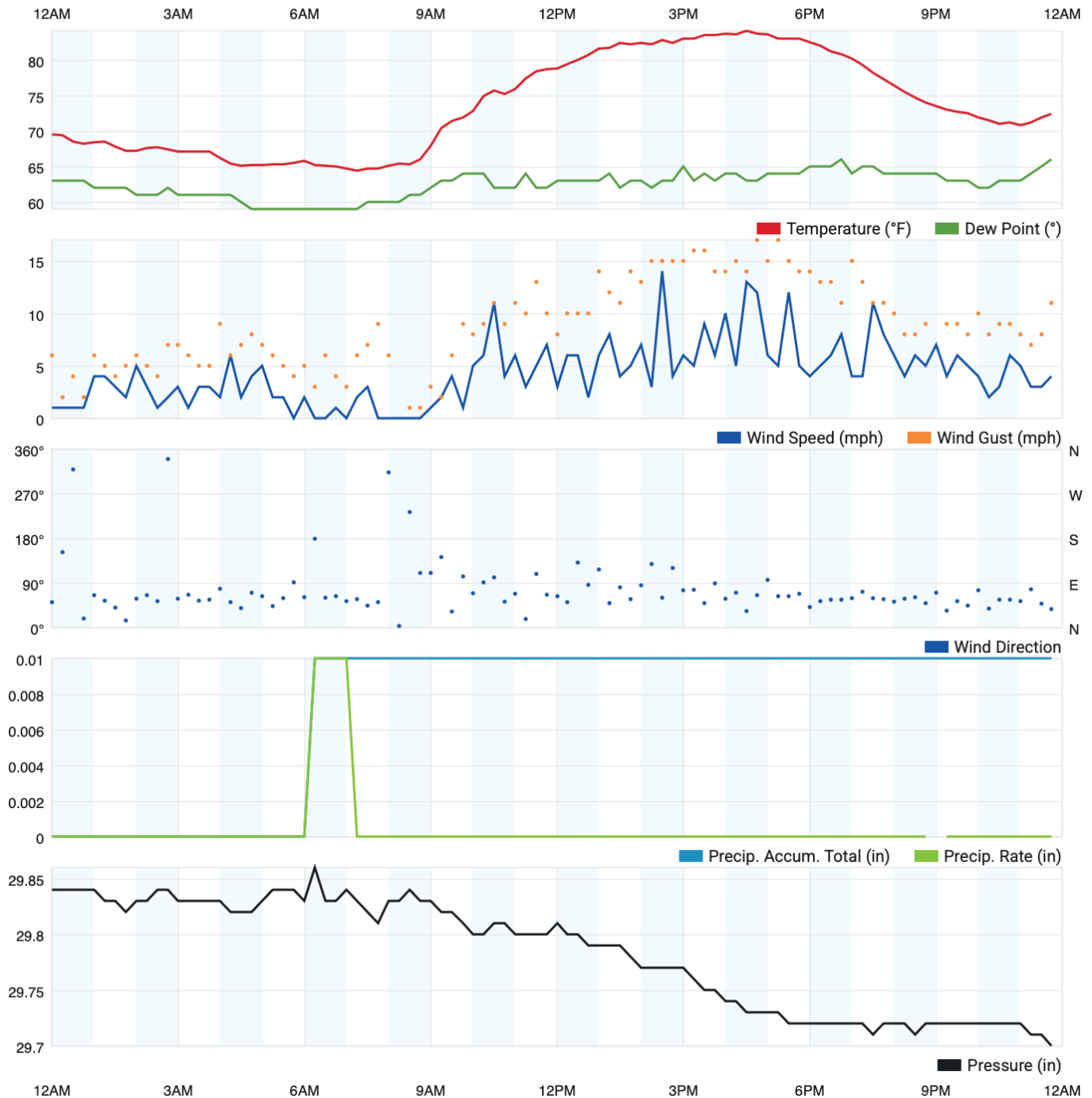
Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 2, 2026



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Thursday



High: 89 °F

Becoming
Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 62 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 90 °F

Hot

Friday Night



Low: 69 °F

Mostly Clear
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

Saturday

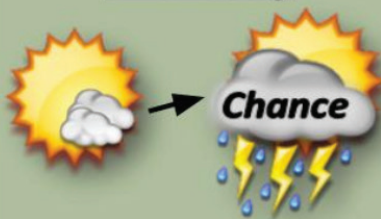


High: 91 °F

Slight Chance
Showers

Upcoming Forecast

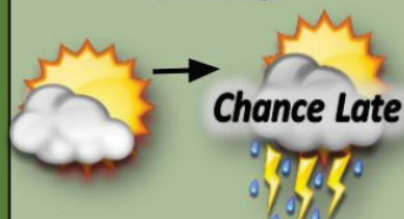
Thursday



Highs: 85-95°F

20-30% chance for
storms during the
late afternoon and
evening northeast
SD/west central MN

Friday



Highs: 87-96°F

20% chance for a
couple of storms
across south
central SD late

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84 °F at 4:30 PM

Low Temp: 64 °F at 7:14 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 3:35 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1897

Record Low: 31 in 1974

Average High: 79

Average Low: 52

Average Precip in Sept.: 0.21

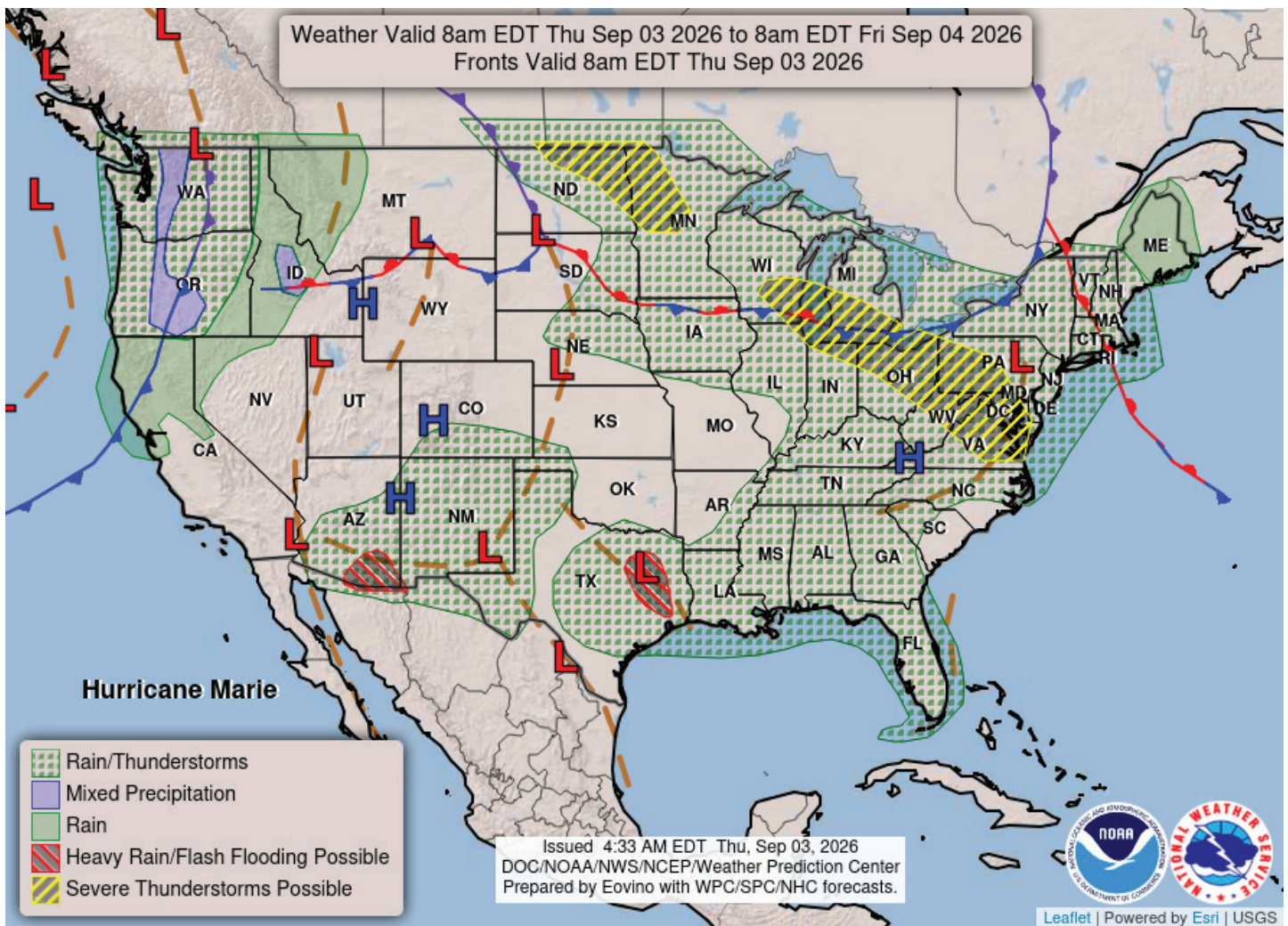
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 16.55

Precip Year to Date: 20.06

Sunset Tonight: 8:07 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:57 am



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Today in Weather History

September 3, 1974: An early freeze occurred across Minnesota and Wisconsin as temperatures fell into the upper 20s to the lower 30s. The cold was the earliest freeze on record in some parts of the state ending the growing season. The most significant damage was to the soybean and corn crop. Damage estimates were more than \$100 million.

September 3, 1999: Training thunderstorms resulted in extensive flash flooding in a 30 to 40-mile wide band from Fort Pierre in southeast Stanley County to Hecla in northeast Brown County. Rainfall amounts in this corridor ranged from 3 to 7 inches. As a result, the communities of Blunt in Hughes County and Onida in Sully County were severely flooded. Most of the homes and businesses were inundated throughout Blunt and Onida causing severe damage. Only a few houses in these communities were spared from receiving water in their basements. Most homes also experienced sewer backup. The sewer systems in both Onida and Blunt were flooded and shut down. Many people had to go to temporary shelters as a result of the flooding. Aberdeen and Fort Pierre had a lot of street flooding resulting in road closures and detours. Also, several basements in Aberdeen and Fort Pierre had the sewer backup. The torrential rains flooded many township and county roads along with several state and U.S. highways. Sections of Highways 14, 20, 83, and 1806 along with many other roads in central and northeast South Dakota had to be closed due to the flooding. Many of the township and county roads had massive amounts of gravel washed away. Some bridges received minor damage with some culverts also lost. A few pets and livestock were also lost as a result of the flooding. Many acres of crops were flooded throughout the area. Some rainfall amounts included 3 inches at Fort Pierre, 4 inches at Hecla and in the Aberdeen Area, 5 inches at the Sand Lake Wildlife Refuge and Blunt, 6 inches at Seneca, 7 inches 10 miles southeast of Gettysburg and at Onida.

1821: Known as the 1821 Norfolk Long Island Hurricane, this storm ripped up the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast coast September 3 and 4 – coinciding with Labor Day (before the holiday was established). Click [HERE](#) for more information from AMS.

On this day in 1821, the “famous” Norfolk-Long Island hurricane occurred - “the only major hurricane to pass over New York City.” It was probably a strong major hurricane when making landfall in N Carolina, but I have serious doubts it was a major when passing over New York. pic.twitter.com/roV8kKanp6

— Cary Mock (@cary_mock) September 3, 2018

1834: A strong hurricane made landfall near Georgetown, South Carolina.

On this date in 1834, a strong hurricane made landfall near Georgetown, SC. Maybe a major hurricane, but I never found enough good proof. pic.twitter.com/hjBGYtyfFY

— Cary Mock (@cary_mock) September 3, 2017

1930: A Category 4 hurricane devastates the Dominican Republic on this day. This storm killed more than 8,000 individuals, which is it the fifth deadliest Atlantic hurricane on record.

1953 — The temperature at Erie PA reached 99 degrees, and Stroudsburg PA established a state record for September with a reading of 106 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1961 — Denver, CO, received 4.2 inches of snow, their earliest snow of record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1970: During the early evening hours, amid a severe hailstorm at Coffeyville, Kansas, a stone 17.5 inches in circumference and nearly two pounds in weight was recovered. Average stone size from the storm was five inches in diameter, with another stone reportedly eight inches in diameter. This hailstone is currently the third-largest hailstone in the U.S. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research.

1979: Hurricane David made landfall in south Florida as a Category 2 storm. It caused 15 deaths in the US. Hurricane David was a Category 5 over the Dominican Republic where over 2,000 people died.

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Daily Devotion

Waiting for the Right Door to Open

**When God closes a door, it's an open to invitation to walk
with Him down the path He has for us.**

Acts 16:5-12: 5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.
6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;

7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;

12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.

It's natural to feel disappointed when a door of opportunity closes. But our heavenly Father will often prevent us from going forward when He wants to redirect our steps toward a wiser path. What shapes our journey is our reaction: Will we beat against the barred door or look for a new opening?

Paul's second missionary journey included a series of divine "no admittance" signs. He set out to visit the churches he'd started across Asia, but the Holy Spirit led him away from city after city. Considering the apostle's sense of urgency for the gospel, each closed door must have been deeply disorienting.

But Paul kept traveling in search of a place to plant a new church, and at last the Lord revealed an open door to Macedonia. The new route led into key cities with great promise. Philippi, Corinth, and Ephesus were major commerce centers teeming with dignitaries and traders who could carry the gospel farther and faster than the apostle ever could alone.

The Bible tells us to trust in the Lord instead of our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). When we learn to follow the Spirit's prompting—even past doors we hoped would open—He directs our steps through the right ones.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.02.26

7 23 43 46 53 3

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 26 Mins 37
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.01.26

1 22 51 61 63 17

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$177,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 11
Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.02.26

2 4 16 39 45 6

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$3,610,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 26
Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.02.26

3 4 5 6 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$46,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 41
Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.02.26

5 6 15 26 33 20

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 10
Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.02.26

3 10 29 58 64 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$173,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 10
Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

2 people killed and suspect is dead in downtown Minneapolis shooting

By TIM SULLIVAN, MARK VANCLEAVE, HALLIE GOLDEN and SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press
MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Gunfire could be heard throughout a downtown Minneapolis apartment building as police responded to an active shooting Wednesday that left three people dead, including the suspect, and five others wounded, authorities said.

The five wounded by gunfire included two Minneapolis police officers, while a sixth person, another officer, suffered other injuries, police Sgt. Garrett Parten said at a news conference. All three officers are in stable condition, according to Hennepin County Medical Center.

A 911 call about shots fired at the building came in just after 4:30 p.m. Officers were dispatched and less than two minutes later they were inside the building and quickly found victims, said Interim Police Chief Bill Peterson.

Officers heard more gunshots and followed them to a higher floor, where they found “a haze that significantly limited their visibility,” he said. Peterson did not provide additional details about the haze.

One officer was shot in the leg and another was shot twice in the abdomen, he said. All three injured officers were expected to make a full recovery, he said.

Authorities did not provide any details about the suspected shooter but said they were familiar with the person before the shooting.

“I’m truly sickened by this level of violence,” Peterson said. “That feeling is tempered only by the courageous actions of the Minneapolis police officers, who responded without hesitation, confronted an extraordinarily dangerous situation and worked to end the violence and restore safety.”

One of the victims was fatally shot at the scene, and one died after arriving at the hospital, he said.

Parten said it was not immediately clear how the shooter died.

Hennepin County Medical Center said it received seven patients but didn’t share additional information about their conditions.

Julius Bailey was sitting outside his apartment building when he heard gunshots and saw a man he recognized as a resident of the building holding a pistol. Bailey said he heard a woman screaming and immediately started running away. He said he counted eight shots.

Bailey said that he recognized the man holding the gun because he was someone who was known for showing off his weapon. Bailey said he has tried to avoid the man since moving into the building in June.

“I could tell he was trouble,” he said.

Chris Miller, who also lives in the apartment building, said he heard a rapid succession of gunshots and quickly ran outside for safety. He said he believed he knew who carried out the shooting and that he encountered someone in the hallway with a handgun earlier this week and reported that person to management.

Video posted to social media showed police aiming rifles upward at an apartment tower near the Minneapolis Convention Center. Officials warned residents to avoid the densely populated Loring Park neighborhood nearby.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said in a post on social media that state officials were on the ground helping local law enforcement respond to the shooting.

“Grateful to law enforcement actively working to ensure the safety of our neighbors in Downtown Minneapolis this afternoon,” Walz said. “Minnesota is praying for our first responders.”

The FBI was responding to the shooting and “will offer any and all resources necessary to assist local authorities,” Director Kash Patel said in a post on the social platform X.

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USS Lincoln crew hits the streets of Thai beach city after lengthy Middle East deployment

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and ANTON L. DELGADO Associated Press

PATTAYA, Thailand (AP) — Buses carrying crew members of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier streamed into Thailand's seaside resort city of Pattaya on Thursday, as part of a port call after a lengthy deployment to the Middle East.

The Lincoln was supporting the U.S. war against Iran, and its deployment included a record-setting uninterrupted time at sea of more than 260 days. Its lengthy deployment drew concerns last month about deteriorating mental health among the crew as well as shortages of key food supplies aboard.

The Navy downplayed any problems, and President Donald Trump commented that the deployment was "not nearly long enough."

The ship has been deployed for a total of 286 days, according to the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok. Its total uninterrupted time at sea before Wednesday's arrival in Chonburi province was 264 days.

The ship is expected to depart Thailand this weekend and continue its journey back to the U.S.

After clambering down from buses, laden with luggage, several service members told The Associated Press they were excited to be in Thailand.

Vendors and travel agents gathered outside the Hard Rock Hotel, the designated pickup and drop-off point for troops traveling from the Lincoln, which is docked nearby at Laem Chabang port.

They swarmed service members as they arrived, offering a range of souvenirs and services. Many sailors waved them away while waiting for their rides.

Two other ships from the Lincoln's strike group are docked elsewhere in Thailand, with the destroyer USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. at Chonburi's Sriracha port and the cruiser USS Robert Smalls in Map Ta Phut in neighboring Rayong province.

A-ngoon Sombat traveled 200 kilometers between Pattaya and the central province of Ayutthaya to sell colorful braided bracelets to the visiting crew, as she does every time she hears a U.S. ship is coming for a port call in Chonburi province.

She set up opposite the hotel entrance and had managed to make some sales, but said she is still unsure if business will be good this week.

"There are many vendors around. It's really up to how lucky each of us are," she said.

Ship crews take shelter from heat in a mall

Dozens of service members could be spotted strolling around Pattaya's Terminal 21 mall with shopping bags in their hands as the afternoon sun was blazing outside.

A 20-year-old serving as a navigator aboard the Petersen, who declined to give his name because he was told not to speak to media while ashore, said the morale among his crew members was really high now that they had arrived in Thailand.

The sailor said it was his first deployment for the U.S. Navy. He said it was a bit of an ordeal but he was happy to finally be on his way home.

He declined to comment when asked about the reports about the conditions on the Lincoln.

Small crowd gathers to spot the Lincoln

A spot just outside the Laem Chabang port had turned into a small attraction by Wednesday evening, as people gathered to catch a glimpse of the Lincoln.

