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Community Calendar

Saturday, Sept. 5

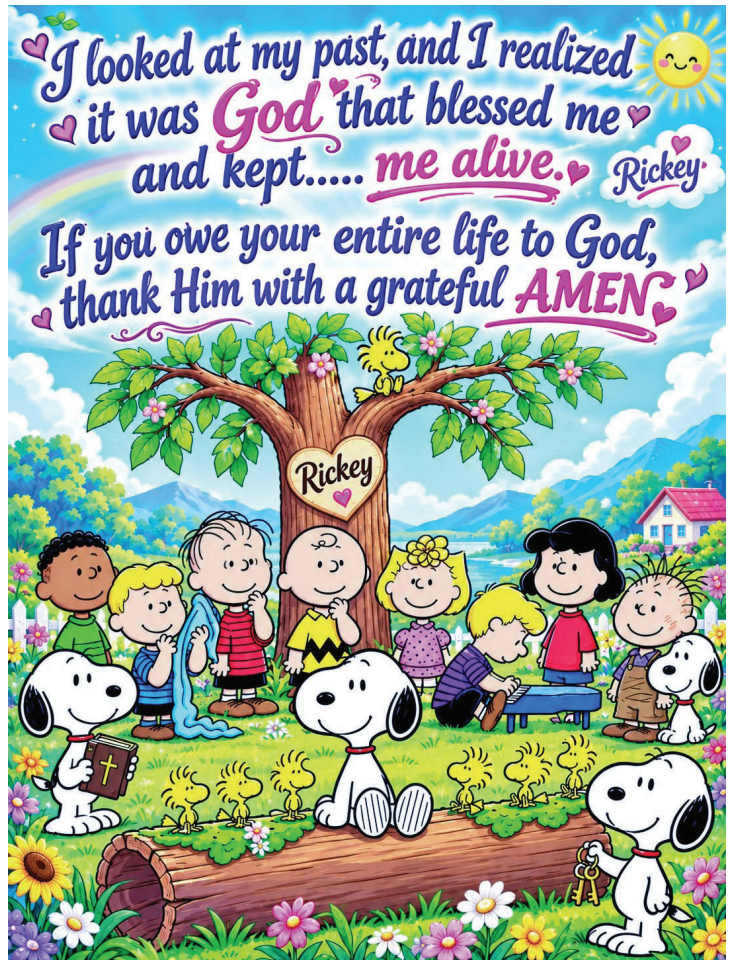
- JH VB tournament at Northwestern, 9 a.m.
- Pickleball at Elementary Gym, 9:30 a.m.
- Soccer at West Central (Girls at 11 a.m., boys at 1 p.m.)

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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

Tigers roll past Flandreau Fliers, 34-6

GROTON — Groton Area struck on its first offensive play and never trailed Friday night, piling up 327 rushing yards while its defense forced three turnovers in a 34-6 victory over the Flandreau Fliers.

The win improved the Tigers to 2-1 on the season heading into next week's road game against Clark/Willow Lake.

Groton Area coach Jordan Carson couldn't have asked for a much better start.

"It always makes it easier when you can get a touchdown on your first play from scrimmage," Carson said. "When you can get ahead of the ball right away."

After Flandreau punted on its opening possession, Anthony Tracy took Groton's first snap and broke free for a 65-yard touchdown run. Freshman Ryder Schwan kicked the extra point and the Tigers had a 7-0 lead with 8:49 remaining in the opening quarter.

Groton had a chance to add to the lead later in the quarter, driving all the way to the Flandreau six-yard line, but the Tigers were stopped on fourth down.

That became part of the story of the first half. Groton moved the football but had difficulty finishing some of its drives, while the Tiger defense continued to keep the Fliers pinned down.

Groton statistician Tom Woods pointed out at halftime just how effective the Tiger defense had been. Flandreau had managed only two first downs and had been held to 21 rushing yards on 17 attempts in the opening half.

"You'll see defensively we really held Flandreau down," Woods said.

The defense also created opportunities for the offense. Gunner Hardy forced a pair of fumbles during the first half, with Layne Johnson and Isaiah Scepaniak making recoveries.

Hardy was also Groton's leading tackler at halftime with six stops.

Flandreau fumbled on third down late in the second quarter, giving Groton possession at the Fliers' 26-yard line with 3:53 remaining.

The Tigers faced fourth-and-four during the drive when quarterback Asher Johnson connected with TC Schuster for a key first down near the goal line.

Woods called it one of the biggest plays of the first half.

"Mr. Schuster, he caught that one," Woods said. "It was just wonderful. The defensive guy was all over him and he made that catch for the first down."

Alex Abeln then scored on a three-yard run with 2:05 remaining in the half. The extra point was no good, giving Groton a 13-0 lead at halftime.

While reviewing the first-half numbers, Woods also noted that the two teams were similar in one important respect — both are relatively young.

Flandreau had only two seniors on its roster, while Groton had five, and Woods said the large majority of both teams consisted of juniors, sophomores and freshmen.

"We're both pretty young," Woods said.

He also talked about one of the themes Carson and his staff had emphasized with the Tigers.



Asher Johnson got a first down and then some before being brought down. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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"The coaches have been stressing three things that are very important: attitude, effort and teamwork," Woods said. "If they fail on one of those, they fail on all three."

That became particularly important in the second half, when Groton wanted to finish stronger than it had in its first two games.

Carson felt his team accomplished that.

"We played a little bit harder down the stretch," Carson said. "I thought we kept our composure a little bit better through some of the adversity, the injuries, the cramps, things like that. I thought we were able to keep them on the straight and narrow with what their jobs were on the field."

Groton received the second-half kickoff and immediately put together a scoring drive.

Starting at its own 26-yard line, the Tigers collected three first downs before Ryder Schelle scored on a five-yard run with 10:53 remaining in the third quarter. Schwan kicked the extra point to make it 20-0.

Flandreau turned the ball over on downs on its next possession, and Groton again drove into scoring territory before a field goal attempt was unsuccessful.

The Tiger defense quickly got the ball back.

Flandreau fumbled on third-and-10 and Groton recovered at the Fliers' 19-yard line. Schelle scored his second touchdown of the quarter on a three-yard run with 1:13 remaining. Schwan added the extra point and the Tigers were in command, 27-0.

Flandreau answered immediately with its only score of the night.

Tucker Hemmer took the ensuing kickoff and raced 91 yards for a touchdown. The conversion run failed, making it 27-6 with 53 seconds remaining in the third quarter.

Carson said Hemmer's ability to make a big play had been a point of emphasis in practice all week.

"We talked about him all week, and we told the guys that he was going to make a big play at some point, and he did," Carson said. "Sometimes you hate to be proven right, but it happens."

Groton responded by putting together perhaps its most impressive drive of the night.

Beginning at its own 15-yard line late in the third quarter, the Tigers methodically moved down the field, picking up five first downs and consuming about seven and a half minutes.

Johnson finished the drive with a four-yard touchdown run with 4:35 remaining in the game. Schwan's extra point completed the scoring at 34-6.

Carson was pleased with the way the Tigers spread the football around.

"I thought we shared the ball well and I thought we blocked well for each other," Carson said. "That was one of our key points from last week to this week. We've got to be football players, not football watchers when we get out there sometimes."

Groton finished with 22 first downs compared to only two for Flandreau and outgained the Fliers 380-37 in total offense.

The Tigers rushed 48 times for 327 yards and five touchdowns.

Johnson led Groton with 127 yards on 14 carries and a touchdown, while Tracy carried 11 times for 119 yards and a touchdown. Schelle had 32 yards and two touchdowns, while Abeln added nine yards and a score.

Johnson completed six of 11 passes for 53 yards. Schuster was the leading receiver with three catches



Dale Ringgenberg from the Groton Rescue Squad was enjoying the evening.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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for 42 yards.

Hardy finished as Groton's defensive leader with nine tackles and two forced fumbles. Schelle had five tackles, while Layne Johnson recovered two fumbles and Scepaniak recovered another.

Flandreau was held to 20 rushing yards on 26 attempts and completed two of six passes for 17 yards. The Fliers fumbled four times and lost three.

Woods also dug into the Groton football history book during his halftime visit. Friday night's contest was the 852nd game in Groton Tiger football history and only the third meeting between Groton and Flandreau.

The teams first played in 1963, when Groton won 30-6. Flandreau won the following year, 7-0. They had not met again until Friday night.

"That was a long time ago," Woods said with a laugh while recalling that he was not yet born for the first meeting and only months old for the second.

With the Fliers behind them, the Tigers now turn their attention to Clark/Willow Lake and the start of conference play.

"They're pretty good," Carson said. "They've got a lot of good athletes. Their quarterback is a senior and he's good, and they've got some good older guys. We're going to have to be well prepared when we get to the Clark game next week.

"We're going to have to be very sound on defense, and we're going to have to find ways where we can move the ball a little bit against those guys."