People arrived by car and motorcycle to peer through a mesh fence at the ship, which is as long as about three American football fields. They took photos and videos, excitedly chatted with strangers about their chance to see the vessel.

American Keith Eldridge, who has lived in Thailand for five years, traveled from the neighboring province of Chachoengsao just to see the ship. He was too late to catch the Lincoln docking but found the viewing spot through a recommendation from other enthusiasts he met along the way.

He said it was impressive for him to get to lay his eyes on this "engineering marvel."

"When you get to look at something so big, wrapped up with so much technology, the radars, the so-

nars, the weapon systems, the propulsion systems, it is truly amazing that we can build it, float it, and we fight from it," he said.

The Lincoln's commanding officer, Capt. Dan Keeler, said the ship will be heading home soon, but may make further supply stops. He declined to comment on the exact date the strike group is expected back in the U.S.

Russia to close German cultural centers after Berlin blames Moscow for airport drone plot

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia will shutter German cultural centers across the country, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Thursday.

The move comes after Berlin blamed Moscow for an attempted attack at Leipzig/Halle Airport and announced the closure of both the Russian Consulate in Bonn and the Russian House cultural center in the German capital.

Moscow has been widely accused by Western officials of running a campaign of sabotage and disruption with the aim of undermining support for Ukraine and destabilizing European nations, something Russian officials deny.

Lavrov said that cultural centers belonging to Germany's Goethe-Institut would be closed in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg, adding that any other response would show a lack of "self-respect" on Russia's part.

Speaking at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Lavrov said that Germany "could not have failed to understand" that the closure of Russian House would "signify the end of their cultural presence in Russia."

A drone laden with explosives was found near a Ukrainian plane at Leipzig/Halle Airport on Aug. 4 and later defused. The airport is a major international freight hub used for providing support to Ukraine.

Putin has dismissed the allegations, saying Berlin wants to distract from its own failings and dissatisfaction among voters. Any proof being offered "has been planted," Putin said.

EU looks to respond after attempted attack

European Union ministers on Wednesday weighed how best to respond to the attempted drone attack but struggled to find new ways to meet the challenge without resorting to military means.

"It is clear that it has all the hallmarks of state-sponsored terrorism. The question is: what do we do about this," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas told reporters before chairing a meeting of the bloc's foreign ministers in Ireland. They discussed sanctions, visa restrictions and shutting Russian consulates, among other measures.

The EU has slapped almost two dozen packages of sanctions on Russia over the war in Ukraine, hitting more than 3,000 officials, oligarchs and entities including banks, energy companies and drone makers. The EU was already preparing to impose more travel bans and asset freezes on another 1,600 people, Kallas said.

Germany insisted it was "not at war" but had become a "daily target" of the Kremlin's hybrid campaign. Putin dismissed the allegations, saying Berlin wants to distract from its own failings and dissatisfaction among voters. Any proof being offered "has been planted," Putin said.

But German Foreign Minister Johan Wadephul said Berlin had carefully prepared its response "and now Russia must live with these consequences." He called on Russia "to show that it is also ready for reasonable talks and negotiations, particularly regarding the situation in Ukraine."

Denmark sounds alarm about Russian sabotage plans

Danish security services are warning that Russian acts of sabotage against the country's defense industry may be imminent.

Danish intelligence services have seen signs of very specific planning by Russia to conduct sabotage operations in the country, Emil Græsholm, head of counterintelligence at the Danish national security and intelligence service PET, told the Berlingske newspaper in an interview published Thursday.

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The targets are primarily companies in the defense industry and especially those associated with delivering military components to Ukraine, he said.

Italy's Defense Minister Guido Crosetto told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the Leipzig/Halle Airport incident was "a very serious act that could have very grave consequences."

But he said the threats aren't discouraging Italy from providing further help to Kyiv as Rome weighs whether to send SAMP/T air defense batteries. As in other Western countries, weapons production capacity is hampering efforts to supply more to Ukraine, he said.

Netanyahu's big reelection concern isn't his political rivals. It's some of his biggest supporters

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seeks reelection, his main concern these days isn't his political rivals. It's some of his biggest supporters.

A series of small, pro-Netanyahu parties are competing in the run-up to the Oct. 27 vote. But instead of strengthening the Israeli leader, these parties — including hard-line blocs led by polarizing Cabinet ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich — risk weakening his chances for reelection by splitting the vote among Netanyahu's base.

The election is largely a referendum on Netanyahu's nearly uninterrupted 17-year rule and his handling of a turbulent period marked by mass protests, Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attacks and nearly three years of war. A victory would mark a stirring comeback for the embattled leader, while a loss would likely end the reign of a man who has shaped Israeli politics for three decades.

With his legacy on the line, Netanyahu is imploring his erstwhile allies to unite into larger parties that have a better chance of entering parliament.

"When we unite, we win. When we split up, we lose," Netanyahu told Channel 14, a TV station that serves as an unofficial mouthpiece for the prime minister.

Here's a closer look at Netanyahu's situation:

Forming a government is tricky

Israeli voters choose between political parties, not individual candidates.

Parties that receive the most votes secure the most seats in the 120-member parliament. But any party that can muster just 3.25% of the vote wins representation. That means that more than a dozen parties can be part of any given parliament.

No single party has ever captured the parliamentary majority needed to form a government. Instead, a party leader — usually the head of the largest party — forms a coalition with smaller partners to secure a 61-seat majority.

Netanyahu currently heads a coalition of religious and ultranationalist parties.

The outgoing coalition faces an uphill battle

Opinion polls have indicated that Netanyahu and members of his outgoing coalition are facing broad public unhappiness as they seek reelection.

The government's popularity has suffered following the Hamas attacks — the deadliest in Israel's history — and the subsequent, inconclusive wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

Now Netanyahu's prospects could be further weakened by divisions in his hard-line base.

Two parties that ran together in the 2022 elections — Smotrich's Religious Zionism and Ben-Gvir's Jewish Power — have so far rejected Netanyahu's calls to merge again due to rocky relations between the two men.

At the same time, smaller parties led by former members of Netanyahu's Likud party and another list formed by a hard-line retired military general find themselves competing for the same voters. These parties are differentiated more by the personalities of their leaders than their ideologies.

Falling short of the threshold could be devastating for Netanyahu

If any of these smaller parties fail to enter parliament, their votes would be lost and Netanyahu's re-

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election prospects dimmed. The failure of small parties to cross the threshold contributed to Netanyahu's defeat in a 2021 election, while rivalries among his opponents led to Netanyahu's return to power in 2022.

For this reason, Netanyahu has been urging his ideological brethren to join together into larger blocs. That would require some individual sacrifices but improve their chances of crossing the threshold and being part of another Netanyahu-led government. In a small boost for Netanyahu, one of the small parties agreed Wednesday to be folded into Smotrich's list.

The parties have until Sept. 8 to consolidate, pull out of the race or continue on their own. Their decision could seal his fate.

With time running out, Netanyahu has been stepping up his calls with increasingly alarmist language.

In his Channel 14 interview, he told a cheering studio audience that only he could defeat Hamas and prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. He warned that victory by his opponents, whom he derisively calls "the left," would be disastrous for the country.

"The left is ready," he said. "If we don't unite, we will lose."

Ukraine's drone attacks caused turmoil for Russians throughout summer

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

There were long lines at gas pumps, turning each fill-up into an ordeal. Flights to vacation destinations were canceled, delayed or rerouted. Online orders were disrupted as e-commerce hubs were set ablaze by buzzing drones.

It's been a difficult summer for Russians — a season of almost daily turmoil, frustration and anxiety.

The war that President Vladimir Putin unleashed on Ukraine 4½ years ago has come home and is harder to ignore. Nightly swarms of drones closed Russian airports, struck oil refineries or set ablaze the warehouses of retail giants Wildberries and Ozon.

Over 43,300 Ukrainian drones were intercepted over Russia and illegally annexed Crimea in June, July and August, according to Defense Ministry data compiled by The Associated Press, although some clearly hit their targets. In the same period last summer, about 7,700 were intercepted, the ministry said.

"We were living a normal life, and then suddenly it's like this," retiree Margarita Terekhova said about having to wait in line to fill up her car in Moscow, part of the nationwide fuel crisis from attacks on refineries that persisted into August.

As the calendar turns toward autumn, increased awareness of the war and its consequences comes at a challenging time for the Kremlin. A parliamentary election takes place Sept. 18-20 — the first since the full-scale invasion.

While there's little doubt about the outcome of the tightly controlled balloting that features few opposition candidates for the State Duma, analysts say it still holds potential for political volatility.

"Elections are a time when people should reflect on themselves, the country, where it's going and what to do about it," said Nikolay Petrov, senior research fellow at the NEST Centre, founded by exiled tycoon and opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Even in a strictly controlled environment, "things that are unexpected, inconvenient (and) painful for the authorities" can happen, Petrov said.

Russia's mood has shifted

The summer's first major attack came June 3, when an oil terminal outside St. Petersburg was struck just as Putin's signature economic forum there got underway. Since then, Ukraine hit refineries, along with Wildberries and Ozon warehouses — from Moscow to Yekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains, to Omsk in Siberia.

That intensified campaign — with its expanded geography and a growing number of drones — shocked Russians, says Denis Volkov, director of the country's top independent pollster, the Levada Center.

Ukraine has not disclosed how many drones it launches, but President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has talked

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about expanding the strikes, which he calls "long-range sanctions." Officials in Kyiv say they will continue trying to pressure Russia into ending the war, even as Moscow intensifies its bombardment of Ukraine.

The attacks have remained the most noteworthy topic for two months this summer, Volkov told AP.

Social media documented gas station queues or travelers stranded by canceled flights. Tearful entrepreneurs told followers their inventory was destroyed at the stricken warehouses.

Images of massive fires at oil refineries and warehouses showed up online despite restrictions on publication of content detailing the attacks.

While the shock over this summer's events has since eased, Volkov said, there is a longer-term downward trend that sociologists have tracked since last year: a worsening assessment of Russia's economic situation and declining approvals of top politicians.

Putin's traditionally high approval rating has fallen somewhat this year. Data from the Levada Center showed it at 76% in August, down from 87% in September 2025.

Chris Weafer, CEO of the Macro-Advisory Ltd. consultancy that works in Moscow, said there's more awareness of the war and less complacency about it.

"People are grumbling more, they're talking more," he said, with a striking level of pessimism, especially in the business community, about the prospects for its end.

Rumors of a possible mobilization

There also appears to be nervousness fueled by persistent rumors of an impending troop mobilization — like the widely unpopular one in September 2022 that drafted 300,000 men.

Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials maintain Putin is planning another mobilization after the Duma election — claims the Kremlin calls "hoaxes."

That has prompted some Russians to leave the country. One 23-year-old Muscovite told AP she left last month with her husband, worried he might be drafted into the army.

The young woman, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of concerns for her safety, also spoke of the fear she felt from Ukrainian attacks. She believes many feel exhaustion from the war, which can now affect "the life of any person in any corner of the country," she said.

Volkov said some anxiety over a new mobilization has long lurked in the background but flared up slightly last year after U.S.-led peace efforts stalled with no end to the war in sight.

People "don't want (the conflict) to expand and more people to be dragged into it against their will, and this breeds certain concern, anxiety," he said.

Authorities don't want a war debate

Volkov and Weafer said this increased awareness and the dampened mood aren't translating into anti-war demonstrations, public unrest or even enough protest votes to affect the balloting.

But things like turnout and "debate ahead of the election" still matter to authorities, Weafer said, even with an all-but-certain outcome.

Petrov pointed to the Yabloko party, the longtime voice of the liberal opposition that campaigns for an end to the war. It initially was allowed onto the ballot, and its young supporters flooded social media with videos promoting the party.

But on Aug. 10, the Supreme Court kicked Yabloko off the ballot, leaving it to compete only in single constituency races. Ten days later, the head of its Moscow office, Kirill Goncharov, told reporters the party, with about 4,000 members, received 8,000 new applications to join.

"The context of the summer of 2026 is that there is a demand for peace," Goncharov said.

Yabloko's slogans resonated with young voters, and that "upended the Kremlin's calculation" of giving people a relatively safe outlet for their discontent, Petrov said.

Tatiana Stanovaya of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center said Yabloko's removal showed that authorities did not want the election campaign to become a debate "for and against peace."

Petrov said the Kremlin needs elections "as a demonstration of its great legitimacy." It doesn't care so much about the results, since it largely controls all the parties anyway.

"Elections, like in Soviet times, should demonstrate the complete loyalty of all citizens," he said, adding that the vote should send a signal that Putin and the Kremlin have everything under control, and that

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people are ready to do "whatever authorities ask of them."

Ukraine says more turmoil is ahead for Russia

Russians interviewed in Moscow this week about how they spent their summer recounted contented moments, but they also described living with the effects of daily drone attacks.

Natalya Bazhenova from Chita in Siberia told AP she waited two full days in line for gasoline. Visiting the Voronezh region near the Ukrainian border, she got constant texts warning of drones but heard no explosions.

Ksenia Smirnova said her family canceled a flight to a Black Sea resort and is going by train instead to avoid problems.

On Tuesday, Zelenskyy issued an ominous warning to airlines operating in Russia that the risks could continue.

"Although the Russian authorities are not properly informing people about this, Russian airspace will effectively be closing — the war started by Russia is closing its skies," he said. "For now, the skies over Russia are for drones — not for civilian aviation."

Trump promises to campaign for Republicans and says they have a winning midterm message

By COLLIN BINKLEY and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday urged Republican lawmakers facing tough reelection campaigns to run on his record in the White House despite his sagging popularity, and he pledged to campaign in all of the roughly three dozen contests that are likely to determine control of Congress.

Voters' dim views of the economy and the war in Iran have put Republicans in a tough spot as the midterm election season enters its final stretch. But during a dinner in the Rose Garden, one of the spaces he has controversially renovated since returning to office last year, the president told his party's most vulnerable lawmakers that they had a triumphant story to tell voters.

"All you have to do is talk about it, and you're going to win and you're going to win big," Trump said a week before the party gathers in Dallas for an unusual midterm convention.

The audience of Republican lawmakers listened quietly to Trump through his speech, occasionally offering applause as many sipped on cocktails ahead of their dinner. Menus checkered in yellow gingham called it an "end of summer BBQ" featuring cheeseburgers.

Trump talked up economic investment in the United States and lower drug prices, using significantly inflated figures, as well as diminished border crossings.

Control of Congress will come down to about 35 races, Trump said. He pledged to spend the 30 days before the election campaigning hard in those battlegrounds, recalling his aggressive travel schedule ahead of his own White House victory two years ago.

"I'm going to go to every one of those 35 places, and we're going to see if we can get everyone elected," Trump said. His focus, he added, would be on House and Senate races.

He specifically listed Senate races in Alaska, where Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan faces Democratic former Rep. Mary Peltola, and Texas, where Republican state Attorney General Ken Paxton is running against Democratic state Rep. James Talarico.

Trump backed Paxton in this year's primary despite a scandal-plagued past, but he poked fun at his style of dress and presence on the campaign trail on Monday.

"You might not love his look. You might not love his television interviews," he said. "But he was the best attorney general in the country, perhaps. He was one of the best in the entire country. And that speaks a lot louder than the suit he's wearing that doesn't look so great."

Republicans' midterm struggles, he suggested, were simply following a pattern that virtually all modern presidents have faced.

"Whether you're a good president or a great president, you lose the midterms," Trump said. "We're going to turn that around because there's no reason for it."

Symbolic funerals held in Nepal for those feared lost as some missing tourists make contact

By SHRISTI KAFLE and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Tourists previously reported missing in Nepal have made contact with authorities, officials said Wednesday, as families of locals still unaccounted for after last week's catastrophic floods held symbolic funerals for their loved ones.

Nepal's Foreign Ministry said 324 foreign nationals have been rescued, while another 590 from 39 countries remain missing following the Aug. 26 floods. At least 1,204 people have been killed and more than 4,200 are missing, according to the country's disaster management agency.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Wednesday that the number of Australians missing in the disaster had fallen from 43 to 38 after five were confirmed safe overnight.

"Amidst all of this tragedy, we are seeing some positive news. Today, another five Australians have been confirmed safe," Albanese told reporters in Palau, where he is attending a regional summit.

"We hope, of course, for positive news further, and we're doing everything we can to work with authorities," Albanese added.

On Thursday, the Australian government said it would send a team of drone operators to Nepal within days to assist search and rescue efforts.

Sunil Sharma, a spokesperson for the Nepal Tourism Board, said at least five other tourists who were previously reported missing had contacted authorities by email or telephone in recent days.

It is thought the disaster happened when a glacial collapse in the Himalayas sent rock, ice and meltwater into valleys below, triggering powerful floods downstream. The surge entered rivers flowing through Tibet and Nepal, causing them to rise rapidly. Floodwaters swept away homes, buildings, roads and bridges, carrying mud and rocks downstream.

Families hold symbolic funerals

Some families in Nuwakot, one of Nepal's worst-affected districts, have held symbolic funerals for relatives still missing, hoping to free their souls after they were presumed dead.

In Hindu tradition, cremation is an important final rite, and for some families, performing the ceremony even without the bodies of their loved ones provides a sense of spiritual release.

Mukunda Rijal said his cousins and their daughters had not been found, prompting the family to perform a symbolic funeral for them.

Along the banks of the Trishuli River, a priest placed straw effigies representing the missing family members and covered them with small piles of wood before setting them alight. The symbolic funeral pyres were surrounded by offerings to Hindu deities as relatives gathered to perform the final rites.

Authorities in Nepal have also been burying recovered bodies in temporary graves until they can be identified. They are preserving DNA samples, photographing distinguishing facial features and recording other identifying details to help match the remains with missing people and eventually return them to their families.

China builds access road for rescue crews

On the Chinese side, rescue crews completed a makeshift road to the disaster site at Gyirong Port on the Nepal border, state broadcaster CCTV reported on Wednesday.

Crews have been clearing access for heavy machinery to be used in the search at the border crossing complex, which was washed away by the floods. The road leading to the crossing was destroyed and buried under water, mud and rocks.

At least 21 people have been killed and 541 remain missing in China, according to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

Survivors find shelter in Kathmandu

Some flood survivors are fleeing the devastation to seek shelter in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu.

Around 400 survivors, mostly from the town of Timure, about 110 kilometers (65 miles) west of Kath-

mandu, have been staying at the Yellow Gumba monastery. The shelter is being organized by locals and relatives, with relief supplies donated by individuals and charity organizations.

Riya Tamang, 21, who fled with her 10-month-old baby as the floodwaters approached, is among those taking shelter at the monastery. She lost her grandparents in the disaster.

"I was the last one to leave the house. It was so difficult to escape," she said.

Her husband, who works as a cook in Gyirong town on the Chinese side of the border, also survived, and the couple now stays in touch through video calls.

Cassandra Wilson, the 2-time Grammy Award-winning jazz singer, dies at 70

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Cassandra Wilson, the two-time Grammy Award-winning jazz singer, songwriter and producer has died. She was 70.

Dubbed America's best singer by Time magazine in 2001, Wilson was best known for her genre-bending voice, which expanded the boundaries of traditional blues-based jazz and worked effortlessly across folk, pop, R&B, country and beyond. At the heart of all her work was her idiosyncratic contralto, a soulful sound distinctly tied to her roots.

As Jon Batiste put it in a eulogy on Wednesday, Wilson sounded like the South.

She died in her native Jackson, Mississippi, on Tuesday morning, the Hinds County Coroner Jeramiah Howard confirmed.

"It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Cassandra Wilson, the Grammy Award-winning and legendary jazz artist. Cassandra Wilson transitioned peacefully at home, surrounded by family, close friends, and her manager," said a statement from her manager to jazz radio station WBGO.

From Jackson to the world

Born and raised in Jackson to musician Herman B. Fowlkes and teacher Mary Fowlkes, Wilson showed an early love of music listening to Motown, Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk. At 6, she started piano lessons. She played clarinet in marching bands. She performed at coffeehouses and in cover bands while studying at Millsaps College and Jackson State University.

In the early '80s, she mentored under jazz greats in New Orleans before moving to New York City and joining Steve Coleman's M-Base Collective — eventually becoming its main vocalist.

Her instantly recognizable voice earned her four Grammy nominations and two wins for best jazz vocal album. Those were in 1997 for "New Moon Daughter" and 2009 for "Lovely."

In 2015, it was Wilson who gave a special concert at the famed Apollo Theater to commemorate the 100th birthday of blues singer Billie Holiday, the legendary American jazz vocalist who died in New York City at age 44. That same year, Wilson released her last album, "Coming Forth by Day," an homage to Holiday.

In 2022, Wilson was named a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master, one of the highest honors awarded to jazz musicians in the United States.

Tributes pour in

"She had an unmistakable vocal tone, phrasing and her approach of weaving folkloric, R&B and diasporic music together with experimental and popular genres had a major impact on me," Batiste said in his tribute to Wilson on Instagram.

"Her Mississippi heritage was always present in everything no matter how expansive her artistry evolved," he wrote in the caption of a clip showing them together on Brazilian TV in 2009. "She was one of the first people to take me on tour around the world, the great Cassandra Wilson."

Jackson Mayor John Horhn said the city "has lost an extraordinary native daughter, and the world has lost a singular musical voice."

"Cassandra Wilson carried the sound, spirit and history of Mississippi with her wherever her music reached," said the mayor's statement, shared with WJTV. "Her work had rare depth of character and a

profound understanding of how music moves people, tells stories and connects generations.”

Trump’s plan for a fence at Lafayette Park near White House gets review by federal panel

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

The latest pieces of President Donald Trump’s wide-ranging Washington makeover are set for an airing Thursday in front of a federal panel that already has blessed other big-ticket plans from the designer-in-chief.

The National Capital Planning Commission, which this spring approved Trump’s White House ballroom proposal after he razed the Executive Mansion’s East Wing without authorization, will discuss a proposed fence around Lafayette Park in front of the White House.

The panel also will review a proposed underground security screening center for White House visitors. It’s the first time the commission will take up either idea, and votes are not expected. But the commission and the separate U.S. Commission of Fine Arts thus far have not been an obstacle for Trump’s plans for the capital.

The fine arts panel, which is controlled by Trump appointees, approved the visitors’ center plans at its July meeting. It heard a presentation on the Lafayette Square fencing but took no action. The fencing also carries the most potential for controversy and opposition on Thursday.

The planning commission is not as dominated by Trump appointees but still has a clear tilt in the Republican president’s favor. The 12 members include three presidential appointees, plus Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, General Services Administrator Ed Forst and, from Congress, Sen. Rand Paul and Rep. James Comer, both Republicans. The new chairman, Mark Paoletta, will chair his first meeting. White House Counsel Will Scharf previously held the role.

Both proposals come at a time when security for the president is a top concern. The administration says the projects would be an improvement over temporary structures that have long been used for security, such as bicycle racks fashioned into barriers.

Trump has been the target of multiple assassination attempts, including two during the 2024 campaign and a third this past April as he attended a Washington dinner with White House journalists. Those concerns were heightened in May after U.S. Secret Service officers fatally shot a man who opened fire near a White House security checkpoint.

But Lafayette Square fencing still would be a marked permanent change to the usual access and appearance of the grounds in front of the White House. The square last had permanent fencing in the late 1800s.

The administration’s 79-page proposal for the 8-acre (3-hectare) park calls for fencing all the way around with larger gates at the north and south entrances. Options call for either including or excluding monuments located at each of the park’s four corners.

The White House Visitor Screening Facility, meanwhile, has been viewed as a noncontroversial part of the administration’s call for increased security measures.

The administration says the permanent facility, which it wants open by July 2028, would replace a series of temporary tents that have been used for years, in a bid to improve security on the White House complex and enhance the experience for visitors. The original design had it being built underground near the southern end of Sherman Park, just southeast of the White House. But consultations with other entities led to it being moved to the western edge, away from utility infrastructure.

Lindsay Clancy jury to keep deliberating but there’s growing risk of a mistrial

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — The deadlocked jury in the Lindsay Clancy trial was expected to keep trying to reach a verdict Thursday and avoid a mistrial after telling the judge twice that they can’t agree whether the Massachusetts mother is criminally responsible for killing her three children.

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Clancy, a 36-year-old former labor and delivery nurse, doesn't deny strangling her children in the basement of their home in 2023. Her attorney argues that postpartum psychosis led to her actions, while prosecutors say she knew what she was doing when she killed Cora, Dawson and Callan Clancy, ages 5, 3 and 8 months.

Clancy's livestreamed trial has generated intense interest, with reporters and spectators packing the courtroom. The case has also sparked deep public divisions over her culpability and the issues around maternal mental health after childbirth.

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

Lindsay Clancy's reaction to the jury

Clancy stared at the jury with no expression on Wednesday as Judge William Sullivan explained to the courtroom that jurors were at an impasse — a sign there's a growing chance of a hung jury and the trial ending without a resolution.

Sullivan told the jurors not to abandon their own convictions just to reach a verdict, but urged them to seriously consider opposing views and reassess their positions if appropriate.

No one knows, he said, that another jury would be "more intelligent, more impartial or more competent to decide it than you are."

Lindsay Clancy could go on trial again

If the jury ultimately can't agree on a verdict, the judge could declare a mistrial. Prosecutors would then have to decide whether to put Clancy on trial again, drop the charges or try to negotiate a plea deal with her lawyer.

If the jury decides Clancy was criminally responsible for her actions, it could convict her of either murder or manslaughter. If she is acquitted, a judge could still order her confined to a mental health facility if an evaluation determines that she poses a danger to the public.

The evidence against Lindsay Clancy

Jurors have heard testimony from relatives and doctors about how Clancy's mental health declined in the months before the killings and how her treatment included several medications and a short stay in a psychiatric hospital.

Medical experts hired by the prosecution and the defense reached sharply different conclusions about her psychiatric state when she killed the children.

Patrick Clancy has said in interviews that he forgives his now ex-wife, whom he views as ill rather than evil.

Clancy strangled the children with exercise bands in their home's basement, then jumped from a second-floor window. She remains paralyzed from the waist down. Her lawyers say she heard a voice telling her to kill the children so she could end her own life.

The prosecution argues she deliberately sent her then-husband on errands to get him out of the house, and prosecutors have questioned the seriousness of her suicide attempt.

Former Tropical Storm Edouard lingers over Texas, flooding homes and roadways

By JAMIE STENGLE and LEKAN OYEKANMI Associated Press

LIVINGSTON, Texas (AP) — Texas authorities rescued dozens of people from stranded cars, homes surrounded by floodwaters and an assisted living facility Wednesday as former Tropical Storm Edouard lingered over rural parts of the state and dumped nearly 2 feet of rain in some places.

Heavy rains from the storm, which weakened into a tropical depression after making landfall Tuesday, were expected to threaten the eastern part of the state through Thursday morning, the National Weather Service said.

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Meanwhile, a burst of tropical weather persisted in the Pacific Ocean, where three hurricanes were churning in open waters.

In Texas' hard-hit Hardin County, about 85 miles (137 kilometers) northeast of Houston, officials said flooding, downed trees and powerlines, debris, and power outages were still creating hazardous conditions.

Between 18 inches (45 centimeters) and 20 inches (51 centimeters) fell in parts of the county over the last two days, the weather service said. The average local monthly rainfall for September is just 5.51 inches (14 centimeters), said Nick Slaughter, a meteorologist with the weather service.

Across the area close to the Louisiana border, schools and municipal offices were closed, and residents were told to stay home.

Edouard downs trees, floods roads and leaves drivers stranded

Hardin County's office of emergency management said Wednesday afternoon that 12 motorists had to be rescued after driving into flooded roadways, two people had to be rescued from a flooded home, about 10 structures were damaged by trees and thousands were still without power.

In Jefferson County, located about 80 miles (130 kilometers) northeast of Houston, the main concern was restoring power after trees and limbs were brought down during the storm, which had wind gusts up to 90 mph (144 kph), said Robert Grimm, the county emergency management coordinator. About 22,000 customers in the county were without power as of late Wednesday afternoon, nearly half of the 50,000 utility customers affected statewide, according to poweroutage.com.

Grady Leger said that as the storm moved through Hardin County on Tuesday evening, a powerline went down by his home near Lumberton, and he could feel the vibration coming up from the ground.

"Some blue and yellow, white sparks caught part of my dead tree on fire," Leger said.

An assisted living facility was damaged in Hardin County, and 21 people were evacuated, according to Texas Parks and Wildlife, whose game wardens assisted. Photos from the agency showed some officials wading in thigh-deep water in parts of the county.

Edouard is expected to dissipate Thursday.

3 hurricanes are in the Pacific Ocean

Hurricane Marie strengthened from a tropical storm on Wednesday well offshore of southwest Mexico in the Pacific, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center said.

Swells generated by the storm were expected to affect parts of coastal southwestern Mexico and the Baja California peninsula over the next few days. They will likely spread to southern California over the weekend, the center said.

Hurricane Lowell, a Category 4 storm, was hundreds of miles south of Hawaii on Wednesday. It briefly strengthened to a Category 5 storm before weakening again, and it was expected to remain powerful over the next several days. Swells generated by Lowell are likely to affect portions of the Hawaiian islands beginning Wednesday, the center said.

Regarding Marie and Lowell, swells "are likely to cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions," the center said.

Elsewhere in the Pacific, Hurricane Karina strengthened into a powerful Category 4 storm. Forecasters said it should weaken over the next few days.

Iran targets US allies in Gulf after overnight attacks, and other Mideast news

By The Associated Press undefined

Iran targeted Gulf allies of the United States for two consecutive nights, firing drones at Kuwait and Bahrain after a Wednesday U.S. aerial bombardment of Iran.

Following a series of attacks Wednesday, sirens sounded in Kuwait early Thursday, where air defenses were intercepting missile and drone attacks during a "blatant Iranian aggression," the country's Ministry of Defense said on X.

Iranian state media said one of the U.S. strikes on the country on Wednesday struck a wedding party,

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leaving at least four people dead and dozens wounded.

Fighting between the U.S. and Iran has increased this week after the U.S. hit Iranian rocket launchers on an island in the Strait of Hormuz on Sunday, saying Iran was planning to use them to shoot mines into the waterway. Iran retaliated by firing missiles at American bases in Jordan, which were all intercepted.

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

US strike hits a wedding party

The U.S. Central Command said its strikes focused on Iranian military targets including air defense sites, radar systems and maritime assets.

But Iranian media said one U.S. strike hit a home hosting a wedding in Kuhestak, a small town on the coast overlooking the Strait of Hormuz.

Four people were killed — two women and two children, aged 4 and 16 — and at least 68 were wounded, the state news agency IRNA and state TV said Wednesday. Just after the strike, Ahmad Nafisi, the province's deputy governor, had told Iranian state television that five people were killed. There was no explanation for the change.

The U.S. military said it was aware of the report but that it "never targets civilians."

Iran targets US allies in the Gulf

Bahrain said its air defense systems intercepted several Iranian air attacks early Wednesday, without providing further details.

Iranian state media said Iran's military had launched drone attacks on U.S. bases in Bahrain and in the United Arab Emirates in response to the overnight attacks.

Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Iran acted in self-defense in retaliation for U.S. violations of Iran's sovereignty.

Monday attack in Strait of Hormuz killed 2 Filipino sailors

A Philippine official said Wednesday that two Filipino crewmembers were killed when a Saudi Arabia-flagged crude oil tanker came under attack and caught fire while about to cross the Strait of Hormuz.

The remains of the two Filipinos and the 14 Filipino crewmembers who survived the attack will soon be flown home, said Hans Cacdac, secretary of migrant workers in the Philippines. About 3,000 Filipino seafarers continue to work aboard ships in the Persian Gulf, he said.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack on the Saudi tanker.

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the attack and called on all parties to return to negotiations and peaceful solutions.

The ministry said the oil-rich kingdom stresses the need to halt escalation and respect the security and safety of international navigation and of global energy supplies.

Iran has established a chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil passed in peacetime, after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28. Ship traffic through the waterway has slowed to a trickle, roiling the global economy and spiking prices for energy and other goods across the world.

US official says administration pressuring nations not to deal with Iran

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Wednesday on "Fox & Friends" that multiple officials in President Donald Trump's administration are talking to other nations still doing business with Iran and pressuring them to stop.

He avoided mentioning Russia specifically, even when asked.

"My message to everyone is stay away," Bessent said. "We all want this conflict to end, and the fastest way for the conflict to end is for no one to provide any support to this regime. We are going to sever every tie that they have from the outside world."

Diplomats in Egypt, Qatar call for a return to negotiations between Iran, US

Top diplomats in Egypt and Qatar have called for the U.S. and Iran to return to the negotiating table in line with their collapsed ceasefire deal.

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Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty of Egypt spoke by phone on Wednesday with his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

The ministers warned that the ongoing escalation threatens "dire consequences on the region's security and stability," the Egyptian foreign ministry said.

Iran's currency hits record low

Iran's currency market hit a record low Wednesday, hours after the exchange of fire between the country and the U.S. over control of the Strait of Hormuz.

Traders in the Tehran market exchanged 2.20 million rials for one U.S. dollar, nearly 10% higher than last week's record, on Aug. 25, when one dollar was sold at 2.02 million rials.

The currency had already been under pressure before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, as Iran faced double-digit inflation and negative growth. The rial has repeatedly hit new lows since the war began.

Arab interior ministers condemn Iranian attacks on Arab states

The Council of Arab Interior Ministers described Iran's attacks on Kuwait, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain as a "violation of international law."

The council said Iran's "brutal aggression" is part of Tehran's efforts to destabilize security and stability in the region. The council also said the attacks threaten international peace and security.

Chinese and Egyptian leaders meet in Cairo

The leaders of China and Egypt welcomed regional efforts to "reach political understandings" aiming at restoring peace and stability in the Middle East amid renewed escalation between Iran and the United States.

President Xi Jinping of China and Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi held talks in Cairo on Wednesday that focused on bilateral ties and regional and international topics.

They welcomed regional efforts to ease tensions and promote "peace and stability in the Gulf and the Middle East," according to a joint communique following the talks.

Pakistan presses on with mediation efforts

Pakistan said Wednesday it remains engaged with the United States and Iran, with support from regional countries, in efforts to bring Washington and Tehran back to the negotiating table.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi told a weekly news briefing in Islamabad that Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a political and security group billed as a counterweight to the U.S. global influence.

Car rams gathering in northern Iranian city, killing 4

A man drove through a crowd gathered in the northern Iranian city of Mashhad late Tuesday, killing four people and injuring more than 10, the official IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

Quoting local traffic police, the semiofficial Fars news agency described the incident as a road accident and implied the driver might have been under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Iran fires on its Gulf neighbors, retaliating for US strikes after a wedding was hit

By DAVID RISING and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran fired on U.S. allies in the Gulf early Wednesday following a night of American bombardment that Iranian state media says included a deadly strike on a wedding party.

Sirens sounded in Kuwait, where air defenses were intercepting missile and drone attacks during a "blatant Iranian aggression," the country's Ministry of Defense said on X.

The latest violence came after a monthlong lull in fighting. The six-month war has led to a spike in oil prices, roiled the global economy and posed increasing political problems for U.S. President Donald Trump's Republican Party ahead of November midterm elections.

Fighting has escalated since the American military hit Iranian rocket launchers on an island in the Strait

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of Hormuz over the weekend, saying Iran was planning to use them to lay mines. Iran retaliated by firing missiles at American bases in Jordan that were intercepted.

American military resources are stretched and political pressure in Washington is mounting, while Iran's economy has been battered by sanctions and an American naval blockade. Iran's currency hit another record low on Wednesday, with traders in Tehran exchanging 2.20 million rials for one U.S. dollar, a 10% hike from last week's record.

Neither side can continue indefinitely between full-scale war and a truce, said Hamidreza Azizi, senior Iran analyst at the Crisis Group, an international think tank.

"At some point, one of the sides may see a need to escalate in order to break this cycle," he cautioned. "So that could bring the two sides to a point that they have been trying to avoid until now, which is a full-scale war."

The struggle is focused on the Strait of Hormuz and oil prices

The latest flare-up in violence came as the standoff seemed to be shifting slightly more in the U.S. favor, with the price of oil hitting around \$80 a barrel last month and Iranian leaders talking about growing economic hardships, said Sascha Bruchmann, an analyst with the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Middle East office in Bahrain.

"The U.S. is trying to reinstall some kind of confidence into the global oil markets ... and the Iranians had to respond to that by reinserting insecurity and doubt," Bruchmann said.

Since the fighting resumed over the weekend, the price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, has climbed to around \$95, up more than 30% from the start of the war.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Iran will "continue to feel the squeeze" from the United States until it drops any nuclear weapons ambitions and ends support for armed groups in the Middle East. Iran has always insisted its nuclear program is peaceful.

U.S. allies in the region fend off Iranian attacks

Following the strikes on Jordan, U.S. Gulf allies Kuwait and Bahrain said they had also come under attack, without reporting any casualties.

"You will soon see that Iran's new strategy on the battlefield, in diplomacy, and in confronting the economic blockade will shatter your foundations," the recently appointed head of Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council, Mohsen Rezaei, said on X.

In Iraq, where Iranian-backed forces are active, Kurdish authorities said they had intercepted 10 drones laden with explosives in the Irbil area. Iranian television reported that American bases in Irbil had been targeted.

Israel's military also said that Iran-backed Hezbollah fired two explosive drones at its soldiers in southern Lebanon, without causing casualties.

The U.S. Central Command said Tuesday's strikes focused on Iranian military targets, including air defense sites, radar systems and maritime assets.

Strike on wedding killed 4 and wounded dozens, state media says

One U.S. strike hit a home hosting a wedding in Kuhestak, a small coastal town overlooking the Strait of Hormuz, according to Iranian state media.

Four people were killed — two women and two children, aged 4 and 16 — and at least 68 were wounded, the state news agency IRNA and state TV said Wednesday. Just after the strike, Ahmad Nafisi, the province's deputy governor, told Iranian state television that five people were killed. There was no explanation for the change.

Several heavy explosions shook Kuhestak, with fireballs that lit up the night sky, according to security camera footage carried by the semiofficial Fars news agency.