Red clouds filled the western sky during the football game. (Photo by Tina Kosel)

EMPLOYMENT

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

First Downs 22
Rushing:.....48-327, 5TD
Rushers:
Asher Johnson.....14-127, 1 TD
Anthony Tracy.....11-119, 1 TD
Trayce Schelle.....8-32
Ryder Schelle.....6-31, 2 TD
Alex Abeln.....5-9, 1 TD
Keegan Kucker.....1-6
Ryder Schwan.....2-4
Kyson Kucker.....1-(-1)

Passing:.....6-11, 53 yards
Asher Johnson.....6-11, 53 yards

Receivers:

TC Schuster.....3-42
Ryder Schelle.....1-5
Anthony Tracy.....1-5
Jordan Schwan.....1-1

Fumbles:.....had 1, lost 0
Penalties:.....3-20

Defensive Leaders:

Gunner Hardy.....9 Tackles
Ryder Schelle.....5 Tackles
Gunner Harder.....2 Forced Fumbles
Layne Johnson.....2 Fumbler Recovery
Isaiah Scepianiak.....1 Fumble Recovery

Record:.....2-1
Next game:.....at Clark/Willow Lake

Scoring:

First Quarter: 8:49: G: Anthony Tracy 65 yard run. PAT: Ryder Schwan kick.....7-0
Second Quarter: G: 2:05: Alex Abeln, 3 yard run. PAT: Ryder Schwan kick no good. 13-0
Third Quarter: G: 10:53: Ryder Schelle 5 yard run. PAT: Ryder Schwan kick.....20-0
Third Quarter: G: 1:13: Ryder Schelle 3 yard run. PAT: Ryder Schwan kick.....27-0
Third Quarter: F: 0:53: Tucker Hemmer 91 yard kickoff return. PAT: Estephan Nelson run failed.....27-6
Fourth Quarter: G: 4:35: Asher Johnson 4 yard run. PAT: Ryder Schwan kick.....34-6

Flandreau

First Downs:.....2
Rushing:.....26-20
Rushers:
Griffin Hemmer.....3-10

Passing:.....2-6, 17 yds
Jake Hamilton.....2-6, 17 yds

Receivers:

Elijah Pavlis.....1-15
Brooks Ballard.....1-2

Fumbles:.....had 4, lost 3
Penalties:.....3-16

Defensive Leaders:

Tucker Hemmer.....12 Tackles
Braehden Smith-Kuhnel.....9 Tackles
Jake Hamilton.....8 Tackles

Record:.....0-3
Next game:.....host Beresford

Tigers sweep Sisseton in volleyball action

SISSETON — Groton Area made it a clean sweep Thursday night as the Tigers won the varsity, junior varsity and C matches against Sisseton.

The varsity Tigers rolled to a 3-0 victory, winning by scores of 25-14, 25-13 and 25-10.

Groton Area coach Chelsea Hanson was pleased not only with the victory, but with the way her team produced its points.

"That was a good game for us," Hanson said. "I was obviously impressed with not only the fact that we won, but we just kind of did it the right way. We didn't rely on them to score points for us. We did it ourselves."

The opening set was tied three times as Sisseton took an early 5-3 lead. Groton responded with six straight points to move in front 9-5 and gradually pulled away for the 25-14 victory.

Tevan Hanson had four kills and two ace serves in the first set while Taryn Traphagen put down five kills and recorded an assisted block.

Groton wasted little time taking control of the second set, racing to a 6-0 advantage on the way to a 25-13 win.

Libby Althoff had a kill, a block and three ace serves in the set. Hanson added four kills and an ace serve, while Traphagen contributed four kills.

The third set was tied three times early, with Sisseton taking a 4-3 lead. Groton moved ahead 7-4 and then broke things open midway through the set with a nine-point run that gave the Tigers a commanding 20-6 advantage.

Groton finished off the sweep with a 25-10 win.

Tori Schuster led the serving attack in the third set with seven aces. Traphagen added four kills, while Abby Fjeldheim had three kills and two ace serves.

For the match, Groton Area finished with 17 ace serves, 38 assists, 38 kills, three blocks and 31 digs.

Traphagen led the Tigers at the net with 12 kills along with one solo block and one assisted block.

Hanson had nine kills, four ace serves and eight digs, while Fjeldheim finished with seven kills and three aces. Kella Tracy had four kills.

Althoff directed the offense with 29 assists while adding four ace serves, two assisted blocks and six digs.

Schuster had seven ace serves, Sydney Locke contributed two assists, eight digs and an ace, and Elizabeth Cole had an assisted block and three ace serves.

Coach Hanson said Traphagen's performance was especially encouraging.

"She definitely has needed that because that's kind of how she looked all summer," Hanson said. "It's how she looked at camp, that's how she looks in practice. Sometimes she just overthinks the game too much. She's got to go out and be Taryn and be an athlete, and she definitely had a great game tonight."

Hanson added that when Traphagen is attacking with confidence, she becomes difficult to defend.

"When she's hitting the shots and angles she is, there's just nothing you're going to be able to stop," Hanson said.

Althoff's ability to move the ball around also earned praise from her coach.

"I thought Libby Althoff did an awesome job distributing the ball," Hanson said. "There were times where Taryn would have three or four kills and then the next ball, the whole net went with her, and she puts the



Taryn Trahpagen gets a solid hit. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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ball in a different direction and sets up good opportunities for our hitters."

Sisseton's attack was led by Saylor Langager with five kills and two blocks. Piper Langager had three kills and three blocks, Gabby Hanson had two kills and a block, while Autum Hanson and Scarlett Hanson each had a kill. Scarlett Hanson also had a block. Marisa Lewis had an ace serve, while Amani DuMarce had a kill and an ace.

Despite Sisseton's struggles in some areas, Hanson said playing against the Redmen's size at the net provided a valuable challenge.

"They block really well," Hanson said. "For our girls to have to get used to hitting around a big block, that's something that we don't see all the time. There were a lot of hands and faces over on our side of the net, so that was a good learning point for us."

Groton also won a competitive junior varsity match, 2-0.

Sisseton jumped to a 3-0 lead in the first set and stretched the advantage to 11-6 before Groton rallied to tie the set at 11.

The set was tied five times and featured three lead changes before Groton scored five straight points to take a 19-15 lead. The Tigers went on to win 25-20.

The second set was tied eight times. Sisseton controlled much of the early action before Groton took its first lead at 13-12.

The teams were tied again at 23 before the Tigers scored the final two points to earn the 25-23 victory.

Brooklyn Spanier led Groton with seven kills and five ace serves. Schuster had six kills and three aces, while Neely Althoff finished with four kills, a block and an ace serve.

Kinley Sandness had three kills and an ace, Makenna Krause served four aces, Fjeldheim had a kill and three aces, Maycee Moody had a kill and Brynlee Dunker added a kill.

Scarlett Hanson led Sisseton with three kills, while Mahre Geyer had a kill and two ace serves.

The C match went the distance before Groton pulled out a 2-1 victory.

Sisseton controlled the opening set, breaking a 2-2 tie with seven straight points to take a 9-2 lead. The Redmen never trailed again and won 25-17.

Sisseton again held the advantage early in the second set and built a 10-4 lead before Groton's Maycee Moody took over from the service line. Moody served seven aces during a Tiger run that turned the deficit into a 12-10 Groton lead.

Moody later delivered the set-winning ace as Groton evened the match with a 25-21 victory.

The deciding set was tied eight times and featured three lead changes. Sisseton held an early 6-3 advantage before Groton battled back. The Tigers took a 10-9 lead and eventually won an extended third set, 16-14.

Moody finished with eight kills and nine ace serves. Charli Jacobsen added eight kills, Brynlee Dunker had three kills, Rylee Stoltenburg had two kills and a block, and Sophia Fliehs recorded two kills and an ace.

Mya Moody added a kill and an ace serve, while Arianna Dinger had three aces.

Sisseton was led by Abrielle Carlson with 12 kills and an ace serve. Violet Glynn had five kills, a block and an ace.

For the varsity Tigers, Hanson said the night was another step in developing the consistency the team will need as the schedule picks up.

"We've really been focusing on serve, pass, serve, pass, serve, pass," Hanson said. "Overall, I'm just glad we came in and took care of business."

Groton Area will travel to Webster on Tuesday before returning home Thursday to face Aberdeen Roncalli.

"I feel like we're in the grind now," Hanson said. "Every day is a game and you don't have much time to turn things around. It's nice to use these games as opportunities to practice things we want to work on, and I thought they did a really good job of that tonight."

Code Enforcer plans to retire

by Elizabeth Varin

· The City Council reviewed department monthly reports, though most of the department heads had scheduling conflicts and couldn't attend Thursday's meeting. Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich told the council that Dennis "Mike" Olson with OCCS will be at the council's next meeting. Heinrich added that Olson may announce that he plans to retire and has someone in line if the city needs a contracted code enforcer.

· The council held a second reading of a supplemental appropriation ordinance to transfer funds from specified funds to other ones. The city is transferring \$358,000 total out of the following funds.

- o \$195,500 from baseball donations
- o \$9,500 from other revenue
- o \$49,700 from airport
- o \$103,300 from unassigned fund balance

· Those funds will go into the following to meet the obligations of the city.

- o \$52,000 to general government buildings
- o \$6,500 to city hall
- o \$210,000 to baseball general
- o \$5,000 to softball
- o \$7,000 to 14U Legion baseball
- o \$5,500 to baseball grounds
- o \$7,000 to parks
- o \$5,000 to economic development and assistance
- o \$60,000 to airport

· The council reviewed statements of qualifications for architectural/engineering services for the park saferoom/bathroom project. It came after a review committee meeting earlier in the week, which included Mike Shilhanek, Brian Bahr and Scott Hanlon. Two proposals were received, one from Michael J. Burns Architects out of Fargo and one from HKG Architects out of Aberdeen. The review committee recommended HKG Architects, and the council agreed, voting unanimously to contract with HKG Architects contingent on the approval of the state Office of Emergency Management, a step required due to federal and state emergency management funds being used for the project.

· The council held off on taking action to a requested agreement to participate in a state Department of Transportation signing and delineation project. The project will evaluate the need for new road signage (including stop, yield, curve warning, delineation, school zone and street name signs) on county and Class II and Class III city roads. The signs would be checked and installed at no cost to the city, but the city would be required to maintain the signs after installation. The agenda item was tabled to allow for legal review of the contract.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

'It works if you want it': People charged with crimes find hope in county diversion programs

Limited local adoption fuels discussion about pursuing state funding

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

Kayla Essem prayed she'd get arrested.

The 32-year-old from Sioux Falls said she had been on and off drugs since she was in high school — fentanyl, cocaine, heroin and meth. Addiction was the only thing she was destined for, she believed, after seeing family members struggle.

Years of drug use frayed her self-confidence and robbed her of stability. Her partner left, taking her two children. She fell into an abusive relationship and overdosed in 2024.

Maybe jail would be enough to "scare me straight," she thought, to loosen the control drugs had on her life.

It was, and it wasn't. Beyond a jail stay, she ultimately found help in a program that's available in some South Dakota counties.

Essem was at a city park in June 2025 when a police officer stopped her and asked to search her purse. She confessed she had drugs in it. She faced a felony charge for meth possession and a misdemeanor charge for drug paraphernalia, with a possibility of years in prison and thousands in fines.

After a night in the Minnehaha County Jail, Essem said she still craved meth. While on bail, she placed herself into an inpatient treatment center at Lewis and Clark Behavioral Health Services in Yankton and went through crippling withdrawal.

When she returned home a month and a half after her arrest, Essem's attorney told her to call the Minnehaha County State's Attorney's Office. Becky Brown, the adult diversion coordinator, had an offer: get the charges dropped by enrolling in and completing the county's adult diversion program.

Minnehaha's program is one of at least four in the state, including Pennington, Yankton and Brookings counties. The total number is unknown because of a lack of central coordination. While officials say the programs are effective, they're difficult to expand within those existing counties and to additional counties since the state doesn't support it with funding like it does for youth diversion.

The programs are run by each county's state's attorney and offer people accused of crimes an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions while avoiding jail or prison time. Eligibility for the programs varies by county, from marijuana and underage alcohol crimes in Brookings County to first-time, nonviolent crimes in Minnehaha County, and beyond that to some violent crimes in Pennington County when victims consent and other conditions are met. Program graduates can get their case expunged if they remain arrest-free for 13 months, according to state law.

Essem took the offer. It was a challenge "to be better, to do better," she said.

She graduated in March, has a job handling packages at a distribution center in Sioux Falls and said she is 13 months sober. The charges can be expunged from her record in October.

"Diversion helped me grow in a way that made me realize what I want and put boundaries up for myself," Essem said.

The diversion program Essem completed has been offered in Minnehaha County since 2021 and primarily serves young adults. State's Attorney Daniel Haggard said he wanted to have an impact on people who've committed their first criminal offenses.

"It's really having the opportunity to change lives early on and really give people a purpose in life that's

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free from substance abuse where they can be productive members of our community,” Haggar said.

State’s attorneys see impact, cost savings

Brookings County, the home of South Dakota State University, has had an adult diversion program since 2019, focusing on people of college age who are charged for underage drinking. The county added marijuana-related offenses in 2020.

The program requires 10 hours of community service and a three-hour class through Brookings Behavioral Health. Brookings participants pay the \$120 cost so the program doesn’t involve taxpayer funds, said State’s Attorney Dan Nelson. Yankton has similar requirements and requires participants to pay the \$75 fee, unless they can’t afford it.

Nelson said diversion isn’t a soft-on-crime approach. It’s about setting young adults up for “success rather than failure.”

“There’s this misconception that spending time in jail for marijuana or alcohol sends the message for people not to do it again,” Nelson said, “but in my experience, it just sends a nonviolent first-time offender to jail and slaps them with a conviction so they can’t get a professional job.”

Nelson estimated that Brookings County’s program has saved it nearly \$1 million over its history. Underage drinking and marijuana-related cases are the top two crimes in the county, Nelson said, and the program avoids costs for court, judges and law enforcement involved in a formal court proceeding.

In Minnehaha County, Brown screens cases on the court docket and sets up meetings with potential participants. They make an individualized diversion plan that meets their needs.

In 2022, Brown had 80 clients. That more than doubled by 2025, with 181 clients. The expungement rate in 2024, which is how Minnehaha County measures its success, was 85%.

Brown attributes the success to the individualized nature of diversion. Essem does too.

“I don’t like to be bossed around, and I have a problem with people telling me what to do,” Essem said. “But they let me take ownership of it, that this was my plan and what I think is best for me.”

Essem determined that she needed to attend intensive outpatient counseling sessions, live in a sobriety house and pay for urinalyses three times a month at about \$13 apiece. Even though she wasn’t craving meth after inpatient treatment, the regular testing kept her accountable and was proof of her success.

In Pennington County, 13.6% of criminal cases went to adult diversion in 2025. The county has expanded its program since starting it in 2016 with people younger than 25 who were accused of nonviolent crimes.

The program now includes older nonviolent adults, a traffic-related program offering safe driving classes, and diversion options for violent cases when the victim agrees and it’s a first-time offense in which the person “acted out of character,” said Pennington County State’s Attorney Lara Roetzel.

Attorneys charging a case must pause to consider if diversion is appropriate, Roetzel said, which avoids “cookie cutter criminal justice.”

“My obligation is not just to victims and the community at large, but there is an equal obligation to the defendant too,” Roetzel said. “I know that when we bring someone into the criminal justice system there are huge consequences — it affects housing, employment, relationships, that person’s entire life.”

Shallow vs. deep end: Youth diversion, probation and treatment courts

There are several types of intervention used across the state, including diversion, probation and treatment courts.

Adult diversion mirrors juvenile diversion programs throughout the state.

In juvenile diversion, state’s attorneys pull a low-level, nonviolent minor offender into diversion programing to avoid formal court proceedings. The youth will get a temporary internal case file, but it’s separate from a formal court case.

The state has reimbursed counties for successful juvenile diversions through court-approved programs since 2016. The state pays \$750 per successful diversion.

In fiscal year 2024, 31 counties participated in the juvenile program with a nearly 82% success rate. In fiscal year 2025, the success rate increased to nearly 85%, according to the latest report from the state Unified Judicial System, and the state’s cost was \$1.47 million.

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Probation is similar to diversion — it's a judge-ordered supervision plan (involving fine payment, treatment or community service) often offered to people who admit to first-time or low-level crimes to avoid incarceration. But it occurs after a guilty plea or conviction, meaning it can show up on a person's record and still involves the costs of going through the court system.

Another related program, the state Unified Judicial System's 17 treatment courts — consisting of drug, DUI, mental health and veterans courts spread across the state — are for repeat offenders on the "deep end of the court system," Roetzel said. Participation in specialty courts occurs after sentencing. Participants receive an individualized treatment plan and supervision by court services officers.

In the state's 2025 fiscal year, treatment courts served 759 people and administered about 91,000 drug tests, at a cost of roughly \$8,000 per participant, according to a presentation earlier this year by state Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen. He said the program had served 2,970 people since its inception in 2008, with 73% of participants avoiding a further felony offense in the first five years after graduating.

Haggar said each intervention tool is necessary, and he believes diversion programming in Minnehaha is "one of the best uses of taxpayer money."

Statewide funding push

A 2023 legislative task force recommended unsuccessfully that the state pay counties for successful adult diversions as the state does for youth diversions. An earlier attempt to do that in 2019 failed.

Yankton County's State's Attorney Tyler Larson said more prosecutors would be open to expanding adult diversion or starting their own program with state funding that mirrors the juvenile diversion program. Right now, his county is "doing the minimum," he said, and has a diversion coordinator managing juvenile and adult programming.

Lincoln County State's Attorney Tom Wollman said his county, which includes the southern part of Sioux Falls, doesn't have the caseload to justify a full time adult diversion coordinator. His juvenile diversion coordinator is "saturated" with cases. If state funding was an option, he would consider adult diversion.

Roetzel approached lawmakers last year during a summer task force meeting meant to research ways to lower prison recidivism rates. She asked them to expand the statewide diversion program to adults, but lawmakers didn't take her up on the proposal.

"We're going to continue to face increasing incarceration at the local and state level if we don't work harder on the front end," Roetzel told South Dakota Searchlight.

Local control meets needs, other state's attorneys say

For juvenile diversion, the state sets standards and determines successes while each county's state's attorney's office determines which programs youth participate in and other details.

Nelson said he'd be "open to the discussion" of state adult diversion funding, but he wants to retain local control. He likes what he's doing and thinks it fits with Brookings County's needs.

Haggar is also hesitant about state involvement in adult diversion.

"One of the reasons you see the success here and you see buy-in from prosecutors is because they can tailor the program to fit their county and their office," Haggar said.

Haggar added he wouldn't want to "lose the good parts of programs we've set up in Minnehaha at the expense of getting state money."