Images from Iran's semiofficial Tasnim news agency showed several hospitalized children being treated for injuries at a hospital in the nearby town of Minab, where a U.S. missile strike on the opening day of the war hit a primary school, killing more than 100 children.

Footage from the Iranian Red Crescent showed rescue workers entering a damaged home in the wake of the strike. It showed a hole in the roof of one house in a neighborhood of densely packed homes.

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Expert says fragments point to a U.S. weapon

A weapons expert told The Associated Press that images of fragments of ordnance that Iranian media said was used in the strike on Mallahi's home, indicated it was an "American air-delivered guided weapon."

N.R. Jenzen-Jones, director of Armament Research Services, initially identified the weapon as a SLAM-ER cruise missile, an air-launched missile that can be retargeted in flight by a human operator. But after examining further imagery, he said it was more likely to be a JSOW, a type of guided bomb, though he did not rule out a SLAM-ER and said multiple weapons may have hit the site.

U.S. Central Command declined to comment on the analyst's findings. Spokesperson Capt. Tim Hawkins said earlier that the U.S. military was "aware of the reports, which originated from Iranian state media, and we are looking into them." He would not say if CENTCOM had launched a formal investigation.

"Make no mistake: These crimes will not go unpunished," Ebrahim Azizi, chairperson of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said on X.

Separately, Iran has said four members of its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and 10 members of the Guard's volunteer Basij forces died in the U.S. attacks. A total of 108 people were injured in the latest round of attacks, state broadcaster the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting quoted the country's health minister as saying.

The Strait of Hormuz remains largely shut down

During last month's lull in fighting, the U.S. ramped up economic pressure on Iran as Washington sought to fully open the Strait of Hormuz.

About a fifth of the world's traded oil was shipped through the key waterway before Israel and the U.S. attacked Iran on Feb. 28 and Iran largely shut it down in response. Despite many pronouncements from Washington that the strait is open, only a handful of ships are making the passage each day and Iran has regularly attacked vessels.

On Wednesday, Saudi shipping company Bahri said two Filipino sailors were killed in an attack late Monday as their vessel transited the strait.

A ceasefire deal reached in June quickly fell apart amid exchanges of strikes that same month. Mediator Pakistan has been working to restart talks.

Late Tuesday, Trump said he would not force Iran to the bargaining table.

"I couldn't care less if they sign a worthless, to them, agreement. I like our position now much better, with almost total control of the Hormuz Strait, and their economy totally collapsing. They are just playing out the inevitable. When are the Iranian people going to rise up and fight?" Trump wrote on social media.

What to know about a reported US airstrike that hit a wedding in Iran

By LEE KEATH and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — A U.S. missile hit a home in southern Iran where dozens were gathered to celebrate the wedding of a fisherman's daughter, according to a rights group and Iranian media.

Iranian state media said four people — two women and two children — were killed and more than 60 were wounded. The rights group said one of the children, a teenager, was killed by another strike on a nearby communications tower.

Heavy explosions shook the coastal town of Kuhestak on the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday, and security footage carried by Iran's semiofficial Fars news agency showed fireballs lighting up the night sky. It came amid the latest round of American bombardment in southern Iran that the U.S. military said was targeting air defenses, radar systems and maritime assets.

Kuhestak is one of a string of small towns that dot the barren coastline along the Strait of Hormuz, the chokepoint that has become a central front in the six-month war. Kuhestak is located about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the town of Minab, where more than 100 children were killed in a U.S. missile strike that hit a primary school on Feb. 28, the opening day of the war launched by the U.S. and Israel.

U.S. Central Command spokesman Capt. Tim Hawkins said the U.S. military was looking into the reports

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of the strike on a wedding. He would not say if the military had launched a formal investigation.

Little information has come out of the remote area. This is what we know so far.

A missile smashed into the wedding party

At least one missile hit the home of Ali Mallahi, a fisherman who at the time was celebrating the wedding of his daughter, state media said.

"The missile completely destroyed the ceiling of the house," Mallahi said in an interview with state TV as he pointed to the hole. He said a neighboring house that shares the same yard was hit by another missile. Like most of the town's population, Mallahi belongs to Iran's Baluch ethnic minority.

There was no immediate video footage of the moment of impact. But videos aired by Iranian media showed a crater, and walls and the roof of the building heavily damaged, with a smashed car nearby and debris — including wedding guests' shoes — scattered around.

Four people were killed and dozens wounded, according to state media

The state news agency IRNA and state TV said two women and two children, aged 4 and 16, were killed, and at least 68 were wounded. Just after the strike, Ahmad Nafisi, the province's deputy governor, had told Iranian state television that five people were killed. There was no explanation for the change.

At the hospital in Minab where wounded people were taken, Iranian media showed at least two girls and a woman in bandages. One of the children looked like she was still in shock.

A man at the hospital with bandages on his head and arm said he was heading to the wedding when he heard jets overhead. The explosion hit as he arrived.

"Blocks were falling and hitting people's heads. And many small children and women that were there were terribly injured. So many," he said in a video posted by the Iranian Red Crescent, which did not identify him.

The nearby port was also targeted

Also hit in the round of strikes was a communications tower at Kuhestak's port, about 100 meters (yards) from Mallahi's house, according to state media.

At least two missiles hit the communications tower and another hit a pier at the port, Moein Arjomand, director of the Balochistan Human Rights Documentation Network, told the AP, citing witnesses who spoke to his group.

The group, which maintains contacts with Baluch communities in Iran, said the 16-year-old was killed by shrapnel as he rode his motorcycle near the communications tower, rather than at the wedding as reported by Iranian media.

Separately, Iran has said four members of its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and 10 members of the Guard's volunteer Basij forces were killed in the latest round of U.S. attacks. A total of 108 people were wounded, according to state media.

Expert says fragments point to a U.S. weapon

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N.R. Jenzen-Jones, director of Armament Research Services, initially identified the weapon as a SLAM-ER cruise missile, an air-launched missile that can be retargeted in flight by a human operator. But after examining further imagery, he said it was more likely to be a JSOW, a type of guided bomb, though he did not rule out a SLAM-ER and said multiple weapons may have hit the site.

U.S. Central Command declined to comment on the analyst's findings.

NBA suspends Clippers owner Ballmer, fines team \$30M, Kawhi Leonard \$700K in cap circumvention case

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The NBA imposed a sweeping punishment against the Los Angeles Clippers on Wednesday for violating salary cap circumvention rules, suspending owner Steve Ballmer for one year, fining the team \$30 million and forcing it to forfeit five first-round draft picks.

Also, two-time NBA Finals MVP Kawhi Leonard was hit with a \$700,000 penalty, president of basketball

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operations Lawrence Frank was banned for six months and team president of business operations Gillian Zucker was suspended for one year.

The Clippers will give up one first-round pick in each draft from 2029-2033.

The league came down hard on the organization after a nearly yearlong investigation led by an outside law firm.

The Clippers had said multiple times that they had done nothing wrong and expected to be exonerated.

"I think that we're going to be in the clear," Leonard said in April, "so I'm not stressing it."

At the same time, Frank said, "If you know Steve and know Steve's integrity, you know there's nothing to it. We believe and we're very confident we're on the right side of this."

The team maintained that stance Wednesday.

"We vehemently reject the NBA's findings, which are the result of a heavily biased investigation seeking to justify a predetermined narrative rather than facts and evidence," the team said in a statement. "What the league told us privately differs from what it announced today publicly, and they have not held themselves close to the standard Commissioner (Adam) Silver set at the start of this investigation to ensure its fairness and accuracy."

The Clippers said they will "now fight just as hard to demonstrate our innocence. We intend to vigorously challenge these findings and penalties through every avenue available to us and look forward to an ethical and impartial arbitration process."

The league said it and the players' union agreed to confirm the penalties as final and binding on all parties. It said the outside law firm continues to receive information involving the investigation, and the league "will consider further action as appropriate."

"I am deeply disappointed by the flagrant violations of our rules and by the Clippers' institutional and leadership failures that led to this misconduct," Silver said in a statement. "The severity of the penalties reflects the seriousness of the violations."

The NBA began investigating in September 2025 whether a \$28 million endorsement contract between Leonard and Aspiration Fund Adviser LLC — a company that filed for bankruptcy last year — broke league rules, following a report by journalist Pablo Torre. Earlier this year, Aspiration co-founder Joseph Sanberg was sentenced to 14 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to defrauding investors and lenders of at least \$248 million.

The Clippers released a letter from Ballmer's attorney David Kelley to Silver in which he described the investigation as "a witch hunt" and the subsequent penalties as a "gross injustice."

Kelley accused Silver of not keeping his promises that the investigation would be governed by due process and fundamental fairness as well as the burden being on the league to prove any violations through evidence.

"League counsel has acknowledged in our discussions that the league does not believe there was an agreement between the Clippers and Aspiration to funnel money to Kawhi Leonard. League counsel also agreed with the Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and a federal judge that Mr. Ballmer was a victim of Joe Sanberg's fraud — not a participant," wrote Kelley, a partner in the firm O'Melveny and Myers.

"Mr. Ballmer's reputation has been irreparably damaged as he now finds himself embroiled not only in this heavily biased investigation, but in civil litigation, the Aspiration bankruptcy proceeding, and more," Kelley wrote.

Kelley wrote that no league rule prohibits team personnel making introductions to both sponsors and vendors in response to player requests.

"Retroactively punishing the Clippers for violating a rule that never existed is hardly consistent with due process," Kelley wrote.

The league said Ballmer knowingly sought to help Leonard obtain off-court income deals, approved a business deal that he knew was a precondition for Aspiration to enter into an endorsement contract with Leonard, and for failing to create conditions under which his team followed league rules.

"I accept full responsibility for lapses in judgment by people within my inner circle and regret the dis-

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traction this situation has caused the fans and my family," Leonard said in a statement issued through his new agent, Harrison Gaines.

The NBA said Leonard, through his former business manager and uncle Dennis Robertson, "violated the circumvention rules by pressuring the Clippers to assist him in obtaining off-court income opportunities, successfully obtaining those opportunities, and failing to reimburse payments by the Clippers for personal expenses."

"I entered into my contract with the Clippers as well as the agreements in question in good faith, fully committed to fulfilling my obligations and with no knowledge of any intent on anyone's part to circumvent the salary cap," Leonard said in his statement.

The league said Ballmer was suspended for "knowingly seeking to help Mr. Leonard obtain off-court income opportunities," among other issues.

Leonard's trade to the Toronto Raptors has been on hold pending the outcome of the investigation. The Raptors had said they still want Leonard, and he apparently is just as eager to return to the team where he won an NBA title and was Finals MVP in 2019.

"As I return to Toronto, I am focused on what I can control, closing this chapter, and moving forward with a clean slate," Leonard said in his statement.

The Clippers and their personnel will be under a compliance and monitoring program by the league for five years and Robertson was banned from doing business with NBA teams for five years.

The league penalized Frank for his involvement with the impermissible endorsement arrangements and for approving impermissible expenses incurred by Leonard and his family. Zucker was banned for being primarily and directly culpable for the illegal endorsement arrangements and for lying to investigators. Both will lose their salaries during their bans.

It's not the first time the Clippers have run afoul of NBA rules under Ballmer, who bought the team for \$2 billion in August 2014.

They were fined \$250,000 a year later for violating rules against offering unauthorized business or investment opportunities to players during their courting of free agent DeAndre Jordan. A presentation to him improperly included a \$200,000-per-year deal with luxury carmaker Lexus.

Ballmer, 70, was CEO of Microsoft from 2000 to 2014.

Edouard weakens into a tropical depression after landfall but still dumping rain into Texas

By JAMIE STENGLE and LEKAN OYEKANMI Associated Press

PORT ARTHUR, Texas (AP) — The former Tropical Storm Edouard weakened into a depression Tuesday night while unleashing heavy rains and strong winds on parts of Texas, knocking out power to thousands, toppling trees and flooding roads.

The storm downgraded hours after making landfall near the Texas-Louisiana border with maximum sustained winds of 60 mph (95 kph), according to the National Hurricane Center. Forecasters said the system would keep losing strength as it pushed inland but would likely continue to produce heavy rains and possible flooding into Wednesday.

Meanwhile, a burst of tropical weather continued in the Pacific, where three named storms were churning in open waters.

The hurricane center expected Edouard to dump 3 to 7 inches (8 to 17 centimeters) of rain with up to 12 inches (30 centimeters) in some areas.

Storm makes landfall along Texas-Louisiana line

As the center of the storm passed over Beaumont, Texas, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) northeast of Houston, the city's offices were shuttered and the Texas Office of Emergency Management warned residents to stay off the road.

Throughout the city were downed trees blocking roads, traffic signals that weren't working and flooded underpasses, Beaumont Police said in a post on social media.

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About 32,000 utility customers were without electricity in Jefferson County, which includes Beaumont, according to poweroutage.com.

Mike Gilbert decided ahead of the storm to close his surf shop on Texas' Crystal Beach because he didn't want to risk his employees having a difficult time getting home. But, he said, it had ended up just being gray skies and drizzly rain there Tuesday as Edouard made landfall about 60 miles (96 kilometers) northeast of his shop.

"You literally never know," Gilbert said. "It could have all of a sudden moved over 50 miles and picked up 20 mph in wind and it could have been a whole different story."

In Cameron, Louisiana, the winds had picked up by Tuesday morning and rain was coming through on and off, said Connor Salvador, who owns an RV park there near the coast. He said while there could be a "little bit" of flooding if they get a lot of rain, he wasn't too worried about Edouard.

"We're pretty used to all these types of storms that come through," he said.

Several storms in the Pacific Ocean

Forecasters said newly formed Hurricane Lowell in the Pacific Ocean was expected to remain several hundred miles away from Hawaii for the next several days at least, but swells from the hurricane were likely to impact parts of the islands beginning Wednesday.

"This hurricane is likely to increase the surf and make for dangerous beach conditions and marine conditions for any boaters near the Hawaiian islands over the next few days," said Andrew Hagen, a forecaster with the National Hurricane Center.

Tropical Storm Marie formed in the Pacific Ocean early Tuesday well offshore of southwest Mexico, the center said. Forecasters said it was expected to become a hurricane by Wednesday night, and swells generated by the storm were expected to affect parts of the coast in southwestern Mexico and the Baja California peninsula over the next few days.

Elsewhere in the Pacific, Karina became a hurricane Sunday, fueled by warm waters far from any shore. It strengthened Monday into a powerful Category 4 storm but forecasters said Tuesday that it was expected to weaken.

Deadlocked jury in Lindsay Clancy trial goes home after a fifth day without a verdict

By MICHAEL CASEY and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — Jurors in the Lindsay Clancy trial went home without a verdict Wednesday following a fifth day of deliberations and twice saying they can't agree whether the Massachusetts mother is criminally responsible for killing her three young children.

The jury will return again Thursday morning. The judge told jurors to keep deliberating Wednesday when they said for a second straight day that they were at an impasse — a sign there's a growing chance of a hung jury and the trial ending without a resolution.

Clancy, a 36-year-old former labor and delivery nurse, doesn't deny strangling her children in the basement of their home in 2023. Her attorney argues that postpartum psychosis led to her actions, while prosecutors say she knew what she was doing when she killed Cora, Dawson and Callan Clancy, ages 5, 3 and 8 months.

"I know it's been a long day," Judge William Sullivan said, "so at this point, what I'm going to do is, first off thank you for your time and commitment to this case. I'm going to ask you to come back tomorrow morning."

Clancy stared at the jury with no expression when Sullivan earlier in the day explained to the courtroom that the jurors were at a standstill.

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.

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Judge tells the jury to keep trying for a verdict

Earlier in the day, the jury sent the court a note saying it couldn't unanimously agree on a verdict, despite days of trying. The jury had sent a similar note Tuesday morning. Neither note revealed anything about how the jury might be split or said anything about the tone of deliberations.

Sullivan then gave the jury a legal instruction sometimes known as a "dynamite charge" because it is intended to help a jury break through an impasse.

He told the jurors not to abandon their own convictions just to reach a verdict, but urged them to seriously consider opposing views and reassess their positions if appropriate. No one knows, he added, whether another jury would be "more intelligent, more impartial or more competent to decide it than you are."

Such instructions are common in many states and the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld their constitutionality, but they are barred in some states because of concerns they might be coercive.

Elyse Hershon, a Boston criminal defense attorney and legal analyst, said, "The next time they say they are deadlocked or unagreed — that is usually the mistrial call."

The trial featured split views on Clancy's mental health

Clancy's livestreamed trial has generated intense interest, with reporters and spectators packing the courtroom. The case has also sparked deep public divisions over her culpability and the issues around maternal mental health after childbirth.

Clancy strangled her children in her home, then jumped from a second-floor window. She remains paralyzed from the waist down. Her lawyers say she heard a voice telling her to kill the children so she could end her own life, and had bipolar disorder and postpartum psychosis, a rare mental illness that can follow childbirth.

The prosecution argued that Clancy planned to kill herself because of depression, deliberately sent her then-husband on errands to get him out of the house that day, and killed the children because she didn't want them to suffer after she was gone.

Jurors heard testimony from relatives and doctors about how Clancy's mental health declined in the months before the killings and how her treatment included therapy, several medications and a short stay in a psychiatric hospital.

If jurors ultimately can't agree on a verdict, the judge could declare a mistrial. Prosecutors would then have to decide whether to put Clancy on trial again, drop the charges or try to negotiate a plea deal with her lawyer.

If the jury decides Clancy was criminally responsible for her actions, it could convict her of either murder or manslaughter. If she is acquitted, a judge could still order her confined to a mental health facility if an evaluation determines that she poses a danger to the public.

Massachusetts woman is charged with filming the jury

Dawn Light, 56, was arraigned on an intimidation charge Wednesday at the same courthouse as Clancy's trial in Plymouth, south of Boston. Authorities say she filmed jurors leaving the courthouse a day earlier.

Light, a retired nurse and Clancy supporter, told reporters she was there: "To see Lindsay. And I did see her. She was getting picked up by the van."

Her lawyer Jennifer White called it a "misunderstanding."

A not-guilty plea was entered on Light's behalf and she was ordered to stay away from the court, jurors and witnesses.

The arrest prompted the judge to ask each juror Wednesday if they saw anything that would affect their impartiality, Clancy's attorney Kevin Reddington told The Associated Press. The judge also opened the day's proceedings with a warning that he had issued an order governing how people should conduct themselves at the courthouse. That order barred people from filming, following, contacting or tampering with jurors.

Immigrant rights group seeks to block use of federal databases it says could purge legal voters

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An immigrant rights group sued the Trump administration Wednesday to block the U.S. Department of Homeland Security from using federal databases that it alleged are being used to target naturalized citizens who are eligible to vote.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington on behalf of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, alleges that DHS and the U.S. Justice Department are interfering with fair elections by using inaccurate federal databases in an attempt to buttress allegations of voter fraud.

The federal government is engaging in an "attack on the freedom to vote," Angelica Salas, the coalition's executive director, said at a downtown Los Angeles news conference. "This is voter intimidation."

The lawsuit — filed on behalf of the coalition by the UCLA Voting Rights Project — becomes part of a swirl of legal moves that states, including California, have taken to fend off federal actions that threaten to create confusion during the midterms.