Since Essem's graduation from the Minnehaha County program in March, she has attended Leaders of Tomorrow in Sioux Falls and chairs two Narcotics Anonymous meetings weekly, including one at the Minnehaha County Jail. She attends Narcotics Anonymous meetings at least five days a week herself, calling the community her "safe space."

She sees her children weekly, and she hopes to find work in a treatment center or become a drug and alcohol counselor working with adolescents, so she can offer the kind of help she received. Next year, Essem hopes to work at The Glory House, a residential addiction treatment, counseling and drug testing nonprofit.

The most difficult part about her sobriety, she said, was separating herself from relationships, spaces and patterns that were connected to drug use.

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"It works if you want it. I wanted it more than anything," Essem said. "I fight hard for my sobriety and recovery, and anything that jeopardizes it has no place in my life now."

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

South Dakota's general election debate season set to begin at State Fair

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota's 2026 general election debate season begins Saturday at the State Fair in Huron.

The South Dakota Farmers Union is hosting a debate between Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden and Democratic nominee for governor Dan Ahlers at 1 p.m. Central time on the fair's Freedom Stage. A livestream of the debate is available on the South Dakota Farmers Union YouTube page.

South Dakota Public Broadcasting and South Dakota News Watch also plan to broadcast and livestream debates in the coming weeks, including a Rhoden-Ahlers debate at 8 p.m. Central on Sept. 28 from the SDPB studio in Sioux Falls.

SDPB and News Watch plan to host a U.S. Senate debate at 8 p.m. Central on Sept. 14 in Sioux Falls, but Republican incumbent Sen. Mike Rounds has not accepted an invite, according to SDPB. Independent candidate Brian Bengs will be given airtime regardless, SDPB said.

Rob Skjonsberg, a Rounds campaign spokesman, responded to Searchlight on Rounds' behalf, saying Bengs "missed his shot to debate in the Democrat primary," a reference to Bengs' decision to run as an independent this time after a failed run for U.S. Senate as a Democrat in 2022. "Mike will focus on South Dakotans," Skjonsberg added.

Bengs' spokesperson Clara Bronikowski said that amid "rural hospitals closing," "the cost of living soaring" and "another billion-dollar forever war," it is "no wonder" Rounds doesn't want to debate.

"I would have a hard time defending that record as well," said the statement from Bronikowski.

SDPB and News Watch will host a U.S. House debate between the Republican nominee, Attorney General Marty Jackley, and Democratic nominee Nikki Gronli at 8 p.m. Central on Oct. 1 in Sioux Falls, with both candidates' participation confirmed.

South Dakota Searchlight's podcast, Searchlight Report, is featuring interviews with supporters and opponents of each of the four questions on the Nov. 3 ballot, beginning with Amendment L, which would raise the approval threshold for state constitutional amendments. Further ballot-question episodes will be released prior to the election.

Advance voting for the general election begins Sept. 18, and the voter registration deadline is Oct. 19.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Ep. 32: Pro and con voices on a ballot question that would raise the bar for changing the state constitution

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

On November 3rd, South Dakota voters will decide on four proposed amendments to the state constitution, all placed on the ballot by state lawmakers. We'll be bringing you an explanation of each of those

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questions, and interviews with supporters and opponents, through Searchlight Report and our website at southdakotasearchlight dot com.

One of the questions will ask voters to make it more difficult for state constitutional amendments to be successful.

Any amendment needs to be submitted to the voters as a question on the ballot, and needs a majority of the vote to pass. If Amendment L is successful, all future amendments to the constitution will require 60% to pass.

Later in this episode, you'll hear from Chase Jensen, a senior organizer with the nonprofit Dakota Rural Action. He's against the measure and wants you to vote no.

But first, I spoke with Sioux Falls Republican Representative John Hughes, who sponsored the resolution that sent the question to the ballot. He dislikes the use of political action committees and paid petition circulators to attempt amendments like restoring abortion rights in the state, which voters rejected two years ago, or legalizing recreational marijuana. Voters approved that in 2020, but it was invalidated by a judge who ruled it unconstitutional.

You'll hear Hughes reference that history. I spoke with him about his motivation for Amendment L, and why he wants you to vote yes. The interviews in this episode have been edited for length.

HUGHES OK, Amendment L is based upon accurate interpretation of what a state constitution is and what it's intended to provide and guard against. And Amendment L is designed to recognize that amending our state constitution is best focused on correcting errors, defects, or oversights, and not to enact sweeping changes to the structure and funding of our three branches of government. That's really what Amendment L is all about.

And people frequently don't realize that allowing initiated amendments to our constitution is a modern phenomenon. I believe it was 1972. And that was prior to the world of PACs and super PACs, and the Citizens United decision that the Supreme Court entered, which essentially gives First Amendment rights to corporate entities, which is what PACs and super PACs are in ballot question committees, and then enter the use of paid circulators.

And so basically, Amendment L is a recognition that through proper voter education, we will see the wisdom of reserving our state constitution as a permanent structure that, by and large, should stay the same and not be changed. And, a simple majority, that we allow for passage of an initiated constitutional amendment is really low hanging fruit. Nationally, it's a very unique situation, and what we have in South Dakota, and frankly, one of the reasons I ran for office in the Legislature is that we have D.C. politics and D.C. money, which is invading our state.

I mean, if you look at Amendment A to add recreational marijuana to our constitution. I mean, I, privately, I'd like to call myself a bit of a constitutional scholar, but the bottom line is, I'm not an academic. I'm a lawyer with four decades of law practice experience in the private sector. And I will tell you that when Amendment A — to add the right to smoke a joint — was on the ballot, I thought to myself, "Enough is enough."

And look at the numbers. The New Approach PAC in DC gave 1.9 million cash plus in kind, I mean, 1.8 million was in cash to put the right to smoke a joint in our state constitution. Wow. Is that what we want?

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And I was around, I was here, and the ballot, the people circulating the petitions are like, "Do you believe in helping veterans with PTSD?" Well, who wouldn't want to help a veteran with PTSD? I have a son that's career Army. He's been deployed. Of course, I'd want to support veterans with PTSD. But people are all overloaded with, you know, the impacts of inflation, and low wages, and trying to make a living. And so when you're walking into the post office, and you have a paid petition circulator, as I did, on Amendment A in 2020 that says, "Do you want to help veterans with PTSD?" And then I read what it is, and I'm like, "You wanna put recreational marijuana in the Constitution?"

This is not the South Dakota that I want for our people, where it's a free for all over putting polarizing ideological rights in our state constitution. That's what our laws are for, and I want to tell people that might be nervous, Amendment L has absolutely no effect on the right of voters to initiate statutes and to refer statutes that they don't like, which have been passed by the Legislature.

Our state government works very well. Our self-government in South Dakota works very well. But when you have out-of-state interests that spin and shade, and in fact, sometimes outright lie about what a ballot question is intended to provide to amend our constitution, that's where I draw the line.

O'BRIEN One of the opponents that I spoke to had said that it's a pretty fundamental American idea and a South Dakotan idea that if the majority agrees on something, that's how it should be.

HUGHES OK, let's have a voucher system then and put in the constitution for private education. You know that might pass in our state. It might. Would I support that in our state constitution? No. Why? I may see the merits of it. Many, many states have voucher programs. Many states have charter school programs ... And I'm, by the way, I should say I'm an ardent supporter of public education. I'm the product of public education for 19 years, and so.

But on the other hand, why would we want to put that in our constitution? Let it go through the Legislature, and if people are unhappy, we're talking about the ... See, people are not connecting the dots. This is not an Athens-style democracy, and if you think the founders of our nation favored Athenian-style democracy, you need to read the Federalist Papers, because we have these issues du jour, like recreational marijuana. Well, I mean, it ended up in the constitution.

Why not put psychedelic mushrooms in the constitution? And you know, you and I probably know there's some terrific research on the therapeutic effects of psychedelics, and we may well have legislation someday soon, like Oregon has done, or Colorado, which has strict protocols for administering psychedelics to people that have severe mental health issues that the science is proving is effective. But do you put that in the constitution? See, this is my problem here. We didn't have the ability to initiate constitutional amendments until 1972. We're talking apples and oranges. The constitution is one thing. Our state statutes and our court decisions are the other.

O'BRIEN When Hughes mentioned the ballot question will have no effect on the right of voters to initiate "statutes" — another word for laws that exist outside of the constitution — he was correct. Even if Amendment L passes and future constitutional amendments need 60% support, regular laws put on the ballot by petitioners would still only require a majority of votes. So would referred laws, which are laws passed by the Legislature that citizens petition onto the ballot.

We'll be back with more from an opponent of Amendment L after this break.

TUPPER South Dakota journalism is changing. Traditional, corporate-owned media outlets have reduced

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their staffs. Newspapers have lost pages and publication days.

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

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

All of that is possible with your support to our nonprofit mission.

You can help at South Dakota Searchlight dot com slash donate.

O'BRIEN This isn't the first time South Dakota voters have been asked to raise the bar for approving ballot questions. In 2018, voters rejected raising the bar to 55% for constitutional amendments. In 2022, a different ballot question asked voters to require 60% approval for ballot questions that had large fiscal impacts. That also failed.

Chase Jensen is the director of organizing at Dakota Rural Action, a grassroots group that focuses on conservation and agriculture. He wants voters to oppose Amendment L, because he says it's being pushed by lawmakers who don't like the things people are putting on the ballot. In our interview, he referenced examples, including a sweeping corruption, campaign finance and ethics package that voters approved in 2016, which the Legislature later watered-down.

Jensen began by talking about the past efforts to raise the threshold for approving ballot questions.

JENSEN Yeah, so I, if I remember right, I think the one in 2018 started even higher and then was negotiated down to 55. The 55% is still well above what it currently sits at. Sixty is obviously more than that. And then the 2022 proposal was really the Legislature's response to Medicaid expansion, which passed very popularly in the state through the constitutional amendment process, and so that was an attempt to make it harder to enact constitutional amendments like you said with the fiscal note, and so it was sort of trying to limit, like this isn't gonna apply to anything, just anything that touches the pocketbook. And that was also scheduled over a primary election, which I think speaks even more to the fact that this was not popular even with the majority party in power during a primary season where mostly their voters were turning out.

They were both resoundingly put away, but Amendment L this year would keep that higher 60% threshold but has no limit to which types of constitutional amendments it would impact, so it would be everything moving forward.

O'BRIEN Right. Some proponents of this amendment say that it should be difficult to amend the constitution, if that argument makes sense. How do you respond to that kind of argument?

JENSEN Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of responses to that. The first being, the majority of constitutional amendments brought to the people, many of which are shot down, come from the Legislature who vote them through on a simple majority. Which, I think, if they would like to stop packing ballots with constitutional amendments, they should just up their own threshold to a two-thirds majority before they can push anything forward. That would probably solve a lot of the busy ballot issues that they focus on.

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The other thing I would just point to, is South Dakota was the first state in the nation to implement a direct democracy process through the initiative and referendum. The constitutional initiative process was added later, but our constitution has always required the public vote on it and a simple majority has always been fine. There has never been an issue with that.

I think a lot of the issue that the Legislature tries to point to with the process now is that there are some subjects that are being moved as constitutional amendments because voters don't trust the Legislature that if they pass them as an initiated measure, that they won't just immediately undo them, like the campaign reform bill in the last decade, and seeing other times where things are attacked or watered down after their citizens bring them forward, so, there are multiple loaded pieces there.

If the Legislature respected the wishes of the people through initiated measures, there may be a little bit less use of the constitutional amendment. So I think there is maybe a story to be told about ... well, I haven't made that point at...

O'BRIEN Well, yeah, what I'm hearing is it's just this kind of back and forth between the voters and lawmakers kind of coming to a head, I guess, maybe with this amendment. Is that maybe a correct read on it?

JENSN I think that that is part of it. I mean, I think that the only people saying it should be harder are the legislators who are then using that argument to tamp down on citizens' rights to propose changes to their form of government directly, which still need a majority requirement to pass, and there aren't a ton of things that almost everybody agrees on, from the left to the right, but the fact that if the majority agrees on something, that's how it should be, that's a pretty fundamental American idea and South Dakotan idea. And so we just really don't see a lot of people having a problem with the way things have been since the founding of our state, except when it's from people in power who are trying to tamp down on the power of citizens' rights to initiate things directly, and that gets a little bit beyond maybe Amendment L, just to name that.

That proposal would not be only subject to citizen-initiated, it would also require 60% for anything the Legislature proposed, so there's that little piece of nuance there, but, as we mentioned, this proposal, this idea of making it harder, has been roundly rejected twice in the last eight years.

O'BRIEN Right, And it seems like it's been a pretty long fought battle of 2018, wanting to raise that threshold in 2022, wanting to raise that threshold. If this doesn't pass this year, do you envision a future where this back and forth kind of continues?

JENSEN I imagine it will be continuing. I think, I am hopeful that the votes would be strong enough that they would at least wait more than just one off cycle before there's another thing like this, I think South Dakotans really appreciate having this avenue, this ability to speak directly to their form of government and look at some of the biggest topics, some of the biggest things going on. Medicaid expansion was a very large example of that, something that the state was almost one of the last in the nation to adopt. And yet, when finally the voters were presented with the actual choice, it passed overwhelmingly.

And so, where there are disagreements with the popular opinion and then the opinion represented by our elected officials, I think that this will continue to be a source of, you know, strife for the elected officials and also something that citizens are unwilling to give up.

O'BRIEN OK. I think that's kind of all the questions that I had. Do you have anything else that you want

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to mention or bring up that I didn't?

JENSEN I think one of the ways that we've understood Amendment L, similar to the last two proposals, you know, recently, is basically the question that's on the ballot is, "Would you like your vote to count for less," and requiring a 60% threshold, really what that means is it only takes 40% of South Dakotans to decide something, and then that minority group will rule the state. They will be able to block anything that they want.

And so the question as we see it, not being respectful, is do you want your vote to count for less? So, we're expecting it to be another pretty clear shutdown, similar with the last two.

O'BRIEN Constitutional Amendment L will be on the ballot for voters on November 3rd. A "yes" vote will require all future amendments to receive 60% support to be added to the state constitution. A "no" vote would keep the threshold at a simple majority.

Early voting for the election starts September 18th, and the voter registration deadline is October 19th.

Check out future episodes of Searchlight Report to learn more about the other questions on the ballot.

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

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

South Dakota Searchlight is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest nonprofit news organization.

Until next time, I'm South Dakota Searchlight's Meghan O'Brien with the Searchlight Report.

Judge extends pause on 'unconstitutional' Trump order, postal rule limiting vote-by-mail

BY JACOB FISCHLER

A U.S. Postal Service rule restricting mail-in voting, like the executive order from President Donald Trump that spurred it, is unconstitutional, U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani said in a Friday order extending a freeze on the policy.

The Trump administration quickly appealed the order to the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Talwani, who was appointed by President Barack Obama, issued a preliminary injunction late Friday, 60 days before Election Day, blocking a U.S. Postal Service rule from going into effect while court challenges play out. The injunction converts a 14-day pause she ordered a week prior.

The Massachusetts judge voiced several serious concerns about the policy, including that it infringes on states' constitutional power to administer elections and Congress' power to legislate election policy.

The rule, which the Postal Service published last month based on a Trump executive order in March, would disenfranchise voters who depend on mail voting, give states the impossible task of overhauling their election systems ahead of a fast-approaching election and assert power the agency does not have under the U.S. Constitution, Talwani said.

The lengthening court battle will likely ultimately be settled by the Supreme Court.

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Not an election regulation, USPS says

The administration and a handful of GOP state attorneys general have defended the rule as a “modest” mail regulation and not an election regulation.

A statement from U.S. Postmaster General David Steiner restated the claim earlier Friday.

The portions of the rule establishing technical standards for ballot envelopes were based on longstanding best practices and were not “breaking new and uncharted ground,” Steiner wrote.

Similarly, a more controversial provision requiring states to send the Postal Service a list of eligible voters was also not complicated for the agency, he said, noting that USPS would not amend the lists.

“The USPS does not edit, change, review or question the contents of the list—the list is merely a list of voters that a State says are receiving a ballot through the mail,” he wrote. “So basically, the State provided list is a manifest identifying the recipients of ballot mail.”

Clash with law passed by Congress

Talwani said Friday the federal government’s denial that the rule is an election regulation “rings hollow.”

“Throughout its body of election legislation, Congress has never delegated its Elections Clause power to the USPS,” she wrote. “Unauthorized by the Elections Clause, the Final Rule clashes with Congress’s statutory scheme, and is unconstitutional where it intrudes not only on Congress’s Elections Clause powers but also that power left to the States.”

In addition to the constitutional principles the rule violates, it is unworkable ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections that will determine control of Congress, she said.

All states allow some form of mail-in voting. The first ballots were sent Friday, with North Carolina starting to mail ballots to certain voters.

In a statement following the ruling, Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell, one of the Democratic attorneys general who sued to block the rule, said Talwani’s order would keep the commonwealth’s election administration on track.

“This order protects our ability to effectively deliver mail ballots to all residents relying on them to make their voices heard in the November election,” she said. “Voters should continue to vote-by-mail as usual and know that this system is safe and secure.”

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.

Judge criticizes Trump pressure on prosecutors on reflecting pool vandalism charges

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — A District of Columbia Superior Court judge Friday seemed inclined to bar any new felony charges against former Olympian David Hearn, after the Trump administration accused the Maryland man of damaging part of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool.

D.C. Superior Court Judge Todd Edelman raised concerns about President Donald Trump’s public pressure campaign on the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia, following a quiet earlier move by U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro to dismiss the charges.

Trump, who oversaw the multi-million-dollar renovation of the pool, has blamed vandals for the damage.

“The president of the United States is pressuring your office... to recharge Mr. Hearn (on) what you have decided is meritless,” said Edelman, who was nominated by former President Barack Obama.

Government lawyers could not answer whether the Trump administration might again try to charge Hearn, of Bethesda, with damaging the reflecting pool. Pirro’s motion for dismissal was without prejudice, which means the case could be filed again.

“I don’t know what the future will bring,” Michael Spence of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia said. “Ten minutes from now that decision could change.”

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Hearn has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Reflecting pool drama

Hearn's case has preoccupied Trump, who faces public backlash and protest as he's moved to reshape the historic landmarks and landscapes of the nation's capital.