"It's not an accident the federal government is trying to interfere with the right to vote. ... They believe they can intimidate naturalized U.S. citizens," said Xavier Becerra, the Democratic nominee for California governor who is acting as a senior adviser to the voting project.

Part of a broader effort to search for noncitizens on voter rolls

The lawsuit alleges that the administration might be comparing voter rolls with undisclosed government databases. Those systems can include outdated information and be riddled with errors, it said, and could produce inaccurate results that disproportionately affect naturalized voters.

"Comparing government databases to try and arrive at a list of noncitizen registrants has been shown to result in erroneous data," the lawsuit said. "Congress has never authorized such activities and in fact has ... prohibited invasion of voter privacy through government data matches in this way."

The Trump administration has been targeting noncitizen voting to allege it could be a source of significant fraud during the midterm elections, even though actual voting by people who are not citizens is rare. He is pushing for the U.S. Postal Service to send mail ballots only to voters verified as U.S. citizens, and his Justice Department has sued to force the release of detailed voter data in 30 states and the District of Columbia, though it has not yet succeeded in those cases.

Asked to respond to the lawsuit, a DHS spokesperson said in an email: "The department accessed publicly available data from states' voter rolls and cross referenced them with known illegal aliens in our systems. It's not rocket science; it's an easy step to secure our elections."

"DHS is laser focused on prosecuting and removing aliens who vote and preventing the dilution of the votes of U.S. citizens," the statement added.

Judge had previously halted use of a federal citizenship database

In June, a federal judge ruled that a recently revamped version of a federal tool can no longer be used, which critics had referred to as an unlawful centralized federal database of voter information.

U.S. District Court Judge Sparkle L. Sooknunan sided with advocacy groups that argued the recent upgrades to the program, called Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, or SAVE, aggregated Americans' sensitive personal data in a way that could result in voters being wrongly purged from voter rolls.

The lawsuit said it isn't clear if the administration used that system to generate projections about non-citizens on voting rolls in the states or if other unknown datasets were involved.

By May, the Trump administration had run millions of voter registrations through government databases to determine their eligibility, a process that critics feared could purge valid voters from the rolls before the November elections. At least 67 million registrations, primarily from Republican-controlled states, have gone through a beefed-up verification program, or SAVE, at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and tens of thousands of those have been flagged as potential noncitizens or people who have died.

State officials push back against DHS noncitizen claims

Specifically, the lawsuit by the immigrant rights group asks the court to stop the administration from

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pursuing a review of California's voter list and to rescind the letter sent to the state requesting voter information. It also asks the court to declare the administration's actions unconstitutional.

Trump's Department of Homeland Security is claiming without providing evidence that 250,000 noncitizens might be on the rolls in just four states, including 190,832 in California.

California's secretary of state, Democrat Shirley Weber, said in response, "I have serious doubts about the reliability of your data and accuracy of your claims, since my office has not shared our statewide voter registration list with DHS or any other federal agency or official."

According to the lawsuit, federal officials have not disclosed evidence supporting those figures.

Tiger Woods pleads no contest to reckless driving charge over rollover crash in Florida

By DANIEL KOZIN Associated Press

STUART, Fla. (AP) — Tiger Woods pleaded no contest to a reckless driving charge and his driver's license was suspended for five years Wednesday following a March rollover crash in Florida, where he initially was accused of driving under the influence.

Woods, still one of golf's most influential figures and as recognizable as any athlete in the world, has had a remarkable fall since winning the 2019 Masters for his 15th major. The first person of Black heritage to win the Masters in 1997, his career has been derailed by multiple back and knee surgeries, car crashes and dependence on pain medication.

He was arrested in March after his SUV clipped a truck and rolled over on its side on a beachside residential road near his home on Jupiter Island.

A sheriff's report said deputies found two pain pills in his pocket and he showed signs of impairment. He did a Breathalyzer test, which came out negative, but refused to take a urine test.

He pleaded not guilty to the original DUI charge.

Courtroom gallery is mostly empty as Tiger Woods changes plea

Before the hearing in Florida's Martin County on Wednesday, Woods, 50, sat at the defense table looking back at the mostly empty courtroom gallery. He said little as he agreed to the reduced charge and left the courthouse without addressing reporters.

He had arrived with his girlfriend, Vanessa Trump, President Donald Trump's former daughter-in-law. She sat behind him during the proceedings.

"Tiger is not absolved of accountability and he surrendered his license for the next five years," Mark Steinberg, his longtime manager at Excel Sports told the AP. "He is continuing his treatment and prioritizing all aspects of his health."

Prosecutor says Tiger Woods has a tolerance to pain medicine

The prosecutor in the case said two toxicologists found there was insufficient proof of his impairment and determined Woods had built up a "pharmacological" tolerance after years of using pain pills.

Thomas Bakkedahl, a state attorney, defended his decision to accept the plea, saying, "I did what I think is right."

Prosecutors obtained the golfer's pharmacy records that showed he had a lawful prescription, Bakkedahl said.

The deputy who arrested Woods after the crash found two white pills in his pocket that had markings identifying them as hydrocodone, according to the arrest report. Hydrocodone is an opioid that is prescribed for pain, but it can be addictive.

Woods told the deputy he takes a few prescription medications, according to the report, including "Vicodin" — a brand name painkiller that contains hydrocodone.

He has had numerous surgeries on his legs and back over the last two decades — some to treat cartilage and ligament damage, a ruptured tendon, arthritis, and damaged discs in his back.

What a no-contest plea means

At Wednesday's hearing, Woods also pleaded no contest to refusing to submit to testing after the crash

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and was fined \$1,500, according to court documents. A no-contest plea is not an admission of guilt, but means the accused will offer no defense. The plea is treated as a conviction in the criminal justice system.

Andrew Buda, a defense lawyer in Tampa who's not involved in the case, said a positive drug result from a urine test would not have been strong evidence against Woods because prescription medications can stay in the body for extended periods.

"A reduced plea to reckless driving is a plausible and unremarkable outcome — not evidence of special treatment," said Buda, a former prosecutor. "A defendant with a good attorney who took the same steps — disclosure, mitigation, treatment — could reasonably expect a similar outcome under the same facts."

Woods' attorney has not responded to a message seeking comment.

Yes, Tiger can still drive a golf cart

Judge Darren Steele warned Woods that his driver's license suspension didn't include exceptions. "If you were to drive for any reason at all, you would immediately go back to jail," the judge told Woods.

The prosecutor said he was confident that Woods would be spotted if he doesn't heed the message.

"Of all the people in the world who should not get behind the wheel of a car, it's the gentleman who is one of the most recognizable faces on the planet," Bakkedahl said.

But there's one vehicle Woods still can drive, at least in Florida — a golf cart.

That's because Florida law says as long as you are at least 18, you can operate a golf cart without a license. And that applies to anyone, Bakkedahl said in an email, whether you're on a golf course or public property.

Video shows the aftermath of the crash

Body camera footage shows Woods taking out his phone after the crash and telling a deputy, "I was just talking to the president."

Woods can be heard saying, "Thank you so much," as he hangs up and the deputy approaches. It is not clear if Woods was referring to President Donald Trump.

The footage also shows the handcuffed Woods hiccupping, yawning and repeatedly appearing to nod off during the 15-minute ride.

Neither Woods nor the person in the other vehicle were injured in the crash, according to officials. Woods told a deputy that he was looking down at his phone and changing the radio station when he hit the truck.

In Washington, Trump told reporters the resolution of the case was fair.

"I told him that a long time, 'Why don't you get somebody to drive you?' So he's going to have somebody drive him from now on," the president said Wednesday. "And, you know, he's just a very special guy. I'm glad that was resolved."

Tiger Woods has been involved in other crashes

Woods has been involved in four crashes over the years. He took a leave from the golf tour after the 2009 crash and again after the latest crash and has yet to return to tournament play.

He left the United States to seek treatment at an inpatient treatment facility, according to court records.

Woods made his first public appearance since returning from treatment on June 23 when he introduced the PGA Tour's plans to revamp its schedule for 2028. Woods remained as chair of the tour's Future Competition Committee after his arrest.

Wall Street rises as tech stocks climb and oil prices, bond yields hold relatively steady

By DAMIAN J. TROISE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

U.S. stocks snapped a three-day losing streak Wednesday as gains by big technology companies and relatively steady oil prices and bond yields helped lift the market after a downbeat start to the week.

The S&P 500 index rose 0.5%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.6%, and the Nasdaq composite gained 0.5%.

The market has been under pressure this week from rising oil prices and a bond-market sell-off. The rocky start to September follows a mostly positive August during which every major index notched a gain for the month.

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While Wall Street remains gripped by anxiety over rising prices, government debt and the impact of global conflicts on the U.S. and the global economy, investors got a breather from the recent volatility in the bond market Wednesday.

"You've seen a nice spike in (bond) yields over the past week or so, and that's made the market a little bit nervous about how much is too much," said Michael Antonelli, market strategist at Baird. "But today, (there was) no real move in yields that's enough to cause any more consternation."

Investors welcomed some encouraging signals about demand for artificial intelligence from two big tech companies, Dell and Palo Alto Networks. The AI boom has been the key driver behind the S&P 500's gains this year.

Dell Technologies jumped 15.8% for the biggest gain among S&P 500 stocks after reporting strong second-quarter profits late Tuesday. The company cited accelerating demand for artificial intelligence computing and raised its fiscal year revenue outlook.

Palo Alto Networks also reported quarterly results late Tuesday that topped Wall Street's expectations, citing a strong market for AI cybersecurity, though its shares fell 9.3% on Wednesday.

Other big tech companies tied to the AI boom rallied. Chipmaker Nvidia, whose big market value tend to give it more influence over the broader market's direction, rose 3.2%, while computer memory seller Micron Technology gained 2.4%.

"When rates rise, we tend to worry about what will that do to economic growth, and that puts some caution in the market," Antonelli said. "On the flip side, you get AI spending, a good report from a company like Dell, and the market takes over again and says, 'Oh, we still have this AI spending tail wind.'"

Markets in Europe fell after markets in Asia closed lower.

Oil prices held relatively steady despite the intensification in the six-month long U.S. war with Iran. The U.S. attacked sites in Iran over the weekend, ending a lull in major hostilities and Iran has since retaliated against sites around the Gulf region.

The price of Brent crude, the international standard, rose 1% to settle at \$95.63 per barrel. U.S. oil climbed 0.9% to settle at \$91.01 per barrel.

Energy stocks were mixed. Chevron edged 0.3% higher after confirming it will expand operations in Venezuela.

A surge in oil prices following the start of the U.S. war with Iran fueled a jump in gasoline prices and global shipping costs. The conflict shut down the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil is typically shipped.

Higher energy costs worsened inflation that was already stubbornly high amid a volatile U.S. tariff war with much of the world.

Inflation has been squeezing businesses and households at the same time that the mostly resilient jobs market shows signs of weakening. Payrolls processing firm ADP reported that private-sector employment slipped in August, according to its monthly survey. It is just a small snapshot, though, of the broader labor market and follows a government report on Tuesday that showed U.S. job openings rose in July.

The big focus this week will be the government's broader employment report for August, which will be released Friday. The previous report for July showed that the jobs market stalled, with employers cutting positions.

Both inflation and the jobs market have been key focuses for Wall Street and the Federal Reserve.

"Friday's employment report, and perhaps even more importantly next week's inflation data, will play a significant role in determining whether policymakers decide to raise rates in September," said Angelo Kourkafas, senior global strategist, investment strategy at Edward Jones, in a research note.

The Fed is trying to balance its task of supporting employment and taming inflation. Wall Street expects the central bank to raise interest rates before the year ends in an effort to cool inflation, which remains well above 3%. The Fed has a stated goal of cooling inflation to a target of 2%.

The bond market has been selling off, which is a signal that it expects borrowing costs to rise.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury, which tends to impact mortgage rates, slipped to 4.78% from 4.79%

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late Tuesday. It has been rising steadily throughout the year and was as low as 4.20% at the beginning of 2026.

The yield on the 2-year Treasury, which closely tracks expectations for Federal Reserve moves on interest rates, dipped to 4.37% from 4.39%. It is still significantly higher for the year, though, and was as low as 3.50% at the beginning of 2026.

Investors are also betting on a 64% chance that the Fed will raise rates at its upcoming meeting in September, according to CME FedWatch.

The Fed's position is growing more complicated. Raising the benchmark interest rate would help cool inflation by making borrowing costs higher and slowing the economy. Doing so, though, could also hurt the employment market at a time when it is seemingly already weakening.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 35.13 points to 7,666.60. The Dow gained 295.07 points to 53,061.95, and the Nasdaq rose 118.05 points to 26,217.83.

The trial over Tupac Shakur's murder ended with a guilty verdict. But did it bring closure?

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — For nearly 30 years, the story of Tupac Shakur's killing existed somewhere between an unsolved murder and hip-hop mythology.

His death became intertwined with the killing of Christopher Wallace, better known as The Notorious B.I.G., six months later. Together, the deaths of two of rap's biggest stars came to symbolize a combustible era commonly reduced to three words: East versus West. The mystery was compounded by reluctant witnesses, distrust of law enforcement and questions about why police in Las Vegas and Compton hadn't pursued charges until now.

Now, a Las Vegas jury has delivered something that seemed elusive for decades: a conviction.

Duane "Keffe D" Davis was found guilty Monday of first-degree murder with use of a deadly weapon in Shakur's 1996 killing. Jurors deliberated for less than three hours. Davis was the only person ever charged in the case.

The verdict provides a legal answer to one of hip-hop's most enduring mysteries. But after decades of books, documentaries and podcasts on theories about Shakur's death, another question remains: Can a conviction bring closure — and if so, for whom?

The emotion of that long wait was visible in the courtroom on Monday. Shakur's sister, Sekyiwa "Set" Shakur, cried after the verdict was read and reached back toward someone sitting behind her. She and other members of Shakur's family later embraced prosecutors.

When Davis was charged in 2023, Shakur's sister called the development "a pivotal moment," while making clear that accountability remained the goal.

"It's important to me that the world, the country, the justice system, and our people acknowledge the gravity of the passing of this man, my brother, my mother's son, my father's son," she said at the time.

Prosecutor Binu Palal echoed that distinction after Monday's verdict.

"To all of us, to me, Tupac Shakur was an icon or an idea," Palal said. "But to the family, Tupac Shakur was a brother, a son, a cousin, a loved person ripped from them 30 years ago."

Can a verdict bring closure?

Chuck Creekmur, co-founder of the hip-hop website AllHipHop, said he believes Shakur's family may finally find some measure of closure, but he expects questions and theories surrounding the rapper's death to persist.

"I thought it was a closing chapter," he said. "But now, I realize I'm pretty convinced it's just opening another chapter."

For some, the verdict may provide a sense of resolution — or at least accountability — but closure might still be out of reach.

On "The Breakfast Club" Tuesday, Charlamagne tha God also reflected on what the verdict could mean

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for Shakur's family.

"Nothing brings your loved one back," he said. "All you think about is what his life would have been like the past 30 years, and you're constantly reminded of him because he's such an iconic figure. So you'll never truly have, you know, peace."

It was never simply about East vs. West

The prosecution's case against Davis centered on an individual act of retaliation rather than a sweeping, coast-to-coast battle between gangs and their associated record labels.

Hours before Shakur was shot on Sept. 7, 1996, he and members of his entourage were captured on surveillance video beating Davis' nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson, inside the MGM Grand after a Mike Tyson fight. Prosecutors said Davis then obtained a gun, gathered a group that included Anderson and went looking for Shakur and Death Row Records co-founder Marion "Suge" Knight.

Davis was not accused of firing the fatal shots. Prosecutors argued he provided the weapon and helped orchestrate the attack.

For Creekmur, the trial exposed how inadequate the familiar East-West label has always been. He pointed to the fractured friendships, gang affiliations, street politics, business interests and media amplification.

"This trial really peeled back the layers on how deep this really goes, and how far from hip-hop it really was," he said. "It just really wasn't about hip-hop at all."

Creekmur said that if the conflict had truly been about hip-hop, the rivalry would have played out through diss records rather than escalating into street violence.

"If it was hip-hop, it would have ended with a few songs," he said.

'They just happened to be on two different coasts'

For those who lived through the era, the reality was more complicated than the East-West label suggested. Shakur was born in New York, maintained friendships there and had close relationships that didn't fit neatly along geographic lines.

"That was Bad Boy and Death Row," said veteran hip-hop journalist Dave "Davey D" Cook, who wrote about Shakur during his years in Oakland. "They just happened to be on two different coasts."

The trial presented a collision of personal feuds, record-label allegiances and evolving street-gang relationships. Shakur and Death Row had associations with Mob Piru, while Davis was a leader in the South Compton Crips.

"I think the public missed the nuance and the accuracy of what was really going on," he said. "It was being sensationalized on radio and in magazines."

He remembers how charged the atmosphere became in the '90s. After Shakur's death, Wallace appeared on a Bay Area radio program and said, "We're not that powerful, yo." Some listeners heard the last word as "yet," Cook recalled, interpreting the remark as provocative.

Years later, he listened again and heard it differently.

"Tensions were so high, and there was so much angst in the air that we didn't even hear him clearly," he said.

Keffe D's own words caught up with him

Davis, 63, spent years publicly talking about a killing that was never prosecuted — and those words ultimately became central to the case against him.

Prosecutors pointed to his accounts in interviews with investigators, documentaries, online appearances and his 2019 memoir, "Compton Street Legend." His defense argued the stories were exaggerated or fabricated for money and notoriety.

"The strength of our case was Mr. Davis ... and his mouth," Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson said after the verdict.

Charlamagne made a similar point while giving Davis "Donkey of the Day" on the popular radio show.

"If you give a man enough microphones, he'll create Exhibit A," Charlamagne said. "There was a time when investigators had to interrogate suspects. Now all you gotta do is give a brother a podcast setup."

But Charlamagne saw a larger lesson in Davis' decades of public storytelling.

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"Sometimes surviving consequences for too long convinces you that consequences no longer exist," he said.

What mysteries remain after the verdict?

Wallace's 1997 killing remains unsolved, while speculation about who else might have been involved in Shakur's killing persists, along with more outlandish theories questioning whether he died at all.

For prosecutors, the verdict closes the case — at least for now.

"At this point, we don't believe we have sufficient evidence to charge anyone else with the death of Tupac Shakur," Wolfson said.

Creekmur expects it to be harder to put some larger questions to rest.

"The fact that there were no convictions, it allowed conspiracy theories to fester," he said, "just like an open wound."

Creekmur said the verdict may provide "a certain kind of closure," though he doubts it will settle all of the questions surrounding Shakur's death.

Cook offered a similar assessment.

"I think that's one chapter in this larger narrative that has been closed," he said.

What to know about the AP/FRONTLINE investigation into scam victims

Associated Press undefined

Scams in the U.S. have surged to a record high, and most people have been targeted. Americans reported a record \$15.9 billion in losses last year to the Federal Trade Commission — a 25% increase from 2024, and likely a huge undercount. The FTC estimates that real losses in 2024 were close to \$200 billion, or about \$550 million every day.