That has ranged from moving forward with a triumphal arch that dwarfs the tallest structure in the district, the Washington Monument, to removing iconic cherry blossom trees along the East Potomac Park.

Over the summer, the Trump administration charged Hearn, an Olympic canoeist, with more than \$1,000 worth of damage to the reflecting pool on June 19.

When Pirro asked the court to dismiss the charges, Trump was angered. Trump said that Pirro "choked" and "folded like an umbrella" and pushed for charges to be refilled.

"Frankly, I think she choked because the judge was really vicious. Instead of going after the people that did it, the judge went after her and went after her department, and I guess she choked," Trump told reporters. "I don't know what the hell happened."

Pirro said her office wouldn't have sought charges if the Interior Department, which manages the Lincoln Memorial, had initially shared more information about repair work on the reflecting pool.

Supporters rally

Attorneys for Hearn, as well as dozens of supporters, gathered outside D.C. Superior Court before the hearing.

They included Maryland Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin, who slammed the Trump administration for initially bringing felony charges against Hearn.

"Stop setting up our citizens for fraudulent purposes," said Raskin, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee.

After the hearing, Hearn gave a brief statement.

"This is not about me, this is about defending democracy," he said.

One of his attorneys, Norm Eisen of Democracy Defenders Fund, said if his client could be charged, then "every American is at risk."

Edelman said he would make a decision soon.

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.

More states are putting panic alarms in schools

BY ROBBIE SEQUEIRA

Three states this year have enacted laws that require or allow schools to use mobile, wearable, wireless or silent panic alarms to quickly summon emergency responders.

The new laws in Illinois, Virginia and West Virginia bring the number of states with such laws to 13, with 10 of them acting since 2023. Another dozen states have legislation pending.

Known as Alyssa's Law, the measures are named for 14-year-old Alyssa Alhadeff, one of 17 people killed during the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Make Our Schools Safe, a nonprofit founded by Alhadeff's mother, has advocated for the legislation.

Although all the laws are grouped under the Alyssa's Law name, they involve different technologies. While some of the laws require schools to use a particular device, others just allow schools to consider implementing some sort of emergency alert system.

Texas, for example, requires silent panic alert technology in classrooms, while Utah mandates that certain members of the school staff wear mobile alert devices. Virginia allows school boards to equip employees with wearable silent panic alarms, but doesn't require it. The laws also differ in how the devices connect with police or other emergency responders. Funding mechanisms also differ from state to state.

The cost of such systems varies. But several years ago, the school board in Gwinnett County, Georgia,

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the largest in the state, approved \$7 million to purchase the CrisisAlert system from CENTEGIX, an Atlanta-based technology company that provides emergency response systems to schools and hospitals. The CrisisAlert system provides school staff members with a wearable button that can be used to call for help.

A report released earlier this year by CENTEGIX found that 88% of the more than 346,000 alerts generated by its wearable panic-button systems during the 2025-2026 school year involved everyday issues such as fights and students leaving campus without permission.

Ten percent of the alerts were medical emergencies and 2% were for suspicious behavior or a campus-wide emergency.

"Wearable incident response badges help reduce delays by enabling staff to discreetly initiate alerts from anywhere on campus," the report states. "Their value comes not only from speed, but from their ability to deliver clear, reliable communication."

But Kenneth Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, a consulting firm, said the fact that relatively few of the alerts were for emergencies suggests that schools should not be mandated to use panic buttons or similar technologies.

Stateline reporter Robbie Sequeira can be reached at rsequeira@stateline.org.

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

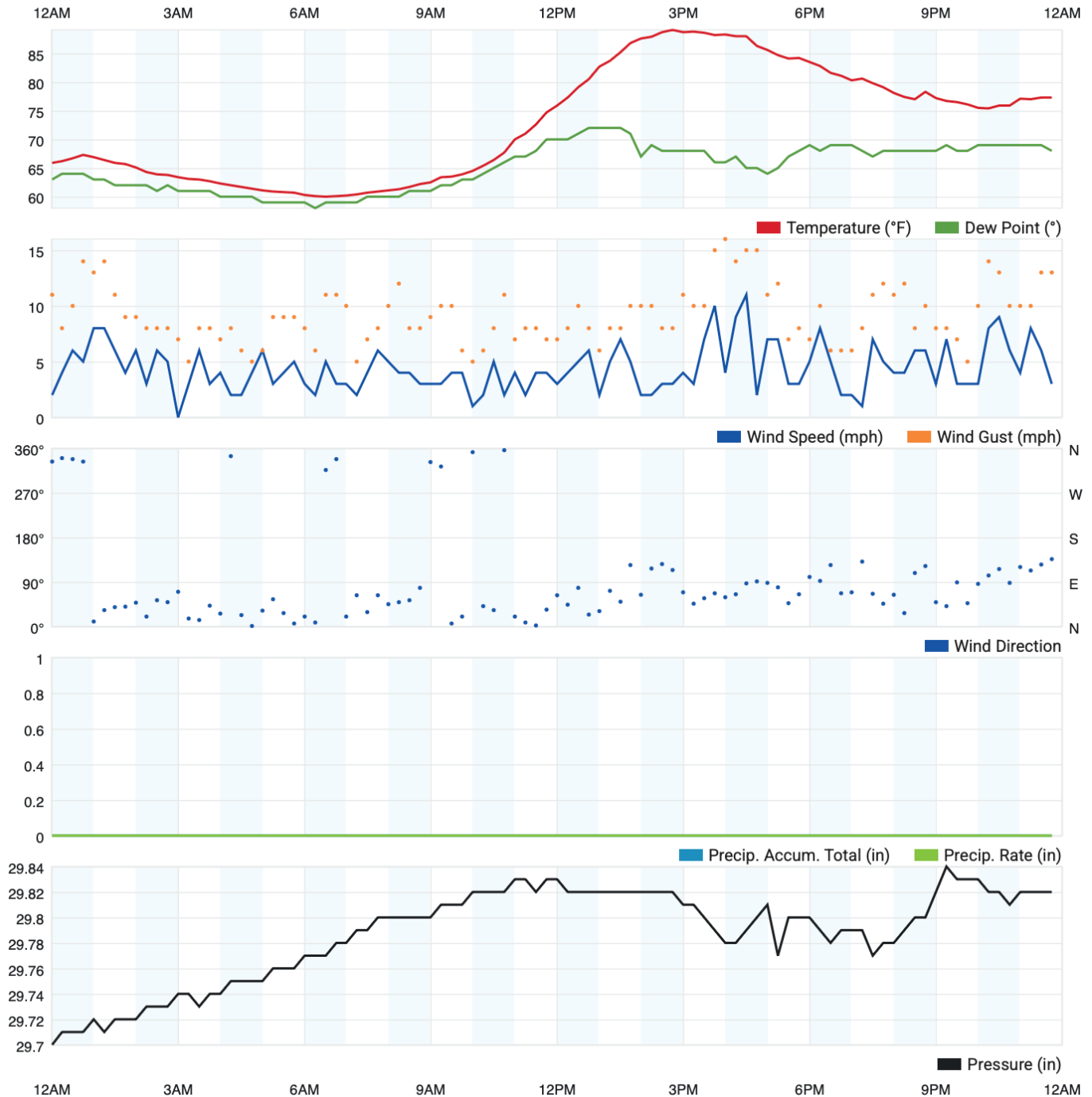
Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 4, 2026



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Today



High: 88 °F

T-storms
Likely then
Sunny

Tonight



Low: 68 °F

Increasing
Clouds

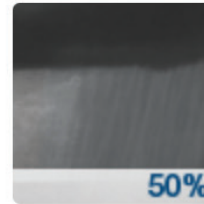
Sunday



High: 86 °F

Heavy Rain

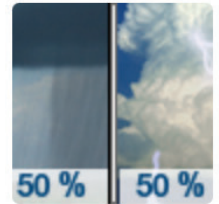
Sunday Night



Low: 67 °F

Chance
Showers

Labor Day



High: 85 °F

Chance
Showers then
Chance
T-storms and
Breezy

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Isolated Severe Storms
Possible

1st Round: Morning (Eastern SD)

2nd Round: Afternoon/Tonight

PRIMARY THREATS



Wind Gusts
of 60-70 mph



Quarter Sized
Hail

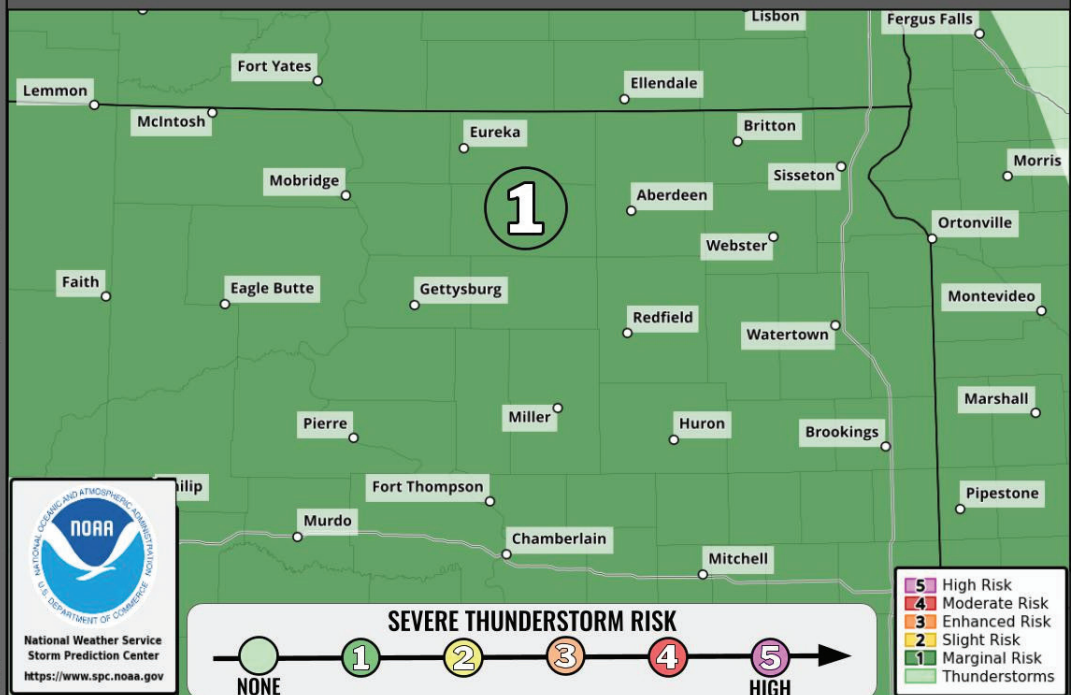
SECONDARY THREATS



HEAVY
RAIN

NWS
Aberdeen, SD

Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Today/Tonight



A Marginal Risk for severe storms exists across the region today. One round of storms across eastern SD this morning may bring isolated severe storms capable of quarter size hail. Another round of storms is possible late this afternoon and/or into the nighttime hours. Storms with this second round may contain quarter size hail and wind gusts from 60 to 70 mph.

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Heat Index Forecast for Today

September 5, 2026
3:24 AM

→ **Highest heat indices near or just above 100°F mainly over central SD.**

◆ Heat indices in the 90s across north central into portions of northeast SD as well.

→ Temperatures will slowly cool late in the weekend into early next week.

Staying Safe in the Heat

- ☀ Limit Outdoor Activities
- ☀ Drink Plenty of Water
- ☀ Avoid Alcohol
- ☀ Wear Light Clothing
- ☀ Wear Sunscreen
- ☀ Work Outdoors Early or Very Late in the Day

weather.gov/heat

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

Maximum Heat Index (°F) Forecast

	9/5														Sat				
	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm				
Aberdeen	71	75	78	85	90	93	95	96	95	94	92	86	78	75	74				
Britton	70	72	75	78	83	86	88	90	90	88	87	77	74	73	73				
Brookings	70	73	76	79	87	91	91	92	94	91	89	86	77	75	74				
Chamberlain	74	79	87	93	97	99	99	101	99	98	95	91	85	83	79				
Clark	72	74	76	79	85	88	90	91	90	89	85	78	75	74	73				
Eagle Butte	69	75	79	87	91	93	95	97	96	94	91	85	82	77	75				
Ellendale	69	73	76	79	86	90	91	94	93	91	90	79	76	74	72				
Eureka	69	73	76	79	86	89	91	94	93	93	90	84	77	74	73				
Gettysburg	71	76	83	87	92	96	97	98	97	96	91	87	79	77	75				
Huron	73	76	83	88	91	94	95	94	96	95	91	89	79	77	75				
Kennebec	74	79	87	91	96	99	99	101	98	97	94	89	84	79	77				
McIntosh	69	74	79	87	91	93	94	95	93	93	90	84	79	75	74				
Milbank	68	70	73	76	79	85	86	90	88	87	86	77	74	73	72				
Miller	73	77	85	89	94	96	98	99	99	96	93	86	79	76	75				
Mobridge	72	76	83	87	93	95	97	99	98	97	94	88	83	78	77				
Murdo	72	77	84	89	94	96	97	97	96	95	93	87	83	78	76				
Pierre	74	79	87	91	97	99	101	103	100	100	96	92	87	83	79				
Redfield	72	76	84	88	92	95	96	97	96	96	92	85	78	76	75				
Sisseton	67	70	73	75	77	79	83	86	85	83	79	76	73	72	71				
Watertown	70	72	76	79	85	88	90	92	90	90	88	79	76	75	74				
Webster	70	72	74	76	79	83	86	88	86	86	85	77	75	73	73				
Wheaton	67	70	73	75	78	82	84	85	84	84	83	75	73	71	71				

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Temperatures will rise into the 80s and 90s across the region today, with the hottest temperatures expected over central SD. Humid conditions will remain in place as well, with dewpoints in the 60s and lower 70s causing heat indices to rise into the 90s to around 100 degrees. The highest heat indices around 100 degrees are expected over central SD. The timing for the hottest temperatures are during the afternoon into the early evening hours.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Isolated Severe Storms Possible

Afternoon/Evening

PRIMARY THREATS

- ☁ Wind Gusts of 60-70 mph
- ☁ Quarter to Golf-ball Sized Hail

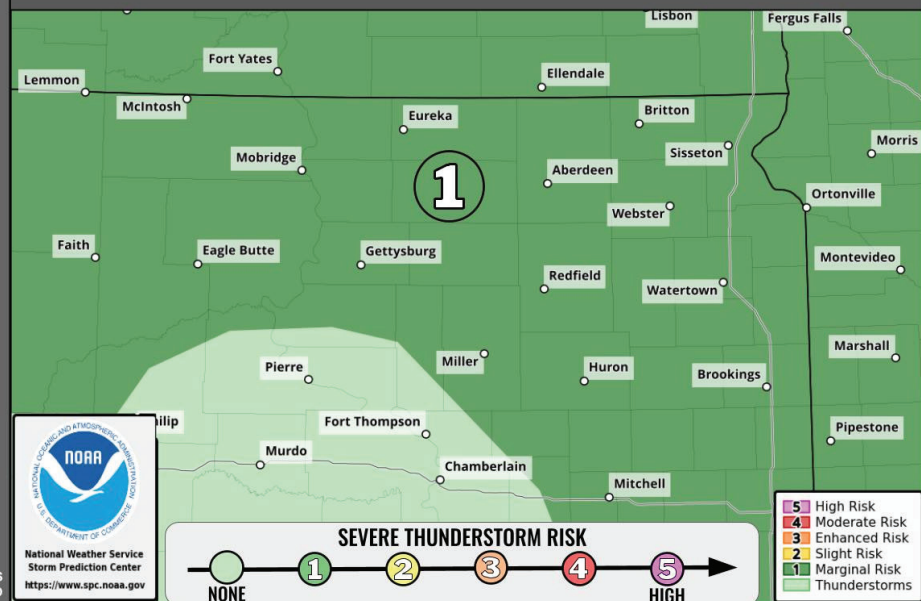
SECONDARY THREATS



HEAVY RAIN

NWS
Aberdeen, SD

Marginal Risk For Severe Storms on Sunday



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89 °F at 2:54 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 6:16 AM

Wind: 16 mph at 3:58 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1945

Record Low: 32 in 1962

Average High: 79

Average Low: 51

Average Precip in Sept.: 0.34

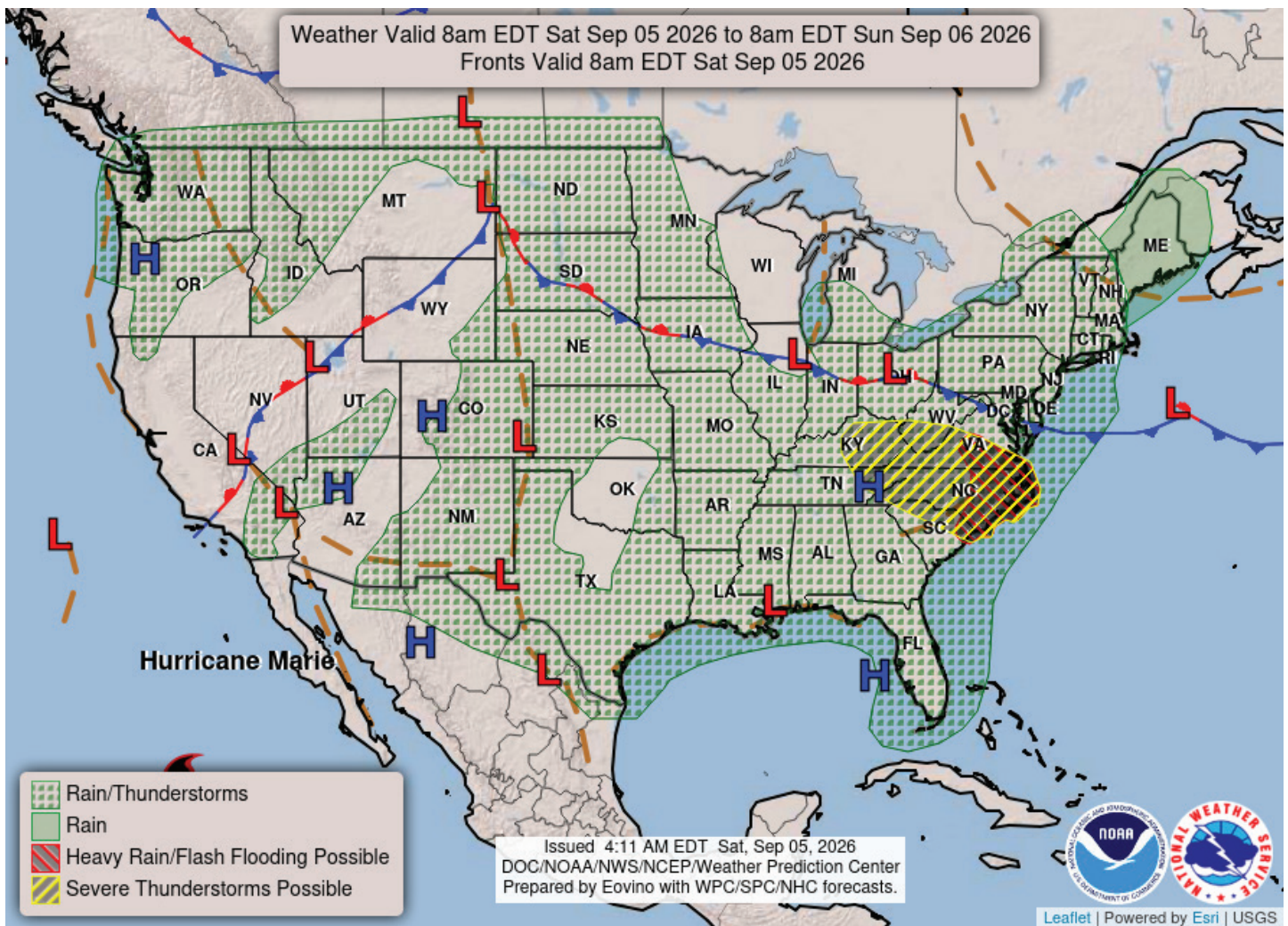
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 16.68