An investigation by The Associated Press and FRONTLINE found that despite attempts by both the Trump administration and Congress to fight scams, victims still have little recourse. The investigation included interviews with 58 victims.

Here are other takeaways:

— Virtually nobody is immune to scams. Ninety-eight percent of Americans suspect they have been targeted with scam messages, many every day, according to a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Three in 10 said they have personally lost money or information to scams. The 58 victims interviewed by the AP/FRONTLINE were aged 32 to 90, lost several thousand dollars to \$4 million each and ranged from IT professionals and academics to people just trying to make ends meet. Several said they contemplated suicide, and two attempted it. Only one got money back, from her bank.

— After the scam, many victims end up paying more in taxes. The IRS often demands that retirees, including scam victims, pay taxes on funds they withdrew from tax-deferred accounts like their retirement savings. Before 2018, victims of theft or fraud could sometimes deduct losses incurred from their taxable income. But under a provision of the Trump administration's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, made permanent in 2025, personal losses from many common scams are not eligible for tax breaks. That means victims can owe taxes after money was stolen from them.

— Some victims are also penalized by banks that blame them or even accuse them of being complicit. Victims described having their accounts abruptly frozen or cancelled, along with demands for repayment on loans and legal fees. Earlier this year, American Bankers Association Chair Kenneth Kelly said banks spend "time, money and significant resources" trying to stop fraud, which usually refers to unauthorized transactions. But under current U.S. law, financial institutions are rarely liable for transactions their customers authorize.

— The U.S. lags behind several other countries in protecting consumers. Since late 2024, financial services companies in the United Kingdom have generally had to reimburse clients tricked into sending money to scammers. And trained social workers sometimes visit scam victims. The European Union is also rolling out rules that make financial institutions potentially liable for scammed funds if they don't put

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in adequate fraud protections, and its Digital Services Act requires platforms to quickly act on reported scam content. In Australia, financial institutions, telecommunications companies and digital platforms can be fined or forced to compensate victims if they don't do enough to prevent and respond to scam activity. And in Singapore, banks and telecom companies may have to repay victims of certain phishing scams if they fail to implement required safeguards. Police can temporarily restrict bank transfers of someone who they believe to be a victim, and they sit physically with bank and e-commerce platform staff in a national anti-scam center.

— The rise of cryptocurrency has helped fuel scams because it is a form of digital cash that can be hard to trace to its real owners. China bans crypto-related businesses, while the European Union requires licensing, consumer protections and broad disclosures. But while the Trump administration has backed some cryptocurrency regulation, it has also promised to halt "aggressive enforcement actions and regulatory overreach." the GENIUS Act signed by President Donald Trump last year to regulate some cryptocurrencies did not require companies to return stolen funds to fraud victims - a gap that consumer advocates, prosecutors and some lawmakers have criticized. Unlike bank deposits, crypto assets are not backed by federal insurance. Many cryptocurrency exchanges operate across borders and through offshore entities where U.S. laws may not apply.

— The U.S. government is waking up to the threat. Congress is considering more than a dozen bills to prevent scams, including one to establish a centralized website for complaints and another to require disclosures on deepfakes and other AI-generated content. The Justice Department in November unveiled a strike force to fight scam centers in Southeast Asia, and the Treasury has levied sanctions on them. President Donald Trump also signed an executive order in March directing the attorney general to prioritize the prosecution of scammers and to submit a recommendation for a program to restore money to victims.

— Fledgling efforts to help victims get money back aren't keeping up with the tsunami of those who have lost it. Efforts are still piecemeal: At least 13 federal agencies touch on different aspects of these crimes, according to a report issued by the Government Accountability Office. The FBI's Operation Level Up has stopped about 8,500 people from falling for scams over almost two years by calling them to intervene, according to former FBI Financial Crimes Section chief Rebecca Keithley. But that's a small fraction of victims, with the FBI receiving nearly 3,000 internet crime complaints a day on average through its IC3.gov portal.

Scams in the US are at a record high.

Yet most victims get no help and some end up losing even more

By MARTHA MENDOZA/FRONTLINE and JULIET LINDERMAN and ERIKA KINETZ/AP Associated Press and FRONTLINE

When Simon's wife of 43 years passed away, it felt a bit like he'd died too.

In his overwhelming grief, Simon sought companionship online, like so many other lonely widows and widowers. Almost immediately he met Emily. But over the next few months, Emily, who Simon realized too late was a fake, stole \$800,000 from him.

And that was just the beginning.

Simon was stuck paying back \$185,000 he had borrowed, and tens of thousands of dollars in additional taxes on money he had withdrawn and lost. He tried to report the crime to his local police and the FBI, he said, but nothing came of it. Instead, he was contacted by yet another scammer — offering to connect him with the Secret Service to recoup his losses in exchange for even more money.

Like Simon, virtually every American has been targeted by scammers in some way, exclusive new polling data shows. Scams in the U.S. have surged to a record high, causing billions in losses for Americans.

But the U.S. still lags behind some other countries in tackling the problem, holding financial and social media companies responsible and regulating the cryptocurrency scammers rely on, an investigation by The Associated Press and FRONTLINE found. And although both the Trump administration and Congress are pursuing new options, victims still have little recourse and sometimes end up losing even more.

In interviews with almost five dozen victims, AP and FRONTLINE found that many faced ridicule and

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stigma from friends and family, mounting pressure from banks and lenders, additional taxes, dismissive law enforcement and neglect from a government they believed would protect them.

"What happens after the scam might even be worse than the scam itself," said Erin West, a former prosecutor and founder of the nonprofit Operation Shamrock that provides support for victims of online scams. "It's a travesty."

While victims say they seldom get any answers from authorities, AP/Frontline found these crimes can be traceable. With the help of leaked documents and cryptowallet addresses, AP/Frontline tracked Emily and Simon's stolen funds to a notorious scam compound halfway around the world in Myanmar with thousands of victims.

Simon was stunned to see Emily's fake profile and hundreds of pages of conversations he thought were encrypted.

"What a fool I was," he said.

Today, much of the Myanmar compound where his scam originated lies in rubble, destroyed by local authorities. Yet many of the illicit operations simply moved, new sites opened immediately, and Simon is no closer to getting his money back.

He asked not to be identified by his full name because he is too ashamed to tell most of his family about the crime. Local police and the FBI declined to comment on the case.

"(The police) told me right away that, you know, 'You have to kiss that money goodbye,'" he said, fighting back tears. "Already I experienced something very bad and now I have to pay for the consequences on top of it, and see my money evaporate all over again. You lose two ways."

As scams surge, fees and taxes pile on

The size of the global scam industry is staggering.

Americans reported a record \$15.9 billion in losses last year to the Federal Trade Commission, a 25% increase from 2024. And such estimates are likely a massive undercount because most scam victims are too embarrassed to report their crimes.

The FTC estimates that real losses in 2024 were close to \$200 billion; that's \$550 million every day just in the U.S.

The ballooning costs are fueled by huge advances in artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency. AI allows scammers to work at a previously unimaginable scale and level of sophistication, and cryptocurrency, often used in investment scams, is a form of digital cash that can be hard to trace to its real owners.

No one is immune, the AP/Frontline investigation found. Ninety-eight percent of Americans suspect they have been targeted by scammers, many every day, according to a poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Three in 10 said they have personally lost money or information to scams.

AP/Frontline interviewed 58 people in the United States who lost money to cyberscams, aged 32 to 90, across all races and income levels. They said they lost several thousand dollars to \$4 million each and included doctors, IT professionals, academics with advanced degrees and people just trying to make ends meet.

All said they felt alone and confused afterward. When they did report the crimes to law enforcement, many felt abandoned by a lack of support. Several victims said they contemplated suicide. Two attempted it.

The only one to get any money back won a rare settlement from her bank, not from her scammer.

Instead, scam victims sometimes owe additional money through bank fees and tax bills. The IRS often demands that retirees, including scam victims, pay taxes on any funds they withdrew from tax-deferred accounts like their retirement savings.

Before 2018, victims of theft or fraud could sometimes deduct losses incurred from their taxable income. But under a provision of the Trump administration's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, made permanent in 2025, personal losses from many common scams are not eligible for tax breaks. That means victims can owe taxes after money was stolen from them.

Retired nurse Susan Bivins said she was tricked into draining her retirement accounts and sending more than \$200,000 to a scammer pretending to be a federal agent. The FBI and local police did not help, she

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said.

Then her tax bill arrived. She owed the Internal Revenue Service \$80,000.

"I wanted to drive off a cliff," she said. "I didn't know how I was going to live."

Bivins sold her home and moved into a small one-bedroom apartment. She is still paying off her tax bill, selling handmade quilts.

The FBI said in a statement that it takes scams and fraud seriously but cannot comment on individual cases to protect privacy. Local police did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

A law before Congress, the Tax Relief for Fraud Victims Act, would reinstate an allowance for victims to deduct their losses. AARP fraud prevention lead Kathy Stokes urged Congress earlier this year to help scam victims who are "stuck with a bill they don't deserve and have no way to pay."

"Essentially they're being revictimized by the U.S. government," Stokes said.

Banks also sometimes blame people who are scammed instead of seeing them as crime victims, or even accuse them of being complicit. Victims described having their accounts abruptly frozen or canceled, along with demands for repayment on loans and legal fees.

Debra Fox in Colorado lost \$58,000 in a romance scam, she said. In a meeting with her bank branch, she said, a representative told her that she would be held responsible for anything fraudulent linked to her own accounts and forced to pay any legal fees.

She was in shock for 48 hours, terrified that the little she had left would vanish.

"I thought, I have no control over this process," she said. "The crime was horrific enough... but it's what happened next that was really unbelievable to me."

Her local bank branch declined to comment on her case.

Earlier this year, American Bankers Association Chair Kenneth Kelly said banks spend "time, money and significant resources" trying to stop fraud, which usually refers to unauthorized transactions. But under current U.S. law, financial institutions are rarely liable for transactions their customers authorize.

There are rare workarounds. For example, under new legal protections, a theft from a senior citizen in California might fall under the definition of financial elder abuse.

Alice Lin, now 83, was the only victim AP/FRONTLINE interviewed to get some money back, after she sued her bank, citing this law.

Over their lifetimes, Lin and her husband had put aside a nest egg of about \$720,000. After he died, she struck up what she thought was an online friendship with a man who'd also lost a spouse.

Her new friend Justin convinced her to take out money from her bank and invest it in cryptocurrency platforms.

At first, her financial statements showed big wins. But when Justin encouraged her to ask her daughter for a loan to invest more, her family realized it was a scam.

Lin sued JPMorgan Chase for failing to protect an elderly citizen and flag the extraordinarily large and unusual transfers. Earlier this year, they settled for an undisclosed amount, according to her lawyers.

JPMorgan Chase said it has multiple layers of scam protection, from bankers who asked Lin about her transactions to written warnings. Settling the lawsuit "was a business decision weighed with the cost of litigation on this matter," said the bank in a written statement.

Lin had been targeted by a sophisticated criminal network that ran dozens of different scams and took in at least \$800 million from January 2022 to September 2024, blockchain analysis TRM Labs did for AP/FRONTLINE showed. This industrialization of scams makes it even harder for victims to get their money back, said Ari Redford, global head of policy at TRM Labs.

"We have not built out systems in the U.S. in many respects to not only alert victims but to really do restitution in a meaningful way," he said.

Lin said the grief and embarrassment made her think about taking her own life. But she was infuriated by a question her scammer asked her long after she'd stopped responding.

"Are you still alive?" said the message. Lin shuddered as she read it again.

"I told myself, 'I'm alive and I'm going to fight back.'"

Global models offer potential answers

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The U.S. is taking steps to improve cooperation with the private sector on fighting scams but — unlike a growing number of other countries — has stopped short of requiring companies to do more to protect consumers or face financial penalties.

Eight in 10 Americans across political lines said the U.S. government isn't doing enough to protect them against scams, according to a new Gallup survey. And more than half said financial institutions, social media and tech companies and the federal government should also share responsibility, new AP-NORC polling shows.

Since late 2024, financial services companies in the United Kingdom have generally had to reimburse clients tricked into sending money to scammers, giving them an incentive to invest in prevention measures. The downside has been slower bank transfers, the need for more employees and sometimes a conversation to explain why a customer might want to transfer money.

The European Union is also rolling out rules that make financial institutions potentially liable for scammed funds if they don't put in adequate fraud protections. And the EU's Digital Services Act, which was passed in 2022, requires platforms to quickly act on reported scam content and take broader steps to reduce online fraud.

In the UK, trained social workers are sometimes sent to the homes of scam victims to address the emotional fallout.

"You wouldn't ever say to a victim, 'Why did you fall for a mugging? Why did you fall for a burglary?'" said Louise Baxter, who serves on the Home Office Joint Fraud Task Force. "It's secondary victimization, from a law enforcement perspective and a societal perspective."

New regulations in Australia also spread the responsibility for preventing scams. Financial institutions, telecommunications companies and digital platforms in Australia can be fined or forced to compensate victims if they don't do enough to prevent and respond to scam activity.

Singapore's protections are among the strictest. Under the government's Shared Responsibility Framework, banks and telecom companies may have to repay victims of certain phishing scams if they fail to implement required safeguards. The country's Protection From Scams Act passed last year allows police to temporarily restrict bank transfers of someone who they believe to be a victim. Further, staff from banks and e-commerce platforms physically sit in the same office as police in their national anti-scam center.

The U.S. makes piecemeal attempts to teach law enforcement agents how to respond to scams, but requirements vary across agencies. And in the U.S., victims are generally only reimbursed if the money is taken from their accounts without their authorization, not if they were tricked into approving the withdrawals. U.S. law also offers social media companies broad protections from liability for the content they carry, even scams.

There are global differences when it comes to cryptocurrency as well.

China bans crypto-related businesses, while the European Union requires licensing, consumer protections and broad disclosures. But while the Trump administration has backed some cryptocurrency regulation, it has also promised to halt "aggressive enforcement actions and regulatory overreach" to promote innovation. And the GENIUS Act signed by President Donald Trump last year to regulate some cryptocurrencies did not require companies to return stolen funds to fraud victims - a gap that consumer advocates, prosecutors and some lawmakers have criticized.

Law enforcement officials say it's harder to track, freeze or recover funds because institutional banking safeguards largely do not apply to cryptocurrency.

Unlike bank deposits, crypto assets are not backed by federal insurance, and so if an exchange fails, the money can be lost. Banks also require customers to provide identification, social security numbers and account details when moving cash, while cryptocurrency transfers can obscure the identities of those involved. Most significantly, many cryptocurrency exchanges operate across borders and through offshore entities where U.S. laws may not apply.

Locating stolen cryptocurrency takes time and money. Returning it is even more complicated. A cottage industry of attorneys specializing in tracing cryptocurrency is emerging, but they still need buy-in from

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overworked officials to obtain warrants.

This means that even if people can locate their stolen funds, it's unlikely they'll get them back.

After Brian Glick lost \$575,000, he called the FBI, an elder abuse hotline, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the New York State Attorney General's office, he said. He filed complaints at IC3.org and FightCyberCrime.org. He collected thousands of screenshots as evidence and turned them over to federal investigators. He even kept talking to his scammer to draw out more information.

But when the FBI went to cryptocurrency company Tether to try and freeze and claw back funds linked to Glick's investment, Tether said it could not. The FBI agent asked Tether to reconsider, according to email exchanges shared with AP and FRONTLINE.

"I respectfully request that Tether take a second look at the below information in regards to freezing funds from bad actors ..." said the email.

After being given more details, including Glick's wallet addresses, Tether told AP/FRONTLINE that Glick's funds were moved and commingled with other funds just hours after the money was stolen.

"By the time Tether was contacted, the two addresses contained a significant amount of unrelated, un-attributed funds belonging to other users," a statement from the company said. It said Tether could not "arbitrarily freeze funds of unrelated users without proper process."

Tether CEO Paolo Ardoio told AP/FRONTLINE that there are countless examples of their work with law enforcement.

"I think that there is no company, even in the banking industry, in the traditional financial industry, that is so helpful as us," he said.

Officials at the FBI and Secret Service said Tether works closely with law enforcement to combat crimes related to cryptocurrency. In a joint initiative, Tether, TRM Labs and TRON, a blockchain network, say they have frozen over \$450 million in illicit funds worldwide since 2024.

Glick was furious.

"There are so many victims of these cybercrimes," Glick said. "And we can't get our money back."

Steps taken in the US

The U.S. government is waking up to the threat.

Congress is now considering more than a dozen bills to prevent scams. One would establish a centralized website for complaints, ReportScams.gov. Another would require disclosures on deepfakes and other AI-generated audio and visual content.

The Justice Department in November unveiled a strike force to cut off access of Southeast Asian operations to U.S. infrastructure, pursue criminal networks behind the scams and seize stolen funds. The Treasury has levied sanctions in Southeast Asia, and Myanmar and Cambodia have staged high-profile crackdowns on scam compounds.

The Justice Department's Scam Center Strike Force claimed on its website this summer that it had restrained \$832 million in cryptocurrency from Chinese transnational criminals. But a spokesperson told AP/FRONTLINE it was unable to go into any specifics about each seizure, where the funds are held or what, if anything, has been returned to victims.

Trump also signed an executive order in March directing the attorney general to prioritize the prosecution of scammers and to submit a recommendation for a program to restore money to victims.

"President Trump is unleashing every available tool to stop criminal networks that exploit vulnerable Americans through cyber fraud and scams," the White House said in a statement to AP/FRONTLINE.

However, advocates say funding hasn't flowed to the federal agencies tasked with combating scams, investigating cybercrime, and developing a cohesive plan for attacking the problem. And the fledgling efforts to help victims get money back aren't keeping up with the tsunami of those who have lost it.

At least 13 federal agencies touch on different aspects of these crimes, according to a report issued by the Government Accountability Office. Seto Bagdoyan, who runs the office's Forensic Audits and Investigative Service, said this piecemeal approach results in a sluggish strategy that "falls short."

"There is no government-wide estimate of the money lost to scams, no common definition of scams,

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and no national strategy for combating them," he said.

FBI Financial Crimes Section assistant section chief Rebecca Keithley, who retired earlier this year, said tens of billions of dollars flow out of the U.S. economy through scams. The FBI's Operation Level Up, an effort to identify victims being defrauded and call them to intervene, has stopped about 8,500 people from falling for scams over almost two years, she said.

But that's a small fraction of the sheer volume of victims. The FBI said it receives nearly 3,000 internet crime complaints a day on average through the IC3.gov online portal for reporting cybercrime.

"It's an enormous problem, and one that the FBI is prioritizing," she said.

Donna Gregory, retired FBI unit chief with the IC3, worked on the portal for 23 years, from its conception in 2000. Gregory said the loss threshold for what law enforcement will pursue varies by jurisdiction, and that the FBI is only able to investigate roughly 10-12 % of cases reported on IC3.

"The empathy you learn to sort of ignore because you would drive yourself crazy," said Gregory. "All these victims saying, 'I've lost my life savings, I don't know what to do...' 'My grandmother committed suicide because she lost everything' or 'I'm going to commit suicide,' and it's like, which one do I have to pick?"

Chris Scott, a casino dealer in Arizona, was scammed out of \$400,000 by a man on a dating site, she said. She added that she went four times in person to her local FBI office, begging for help — but was told all she could do was file a complaint through IC3.

She did. But she heard nothing back, she said, not even an acknowledgment of receipt. She began to panic, and searched for help online.

Scott found three companies claiming to have a direct line to the FBI, each promising to recover her funds. Out of desperation she hired them all, she said, handing over a total of \$23,000.

None of the companies were real. Scott was forced to sell her home to cover her debts. She is still paying off the \$20,000 tax bill she received after draining her retirement accounts, she said.

"I'm just a small fish in a big pond," Scott said. "All I wanted was to talk to someone and get help, but I'm nobody to them."

Congo's Ebola outbreak shows no signs of slowing as deaths top 3,000

By CONSTANT SAME BAGALWA and OPE ADETAYO Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Congo's Ebola outbreak has killed more than 3,000 people out of more than 6,100 confirmed cases, according to the latest government data from Wednesday, as the disease is spreading at an unprecedented speed, faster than efforts to track and slow it.

Data from Congo's Ministry of Health showed the outbreak has recorded 6,186 confirmed cases, including 3,007 deaths since it was declared a global health emergency in mid-May. It remains the fastest-growing outbreak of Ebola ever.

Jean-Claude Angwanzia, a resident of Bunia, said that he left Mambassa in the epicenter of Ituri province, because he didn't feel safe. He said that he hardly saw health workers and infected bodies were being mishandled, prompting safety concerns.

"I had to flee the area because of the danger looming over us," he said.

The pace of the outbreak is putting a strain on people's lives.

Papy Baraka, a public transportation driver in Bunia, has had to cut down on the number of passengers he picks up in his car.

"The disease puts everyone at risk, and daily life has slowed to a crawl. We are afraid," he said.

Recent weeks have witnessed a surge in cases, with two new health zones affected last week in North Kivu, where the fatality rate is much higher than in the rest of the affected provinces. The virus has spread to six provinces.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control said Tuesday in a report that the efforts to contain the virus "remained below established response targets" and the fast expansion of the disease across many health zones indicates "uncontrolled expansion of the outbreak."

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The report said that the statistics show that most of the cases are “occurring outside known transmission chains” as a result of the percentage of confirmed new cases coming from only between 15% and 20% of known contacts.

Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on Wednesday that there are chains of transmission the health authorities are not aware of.

“Until every chain is found and broken, the epidemic will continue; And it will continue to pose a threat to DRC, its neighbors, and the region as a whole,” he said.

Health workers are struggling under difficult conditions and have gone on strike multiple times to demand their pay.

The disease has continued to spread rapidly for several reasons, including conflict in the eastern region of the country where the outbreak is concentrated, attacks on health workers, miners constantly on the move, and inadequate health infrastructure.

The resumption of school in the middle of the outbreak has also raised concerns about transmission in classrooms.

The World Health Organization said that the outbreak is on track to exceed the deadliest on record, West Africa’s regional outbreak between 2014 and 2016, which killed 11,000 people.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that the outbreak is possibly three times larger than the number of cases recorded, as surveillance and contact tracing are still weak. Despite that, the outbreak has already become Congo’s deadliest Ebola outbreak.

There is no vaccine or approved treatment for the rare Bundibugyo virus that has sparked the current outbreak. A couple of vaccines are being developed to tackle the disease.

Last week, the government started the distribution of the Ervebo vaccine to front-line health workers in Kisangani in the northeastern Tshopo region. Ervebo has helped combat previous Ebola disease outbreaks, and WHO said that it could offer some protection.

No Democrat has won a Kansas Senate seat in a century. Can a megachurch pastor change that?

By JOHN HANNA AP Political Writer

EMPORIA, Kan. (AP) — Adam Hamilton has spent decades trying to bring people to Jesus as founder of the nation’s largest United Methodist church. Now he wants to bring Kansas voters to the polls as the Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate.

A first-time candidate, Hamilton faces an unusual balancing act between political ambition and spiritual obligation. His pastoral role has given him rare prominence for a Democrat in a state where Republicans have won every Senate race for nearly a century, and some in his party are hoping for an upset victory over incumbent Sen. Roger Marshall.

But conservatives are also trying to use Hamilton’s religious leadership against him. They suggest that his sermons prove he’s too liberal for Kansas or even that he’s a heretic for suggesting that non-Christians have a path to salvation after death.

Marshall said in an interview that Hamilton is “too woke for Kansas.”

Hamilton isn’t turning the other cheek. If Jesus were standing before them now, he said, “Roger Marshall would call him ‘woke.’”

Only a few ordained ministers have served as senators over the past 100 years and just one — current Democrat Raphael Warnock of Georgia — remained an active pastor. If elected, Hamilton plans to continue as senior pastor at his Church of the Resurrection in the Kansas City area, preaching 12 to 18 times a year.

As Hamilton tries to win over center-right churchgoers as well as secular liberals, he’s promising that he wouldn’t use his perch in Washington to evangelize. He’s on unpaid leave, going 11 weeks without giving a sermon this summer, although he peppers his remarks with biblical references, discusses Jesus’ teachings with voters and spends several hours weekly on pastoral duties such as hospital visits.

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"I need that interaction with people and the caring for people," he said after a meet-and-greet at a coffee shop in Emporia, a university town of 24,000 that's smaller than his congregation 110 miles (180 kilometers) to the northwest.

Hamilton brings skills that built a huge church to a tough race

Hamilton, 61, built his church from a few members meeting in a funeral home chapel in 1990 into a 25,000-member congregation with nine locations across the Kansas City area. He's demonstrated an ability to raise money and has gained national attention by writing more than 30 books, mostly on Christian theology.

Hamilton describes himself as a centrist, running partly on "bringing people together." His congregation, he notes, is nearly evenly split between Democrats, Republicans and independents.

Republican-leaning Kansas has a sizable bloc of moderate voters, protects abortion rights and regularly elects Democratic governors. But Democrats haven't come within 10 points of winning a Senate race in more than 50 years, and they haven't won one since 1932.

Marshall, 66, is focused on rallying rural conservatives, a strategy that perennially works for Republicans. A fifth-generation farm kid who became an obstetrician, the senator is fluent in agriculture policy. He jibed that suburbanite Hamilton "doesn't know a heifer from a steer."

Marshall also warned that the Senate could fall under Democratic control if Hamilton wins the race.

"His party is too crazy for Kansas," Marshall said.

The campaign has included an allegation of heresy

This year's race is unusual because of attacks from the Christian right branding Hamilton a heretic.

At issue is a 2022 sermon, reposted on X after Hamilton won the Democratic primary in August. Hamilton cited New Testament passages to argue that non-Christians can receive "the saving grace of Jesus" after death, avoiding eternal torment in Hell.

Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas declared that Hamilton had rejected "the central tenets of Christianity," quoting a verse in the Gospel of John where Jesus declares, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

Marshall thanked Cruz for raising the issue, suggesting the sermon was "one of hundreds" of examples of Hamilton being out of step with Kansans.

Hamilton acknowledged that some Christians agree with Cruz — but cited other prominent Christians who might share his own view, including Methodist founder John Wesley and "Chronicles of Narnia" author C.S. Lewis.

"If he's going to call me a heretic, he's not the first," Hamilton said. "He won't be the last."

Hamilton seeks to reassure voters wary of church-state mix

Hamilton also has faced skepticism from Democrats wary of mixing government with religion.

Republican conservatives routinely highlight their faith, suggesting that God wanted them to seek office and profusely thank God after winning.

This year during Lent — the 40 days of self-reflection and repentance before Easter — Hamilton said he skipped a meal each day and prayed about entering the Senate race.

"I'm never 100% sure about the will of God, so I tell people I am 87.2% sure I am supposed to be doing this," he said. "The Kansas voters will decide whether I'm supposed to win, but I feel like I was being called to step into the arena."

In Emporia, Hamilton said that as a senator, he'd "fight for the rights of all people, whether they have any faith or not."

"I'm not running for the Senate to make everybody in this country Christian or United Methodist," he said.

Nolan Guyer, a 72-year-old Navy veteran and retired nuclear plant operator, said he initially worried about voting for a minister, but Hamilton won him over enough that he donated to the pastor's campaign.

"I don't think it's the government's business to teach morals, and that is a preacher's job," Guyer said.

Some familiar issues are prominent

Republican political action committees have attacked Hamilton as so radical on climate change that he urged his congregation to repent for eating beef. They base that allegation on a misleading stitching to-

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gether of two parts of a 2020 sermon, with one clip showing Hamilton calling Christians "to repentance" for not protecting God's creation and a second, earlier clip of him saying that "maybe changing your diet" is among personal actions that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Another ad claimed that Hamilton's church helped pay for a drag queen story hour for children — a claim his campaign denies.

Marshall blamed Hamilton for a split in the United Methodist Church over allowing LGBTQ+ clergy, something it did in 2024. While Hamilton did support that change — at least since 2019 — he also had worked to prevent a split by backing a plan for a local option on whether to ordain or marry LGBTQ+ people.

Hamilton said his views on human sexuality and same-sex marriage evolved gradually, as he came to know gay and lesbian people in his congregation. His church now has a Queer Inclusive Collective ministry and participates in Pride events.

"One small part of my ministry has been trying to make sure that people who felt alienated from the church and pushed away knew that Christ welcomed them and they were loved by our congregation," Hamilton said.

Hamilton's watchwords include 'decency' and 'affordability'

One of Hamilton's assertions, that he is "running on decency," resonated with Jann Briggs. She's a retired teacher from Reading, a small town where the Methodist church is across the street from the Miracle Cafe.

Briggs and several friends came to Hamilton's event in Emporia with a copy of his latest book, "Holy Spirit: God's Presence and Power at Work in Us." He signed it for them.

"Finally, somebody who's speaking the right words," Briggs said.

Hamilton is also focusing on affordability, a key issue for Democrats this year. He has criticized Republican cuts to federal programs for the poor, such as food assistance and Medicaid coverage.

"I just want to know, when did it become 'woke' to care for your neighbor?" he asked.

Scientists find a huge 10-sided wave pattern swirling in the clouds over Saturn's south pole

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Scientists have discovered an enormous 10-sided wave pattern in the icy ammonia clouds over Saturn's south pole.

The spinning, meandering decagon appears to be even bigger and more unstable than the hexagon of clouds around Saturn's north pole that was spied by NASA's twin Voyagers in the 1980s, the Spanish-led team reported Wednesday.

This new jet stream formation popped up in the Hubble Space Telescope's sights in 2023 after earlier observations came up empty. The researchers suspect the bizarre atmospheric phenomenon may have formed between 2017 and 2023, when Saturn's south pole was tilted away from Earth and therefore out of view.

It could still be evolving, with a single side of the decagon already exceeding 10,000 miles (16,700 kilometers).

The findings are significant because it shows "the 'unique' hexagon is not as extraordinary as we thought," lead author Agustin Sanchez-Lavega with the University of the Basque Country said in an email.

The findings were published in the journal Science Advances.

Although all of the solar system's planets with atmospheres have wave-spawning disturbances, only Saturn churns them out looking like polygons, geometric shapes bounded by straight lines.

Both sit on jet streams, but the hexagon is practically stationary whereas the decagon migrates eastward at a tame 6 mph (10 kph).

"Saturn still has the ability to surprise us," the University of Leicester's Leigh Fletcher said in a statement. He measured the wind in the decagon as part of the study using the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile.

By comparing these two formations on opposite ends of Saturn, scientists can learn more about the

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weather patterns of giant gas planets, according to Sanchez-Lavega.

"This is a highly interesting phenomenon that appears to be unique to Saturn, and we want to know why," he said.

Sanchez-Lavega wonders whether they might be related to the cyclones on Jupiter that are arranged in polygonal shapes. Improving views of Saturn's southern hemisphere over the next several years should allow astronomers to capture more details of the decagon and perhaps solve "this intriguing atmospheric mystery," he said.

It's unclear whether the decagon will last as long as the hexagon, which has been visible by spacecraft for more than 40 years. That is longer than a Saturnian year, which is equivalent to 30 Earth years.

"For the time being, all I can confirm is that the decagon is still there," Sanchez-Lavega said.

Postal Service work to comply with Trump's executive order is rushed, sloppy, whistleblower contends

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

The U.S. Postal Service is poised to launch a hastily built, error-riddled computer system that could jeopardize the process of mail voting relied upon by one-third of all voters, according to a whistleblower statement released Tuesday by Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal.

The effort is part of the implementation of President Donald Trump's executive order limiting mail voting and has been temporarily halted by a federal judge. The ruling is being appealed by the administration and the directive may ultimately end up back before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The disclosure from the unidentified whistleblower contends that the Postal Service has been scrambling to try to build a complex system that would normally take a year or more in only three months, sometimes in defiance of the judge's orders halting work. The goal is to have it ready for use in the midterm elections.

The disclosure contends that, due to the new procedures, a single scanning error in a batch of tens of thousands of ballot envelopes could prevent any from reaching voters. It details a system that election officials have already warned could not be implemented before the first mail ballots begin going out Friday in North Carolina.

"The Postal Service has designed a system to disenfranchise millions of Americans," Blumenthal told reporters in advance of releasing the whistleblower information. "This administration seems hell-bent on changing the framework on casting ballots in this country clearly for political reasons."

Executive order is subject to furious court action with midterms nearing

Trump's executive order, signed in March, directed U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the commissioner of the Social Security Administration to develop state citizenship lists and then required the Postal Service to send mail ballots only to voters who are on such a list. Ballot envelopes would have to comply with new Postal Service rules and include barcodes.

The online portal that is the subject of the whistleblower complaint is intended for states to deliver their lists of verified voters to the Postal Service.

The Postal Service released a statement Tuesday evening in response to Blumenthal's letter, pledging to work with Congress and the courts. It noted that the judge who issued the latest restraining order explicitly allowed the service to continue to develop its online tool for states that want to use it voluntarily.

"Regardless of political party or perspective, we share a common goal: ensuring that Americans can have confidence that their election mail will be handled securely and delivered reliably," the Postal Service said.

The White House said the software buildout process is "neither complex nor unique" for the Postal Service because it already uses bulk mailing and intelligent mail barcodes for large customers. "Under President Trump, the federal government is working to ensure safe, transparent, and honest elections," spokeswoman Lauren Bis said.

Jonathan Smith, president of the United Postal Workers Union, which has long opposed the executive order, said in a statement Tuesday: "The whistleblower report reveals what this executive order was always about — denying Americans their hard-fought right to vote. It is creating chaos in a system that is proven

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to be a safe, secure way for millions of Americans to vote.”

The 20 Democratic House members who sit on the Oversight Committee wrote a letter to Postmaster General David Steiner criticizing the project in light of the new revelations. “We demand that you immediately cease implementation of this irresponsible and illegal scheme to implement the Trump Administration’s plan to control our federal elections,” the Democrats wrote.

Trump has long opposed voting by mail, even though he has repeatedly used the method to cast his own ballot. He falsely blamed mail voting for his 2020 election loss and has spent years spreading conspiracy theories about it. 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.

Since returning to office, Trump has said Republicans should be “taking over” vote counting in Democratic areas and launched a sweeping attempt to reinvestigate the 2020 election, despite a mountain of evidence that he lost fairly to Democrat Joe Biden.

Until Trump came out against mail voting in 2020, the system was used equally by both parties. Since then, it has become more common among Democratic voters. More than 29% of all voters in 2024 cast their ballots through the mail.

After Trump issued his executive order, Democrats and civil rights groups sued and eventually won a ruling from U.S. District Court Judge Indira Talwani in Boston barring implementation of the system before the November midterms. But without ruling on the legality of Trump’s order, the Supreme Court’s conservative majority last week found that was premature and overruled Talwani, momentarily clearing the way for its implementation.

On the night of Aug. 21, the Postal Service released a final rule outlining how it would implement the order. It said it would only send mail ballots for states that got approval for the design of their envelopes and submitted a list of voters receiving them through the still-not-active online portal. That rule gave plaintiffs a chance to sue again, and Talwani on Thursday night issued a 14-day restraining order against implementation of the measure.

Whistleblower complaint says portal development is rushed and sloppy

The letter from Blumenthal and an accompanying summary of the whistleblower’s statements says the Postal Service began work on the portal on June 15 and stopped on June 25 after Talwani’s initial order. Then on July 29, the Postal Service restarted the work. That was when the administration appealed the judge’s order to the Supreme Court. The high court did not strike Talwani’s injunction down until Aug. 24.

Talwani last week found the Postal Service violated her order by continuing to work on the final rule, but she imposed no sanctions on the government. On Monday, she issued a ruling refusing to lift the restraining order that also said the Postal Service could continue work on its portal, as long as it wasn’t forcing states to use it.

In its summary of the whistleblower’s statement, the group Whistleblower Aid says the hurried construction of the portal, with a goal of being active Tuesday, meant it did not undergo full testing.

“The apparently sloppy and rushed manner in which the Federal Ballot Mail Portal and supporting IT systems are being built poses significant risk,” the group wrote. “Potentially millions of American voters may not receive their mail-in ballot this election cycle in a timely manner, or at all.”

The statement also says the Postal Service is implementing a “zero percent” rule in which any errors in any mail ballots sent out by an election office could lead to all of them being discarded — even if it’s simply one problem amid tens of thousands of legitimate ballots.

The rule requires ballots to be handled in a physical post office by an election official. Those will then be scanned to ensure they match the voter database. During three layers of checks, a single apparent error could cause the whole batch to be rejected, the statement says.

Blumenthal said he has “a very strong hope and some faith that our system of justice will strike down this unconstitutional and unconscionable rule.” But, he added, if it somehow goes into effect for the midterms, he would not advise voting by mail.

Lawmakers ask Army to explain why it told a military unit to stop specializing in drone warfare

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers is pressing the Army to explain why it told a unit based in Europe to stop specializing in drone warfare, an order that comes as the world's battlefields rapidly evolve and military tactics increasingly rely on uncrewed systems to fight.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade was building its own drones and practicing the kind of warfare that Ukraine has pioneered against Russia and that Iran has fought against the U.S. — warfare that has killed and wounded American troops. The brigade of 600 soldiers was set up in November to be deployed anywhere that drones were needed.

"We have deep concerns that eliminating this specialized drone unit will limit our ability to learn from allies, particularly the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and hinder our efforts to modernize drone warfare at the speed necessary to compete on the modern battlefield," the lawmakers said in a letter shared with The Associated Press.

It requests a briefing from the Army to explain its decision and was sent Tuesday to departing Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and Gen. Christopher LaNeve, the Army's acting chief of staff. It was signed by Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina, independent Sen. Angus King of Maine and Republican Rep. Mike Turner of Ohio.

"This specialized unit was a prudent response in a moment when the character of warfare is changing faster than a conventional formation's ability to adapt," the lawmakers say.

They said they were particularly keen to understand the data, analysis and process behind the change after less than a year of the drone unit being active. They also want to know if the decision was based on guidance from Pentagon leadership or made internally by the Army.

LaNeve, who is filling in as the Army's top uniformed officer, recently ordered the battalion to refocus on its core mission of being an airborne infantry unit. The move followed Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's sudden ousting of the Army's prior chief of staff, Gen. Randy George.

Integrating drones into the Army's tactics was a major focus for George. Last year, he and Driscoll had rolled out what they called the Army Transformation Initiative, which pushed to add "modernized (unmanned aircraft systems) into formations."

George, who became Army chief of staff under President Joe Biden, regularly spoke about the need to accelerate development of new drone systems and get them in the hands of regular soldiers, not just specialized units. Driscoll supported such efforts and focused on cutting the red tape for military contractors to quickly develop more drones.

After George was ousted by Hegseth without explanation in April, he was replaced by LaNeve. This week, Driscoll submitted his own resignation and later said on social media that Wednesday would be his final full day on the job. A reason for his departure was not publicly revealed, but he was an ally of George, and his tensions with Hegseth have been widely reported.

"We are supportive of the transformative initiatives the Army has taken under Secretary Driscoll's leadership in this area and would like to see that momentum maintained even as uniformed leadership changes," the lawmakers wrote.

FACT FOCUS: Texans listed as 'suspense voters' can still cast a ballot if they confirm their address

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

Social media users are raising alarms over the inclusion of 1.2 million voters on Texas' "suspense list," claiming it shows efforts to tamper with the November midterms.

But despite its name, voters' registrations are not canceled if they are added to the list. They are still able to vote.

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Here's a closer look at the facts.

CLAIM: Texas has suspended 1.2 million voters, meaning they can't participate in coming elections.

THE FACTS: False. More than 1.2 million people — about 6.6% of the more than 18 million registered voters in Texas — were listed as "suspense voters" by the Texas Secretary of State's Office as of March 2026. This means that voters' residential addresses must be confirmed before they can cast a ballot. They are not prevented from voting. The suspense list was created more than 30 years ago as a method for maintaining accurate voter rolls.

"This is a routine and ongoing effort to keep voter registration rolls up to date," said Mark Lindeman, policy and strategy director at Verified Voting, a nonpartisan group focused on election technology. "While similar list maintenance processes are used in states across the country to track address changes, it's always good practice for everyone to check their voter registration status regularly."

Voters are put on the suspense list when an election official is not sure if their current residence is the one listed in their records. This may happen if their registration certificate, a jury summons or other mailing has been returned as non-deliverable, or if any other information indicates they no longer live there. A notice requesting confirmation of the voter's address is sent when they are added to the list.

Registration certificates prove that someone has been registered to vote. New certificates are automatically sent to voters every two years if they haven't changed their address.

The number of people on the suspense list fluctuates as they confirm their addresses and additional registrations are flagged as needing confirmation, but the current number is in line with previous years. There were 1,239,812 voters listed prior to the 2022 midterms and 2,116,669 before the 2024 election.

"Texas counties have utilized the suspense list as a way to keep voter rolls updated and protect the rights of Texans to cast their ballots for many years," said Alicia Pierce, a spokesperson for the Texas Secretary of State's Office. "There is nothing new about this process and the numbers are consistent with what we have seen in previous election cycles."

Pierce encouraged voters to check their status before the Oct. 5 registration deadline and update their address if necessary.

Some of those posting about being placed on the suspense list claimed to be recent voters who had been at the same address for years. Others expressed concern that problems with the U.S. Postal Service could contribute to issues with people's ability to vote.

In August, the Postal Service introduced new requirements for mail ballots less than two weeks before some states begin sending them. The Postal Service is trying to comply with an executive order issued in March by President Donald Trump that would restrict voting by mail. Trump's order has been temporarily halted by a federal judge.

A whistleblower statement released Tuesday by Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal alleges that the Postal Service is poised to launch a hastily built, error-riddled computer system that could jeopardize the process of mail voting relied upon by one-third of all voters.

What should voters on the suspense list do next?

If voters have moved, they can update their address by sending in a voter registration application by Oct. 5. Voters who miss the deadline and moved within the same county can vote early or on Election Day by filling out a statement of residence form.

Those who miss the deadline and have moved to a new county can vote in the new county by filling out a limited ballot during the early voting period only. Limited ballots include only candidates and measures shared between the voter's old and new county.

Voters on the suspense list who haven't moved can confirm their address by completing a statement of residence form. Any questions should be directed to the Texas Elections Division.

Under state and federal law, voters are only removed from voter rolls after they have been sent a notice that their registration is subject to cancellation and two subsequent federal election cycles have passed without any response or voting activity. Voter registration cannot be canceled only because of a failure to vote.

The suspense list was established in 1995. It was a response to the National Voter Registration Act

passed two years earlier, which requires states to maintain accurate voter rolls. Many other states, aside from the six that are exempt from the act, have similar systems in place. Suspense voters are typically called inactive voters outside of Texas.

"The top line for voters is this is not something to be worried about at all," said Chris Mann, research director at the Center for Election Innovation and Research. "In fact, voters should be reassured that Texas is doing what it is supposed to be doing under the law and best practice."

Russian strikes kill 2 Ukrainian civilians as Moscow and Kyiv threaten to raise the stakes

By HANNA ARHIROVA and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian aerial attacks overnight and during daylight Wednesday killed two civilians and wounded six in the central Ukrainian city of Dnipro, local officials said, while the Kyiv and Odesa regions bore the brunt of Moscow's latest strikes.

The air war between Russia and Ukraine has intensified as the conflict stretches into its fifth year following Moscow's invasion of its neighbor. The front line in eastern and southern Ukraine remains largely deadlocked, and U.S. efforts to negotiate a settlement have yet to produce a path to peace.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy exchanged threats late Tuesday over what their next steps might be.

Zelenskyy warned foreign airlines that flying in Russia is not safe because of Ukrainian long-range drone attacks, saying that "Russian airspace will effectively be closing." The military pressure aims to compel Russia to accept peace negotiations, he said.

Putin accused Zelenskyy of "state terrorism" and said: "We don't negotiate with terrorists."

Putin's comments got short shrift from Ukraine's Center for Countering Disinformation, a government body, which said the remarks were a flagrant attempt by the Russian leader to shift the blame away from Moscow.

"A state that itself unleashed this war, that daily commits terror against Ukrainian civilians and destroys cities, is again trying to portray itself as a 'victim,'" the center said.

Russian Transportation Minister Andrey Nikitin dismissed any travel concerns, saying authorities are constantly strengthening flight safety.

"We will not allow any significant disruptions to civil aviation," he told reporters, according to Russian news agency Interfax.

At a late-night news conference at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Kyrgyzstan, Putin also addressed reports that the Ukrainian military had used British-made drones to strike inside Russia.

Asked whether Russia would strike British military facilities if the U.K. government continues to provide Ukraine with weaponry, Putin declined to rule it out. With a small smile, he told reporters that is "a military secret."

China and North Korea, meanwhile, have provided military support for Russia, as has Iran in previous years.

The Russian and Ukrainian leaders' comments came as European officials weigh their response to the latest in what they say is Moscow's campaign of continental sabotage and disruption aimed at weakening support for Ukraine. Germany on Tuesday blamed Russia for an attempted attack at Leipzig/Halle Airport last month using a drone laden with explosives.

Russia's Dnipro strikes kill 2, hit a food warehouse

Russia fired 174 attack drones, about half of them jet-powered drones that are hard to stop and are increasingly deployed by Moscow, as well as two ballistic missiles and two air-launched missiles, according to the Ukrainian air force.

Russian strikes on the city of Dnipro in central Ukraine killed a man and a woman, local officials said.

The assault hit food warehouses belonging to a Dnipro retail chain, wounding at least six people, said Oleksandr Hanzha, head of the Dnipropetrovsk regional military administration.

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Moscow's forces have recently hit other food storage depots, leaving some supermarket shelves empty. Russian forces have targeted civilian facilities in what Ukrainian officials say is an effort to disrupt daily life and sap public morale.

"Unfortunately, there has been far too little response from the world and its most influential leaders to this latest Russian escalation of strikes," Zelenskyy said on social media Wednesday. "Every partner knows what is needed: air defense for Ukraine, sanctions against Russia, and a significant increase in defense production."

Officials in the southern Ukrainian region of Odesa reported the attack damaged a 24-story residential building, destroying apartments on several floors and wounding eight people, including a child.

A man and a woman were wounded by shrapnel in morning attacks on the Kyiv region, according to Tymur Tkachenko, head of the regional military administration.

It was the seventh straight day Kyiv came under attack. The latest barrage wasn't as heavy as in previous days but it kept Kyiv residents on edge.

Russia says 2 killed, 16 wounded by Ukrainian drones

The Russian Defense Ministry said its air defenses destroyed 130 Ukrainian drones overnight. It said the drones were shot down over 11 Russian regions, the Black Sea and Crimea, the peninsula that was illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014.

Ukrainian drone attacks killed two people in Russia's Belgorod border region and wounded 16 more, acting Gov. Alexander Shuvayev said. Ukrainian forces hit the region 140 times over 24 hours, he said.

Ukraine's domestically developed long-range drones have repeatedly targeted Russia's oil sector, hoping to dent the economy, and the warehouses of online retailers, to make the Russian public feel the effects of war.

The Ukrainian Defense Ministry said that in August, its drones struck 12 Russian refineries, three fuel terminals and oil depots, and two gas processing and petrochemical companies.

Russia is making no progress on the front line, analysts say

The Russian army's effort to drive deeper into Ukraine has lost its momentum, according to Western analysts and officials.

Russian advances in August were "a fraction" of Moscow's gains during the same month last year, the Institute for the Study of War said late Tuesday.

Russia's spring-summer offensive has failed to smash Ukraine's front-line defenses, the Washington-based think tank said.

"Russian gains remain slow and limited," it said.

Judge lacked power to overturn ex-soldier Bowe Bergdahl's military conviction, appeals court rules

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge had no authority to overturn former U.S. Army soldier Bowe Bergdahl's military conviction for deserting his post in Afghanistan before Taliban-allied forces abducted him and held him captive for nearly five years, an appeals court has ruled.

A three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit on Tuesday ordered the dismissal of Bergdahl's claims in district court. The panel said District Judge Reggie Walton in Washington lacked the jurisdiction to vacate Bergdahl's court-martial conviction and sentence in 2023.

Bergdahl had sued in 2021, arguing that the punishment violated his Fifth Amendment due-process rights. Walton ruled that military judge Jeffrey Nance created a potential conflict of interest by failing to disclose his application for a position as an immigration judge in the Justice Department.

But the appeals court concluded that only military tribunals have the authority to vacate a court-martial judgment.

"Bergdahl's claim thus conflicts with that longstanding limitation," Circuit Judge Robert Wilkins wrote.

Chief Judge Sri Srinivasan and Circuit Judge Gregory Katsas also heard the appeal in Bergdahl's case.

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Srinivasan and Wilkins were nominated by Democratic President Barack Obama. Katsas was nominated by Republican President Donald Trump.

Eugene Fidell, one of Bergdahl's lawyers, said they were weighing their legal options after Tuesday's decision.

"We're certainly disappointed. It's an important case that raises serious issues," Fidell said. "The case has lasted a long time, but we are closely examining the available alternatives."

Bergdahl, then a 23-year-old soldier from Hailey, Idaho, was stationed near Afghanistan's Paktika Province in June 2009 when he left his post without permission to hike to headquarters to complain about what he viewed as poor leadership in his unit.

Bergdahl was captured by forces from the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network and repeatedly tortured before his release from captivity in 2014 as part of a prisoner swap that was sharply criticized by Trump and others while he was running for his first term as president.

Several U.S. service members were wounded during the search for Bergdahl, who was charged with desertion and misbehavior before the enemy after his release from captivity. He pleaded guilty to both charges in 2017 and was dishonorably discharged. Prosecutors at his court-martial had sought 14 years in prison.

German companies under pressure to adapt as China challenges them at their own game

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

MOOSBURG, Germany (AP) — The heart of the German economy is making and exporting the big-ticket, complex goods that make global business run: everything from cars and locomotives to factory machinery, aircraft and construction equipment.

That model for growth is under serious pressure from a new competitor whose exports can often match or approach Germany's in quality and sell for far less: China.

The China shock — as economists call it — is emerging as a key reason for Germany's chronic economic stagnation since the COVID-19 pandemic. The sluggish economy has helped make Chancellor Friedrich Merz's governing coalition unpopular ahead of an election Sunday in the eastern region of Saxony-Anhalt in which the far-right Alternative for Germany has its best chance yet of getting its first state governor.

German companies once reaped fat profits selling to China. But the tables have turned as Beijing supports companies in targeted sectors — often where German companies make competing goods. China's goods cannot find enough buyers in China's currently tepid economy, so they are shipped to foreign markets, including Europe.

Economic stagnation sours the mood ahead of regional elections

The German economy — Europe's biggest — has stagnated for several years, shrinking in 2023 and 2024 and showing only 0.2% growth last year. Although the unemployment rate of 4% is lower than the EU average, Germans can see the unsettling headlines about job reductions at companies that have defined the German economy for decades: 50,000 at Volkswagen, with media reports of plans for more, 8,000 buyouts at BMW by the end of next year, a reduction of 13,000 at auto technology firm Bosch by 2030. And inflation has run ahead of wage increases after the pandemic, with last year's real wages only just catching up to where they were in 2019.

Costs must come down "in an environment where the Chinese total market is down by 20%, and Chinese competitors are increasing exports and thereby competitive pressure in Europe," said Volkswagen's finance chief, Arno Antlitz.

Of the world's major economies, Germany has been hit the hardest

Germany's economy relies on exports that are similar to the kind of manufactured goods that Beijing is now targeting for support. Other major economies such as Britain, Italy and France have smaller manufacturing sectors, while U.S. tariffs block many Chinese goods, above all autos.

Germany now buys more from China than it sells in precisely the categories where German companies

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once dominated: cars, trucks, buses and trains, aircraft, factory machinery and medical devices. "China has already eaten much of German industry's lunch and is preparing to start on dinner," wrote economists Brad Setser and Sander Tordoir.

One answer: If you can't beat them, join them.

Jungheinrich AG, a German maker of forklifts and warehouse vehicles, is partnering with Chinese manufacturer EP Equipment to make AntOn, an entry-level forklift that can match competitors on price. The partnership is taking advantage of EP's large scale and lower production costs in China, and pairing it with Jungheinrich's global sales force and reputation as one of the world's three leading makers of warehouse vehicles.

AntOn's lineup may not quite match the features available in strictly German-made vehicles — but they're good enough and half the price. So AntOn, painted a bright purple color to differentiate it from Jungheinrich's high-end yellow machines, has a simple, robust design with basic levers instead of a joystick, no compartment for a phone or wallet and an uncushioned seat. They sell for much less than typical Jungheinrich machinery, but are aimed at customers who may not need to run them 24/7.

"The challenge is, there comes a massive wave with Chinese products and Chinese offerings into Europe, but also into the international markets. And the key question is, how do you react?" said Chief Sales Officer Nadine Despineaux at the company's plant in Moosburg near Munich.

She views the demand for entry-level or "mid-tech" vehicles as a business opportunity to reach new customers and markets. AntOn "is a good combination of German engineering, market access and customer proximity, which we bring to the table, and highly efficient production sites, which we use in China."

Volkswagen has adopted an "in China, for China" approach, setting up a vehicle development center in Hefei to design vehicles for the local market.

German policymakers are attempting to avoid a repeat of what happened with the country's solar industry. Germany pioneered solar panel adoption in the early part of this century, but lower-priced Chinese products drove several German manufacturers into bankruptcy. Now, most solar panels in the country are imported from China.

Chinese companies do get help, but must survive ferocious competition at home

Chinese industrial policy means key sectors get many different kinds of support, including easy credit, inexpensive raw materials, cheap land and, in some cases, "made in China" requirements. Chinese workers earn less than those in Europe and economists say China works to keep its currency artificially low, making its goods more competitive overseas.

But China's export prowess is based on more than government help. Chinese companies face brutal competition on price in a sluggish economy at home, forcing companies to keep costs down while racing to adopt new technology.

China rejects the criticism of its trading partners. A recent Ministry of Commerce report titled "China's Position on the So-Called Excess Capacity Issue" says discussions surrounding a China shock "falsely" describe China's industrial development as a threat to Western economies.

From its end, the German government has sought to improve growth by enacting a 500 billion euro (\$579 billion) fund to pay for new infrastructure such as roads, bridges and rail lines. A package proposed in July includes income tax cuts for mid- and lower-income taxpayers and reductions in red tape.

The solution for German companies may be in Brussels

But Setser, the economist and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, says the trade statistics show that the China shock is a dominant reason for Germany's economic malaise. And the answer for Germany may be out of the hands of German industry — and the ultimate responsibility of EU trade policy run by the European Commission in Brussels. The Commission has imposed narrowly tailored tariffs, or import taxes, on some Chinese goods such as electric autos and platforms that lift workers at construction sites.

"We do think that Europe needs a tougher trade policy, that it needs to insulate its market from some of the spillovers from China's own industrial policies," said Setser. "There has to be a bit more symmetry ... that the rest of the world will not remain open to a China that itself is not open to new imports."

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Today in History: September 3 Treaty of Paris ends Revolutionary War

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Sept. 3, the 246th day of 2026. There are 119 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 3, 1783, representatives of the United States and Britain signed the Treaty of Paris, which officially ended the Revolutionary War and recognized U.S. sovereignty.

Also on this date:

In 1861, during the Civil War, Confederate forces invaded the border state of Kentucky, which had declared its neutrality in the conflict.

In 1894, the United States celebrated the first federal Labor Day holiday.

In 1935, Sir Malcolm Campbell became the first person to drive an automobile more than 300 mph (480 kph), speeding across the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah.

In 1939, Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand declared war on Germany, two days after the Nazi invasion of Poland; in a radio address, Britain's King George VI said, "With God's help, we shall prevail."

In 1943, Allied forces invaded the mainland of Italy during World War II, the same day Italian officials signed a secret armistice with the Allies.

In 1976, America's Viking 2 lander touched down on Mars to take the first close-up, color photographs of the red planet's surface.

In 1999, a French judge closed a two-year inquiry into the car crash that killed Princess Diana, dismissing all charges against nine photographers and a press motorcyclist, and concluding the crash was caused by an inebriated driver.

In 2019, Walmart said it would stop selling ammunition for handguns and short-barrel rifles, and the store chain requested that customers not openly carry firearms in its stores; the announcement followed a shooting at a Walmart store in Texas that left 22 people dead.

In 2025, a picturesque electric streetcar that is one of Lisbon's big tourist attractions derailed and crashed in the Portuguese capital, killing 15 people and injuring 18 others.

Today's Birthdays: Singer-musician Al Jardine (The Beach Boys) is 84. Filmmaker Jean-Pierre Jeunet is 73. Rock guitarist Steve Jones (The Sex Pistols) is 71. Actor Steve Schirripa (TV: "The Sopranos") is 68. Author Malcolm Gladwell is 63. Actor Charlie Sheen is 61. Filmmaker Noah Baumbach is 57. Actor Garrett Hedlund is 42. Olympic gold medal snowboarder Shaun White is 40. Model-actor Kaia Gerber is 25. Actor Jack Dylan Grazer is 23.