Precip Year to Date: 20.06

Sunset Tonight: 8:03 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:00 am



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Today in Weather History

September 5, 1983: In the late afternoon and early evening, hail up to 2, and ½ inches in diameter pounded crops, trees, buildings, and windows resulting in extensive damage in Spink, Beadle, Turner, and Clay Counties. Trees were stripped of numerous branches broken off.

1666: The Great Fire of London started on September 2nd and continued through September 5th. The fire spread rapidly due to strong westerly winds. This fire consumed 13,200 homes, 87 parish churches, and St. Paul's Cathedral.

1925 — The temperature at Centerville, AL, soars to 112 degrees to establish a state record. Every reporting station in Alabama was 100 degrees or above that afternoon. (The Weather Channel)

1929: Early season snowfall occurred in the mountains of Wyoming and the Black Hills of South Dakota on September 5th and 6th. The highest snowfall amount was 16 inches in Fox Park, Wyoming.

1933: A Category 3 hurricane made landfall on South Padre Island, Texas during the late evening hours on September 4th, or Labor Day. The storm caused 40 fatalities and nearly \$17 million in damages. With the storm making landfall during a holiday weekend, fatalities could have been much higher. The following is from the report of the official in charge at Corpus Christi, Texas: "Probably never before in the history of Texas hurricanes have such widespread and early warnings been given as were received from Washington in advance of this one. The telegram of Saturday, September 2, warning all persons to avoid inaccessible places over the weekend probably saved thousands of lives."

1950: Hurricane Easy was an erratic and unpredictable hurricane that lingered over the Tampa Bay area for days, dropping torrential rains and causing damage especially in Cedar Key, Florida where the storm eventually made landfall. This hurricane dumped 38.7 inches of rain in 24 hours in Yankeetown, a record for the U.S. at the time, and caused \$3.3 million in damage. Total rainfall amounts in Yankeetown was 45.20 inches.

1975 — Strong winds reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust resulting in a 22-car chain reaction accident on Interstate 10 near Toltec AZ. Two persons were killed, and 14 others were injured. (The Weather Channel)

1978: Tropical Depression Norman became the most recent tropical system to make landfall in California near Long Beach as an extra-tropical storm.

1987 — Thunderstorms over the Southern and Middle Atlantic Coast States drenched Charleston, SC, with 5.50 inches of rain, and a total of 13.50 inches in two days, flooding homes, and leaving roads and bridges under water. (The National Weather Summary) A tropical storm which formed off the South Atlantic coast was responsible for torrential rains over coastal regions of South Carolina. Between the 30th of August and the 8th of September, Charleston SC received 18.44 inches of rain. The heavy rains caused extensive flooding around the city of Charleston, seriously damaged cotton crops in the eastern part of the state, and resulted in an unusually high number of mosquitos. (Storm Data)

1988 — Five days of heavy rain commenced in west central Florida. Up to 20 inches of rain in four days resulted in extensive urban flooding, and evacuation of 1000 homes. Flooding claimed four lives, and caused more than five million dollars property damage. (The National Weather Summary)(Storm Data)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced six to ten inches of rain in south central Kansas between 6 AM and Noon. Serious flooding was reported around Wichita, with water four feet deep along some roads. A cold front crossing the Northern High Plains Region produced wind gusts to 63 mph at Sheridan WY. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1996: Hurricane Fran made landfall near the tip of Cape Fear, North Carolina with maximum sustained winds near 115 mph on the evening of September 5th. Fran was responsible for 26 deaths and was at the time the most expensive natural disaster ever in North Carolina's history.

2017: Hurricane Irma became a category 5 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 180 mph. This made Irma one of strongest hurricane ever observed in the open Atlantic Ocean.

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Daily Devotion

Living in God's Grace

God's grace is endless, and He invites us to make it our home.

Philippians 1:1-11: 1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,

5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

7 For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,

10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Since all of Paul's letters begin with an expression of God's grace, we may be tempted to think that it is simply a customary word of greeting. But in reality, God's grace is our foundation and the very atmosphere in which we live as believers in Christ.

Grace is the undeserved favor of God. And according to Ephesians 2:8, it's the means by which we are saved through faith. Romans 5:2 says that by our faith, we have "obtained our introduction ... into this grace in which we stand." Grace isn't a one-time gift—it sustains us throughout life and into eternity. And it never ceases to do its work in us. That's why Paul could confidently say, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

Sometimes it's difficult to see righteousness in ourselves, because we know how weak and flawed we are. But even that awareness can draw us closer to Christ. If we've been saved, then the Lord lives in us and we in Him (1 John 4:13). Jesus is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30), and He's actively producing His fruit in our life as we abide in Him. This process, known as sanctification, is God's grace working to align our character with the Son's. So let's stand firm in divine grace and trust God to complete what He started.

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.04.26

13 34 41 51 52 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 29 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.04.26

6 26 34 59 61 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$193,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 3 Days 15 Hrs 14 Mins 31 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: 14 Hrs 29 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.02.26

3 4 5 6 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$46,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 44 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.02.26

5 6 15 26 33 20

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 13 Mins 31 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: 15 Hrs 13 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

Alcester-Hudson 58, Gayville-Volin High School 6
Bennett County 24, Stanley County 6
Bon Homme 60, Scotland/Menno 12
Britton-Hecla 59, Webster 22
Canistota 46, Chester 18
Canton 32, Dakota Valley 22
Castlewood 58, Estelline-Hendricks 8
Centerville 51, Irene-Wakonda 0
Chamberlain 28, WWSSC 7
Clark-Willow Lake 40, Aberdeen Roncalli 7
DeSmet 28, Elkton-Lake Benton 26
Dell Rapids 36, Belle Fourche 8
Dell Rapids St Mary's 38, Avon 32, OT
Deubrook def. Wilmot, forfeit
Deuel 45, Sioux Valley 8
Elk Point-Jefferson 37, Parker/Marion 2
Florence-Henry 26, Waverly-South Shore 22
Freeman 52, Howard 13
Garretson 37, Hanson 30
Great Plains Lutheran 36, Sisseton 14
Groton 34, Flandreau 6
Hamlin 43, Baltic 6
Harding County 34, Lemmon High School 28
Harrisburg 35, Sioux Falls Washington 10
Hill City 42, New Underwood 26
Huron 60, Douglas 0
Ipswich 26, North Central 12
Ipswich 26, Rapid City Central 12
Kadoka 28, Gettysburg 24
Lennox 30, Vermillion 0
Lower Brule 42, Crow Creek Tribal School 0
Madison 42, Tri-Valley 7
Northwestern 30, Leola-Frederick High School 14
Parkston 56, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 12
Philip 12, Lead-Deadwood 9
Philip 12, New Underwood 9
Platte-Geddes 50, Sioux Falls Lutheran 14
Rapid City Christian 35, Mobridge-Pollock 6
Riggs 44, Yankton 14
Sioux Falls Christian 61, Custer 0
Sioux Falls Jefferson 65, Rapid City Stevens 0
Sioux Falls Lincoln 35, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 7
Spearfish 47, Mitchell 27
St Thomas More 43, Hot Springs 6
Sturgis Brown High School 32, Rapid City Central 7

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Sully Buttes 42, Lyman 34
TDAACDC 44, Burke 20
Tea 45, Aberdeen Central 7
Todd County 56, Pine Ridge 6
Wagner 35, Miller 0
Warner 14, Faulkton 12
Watertown 35, Brookings 7
Waubay/Summit 50, Redfield 0
West Central 56, Milbank 6
White River 56, Little Wound 6
Winner 41, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 0

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

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-20, 25-16, 25-16, 25-16, undefined-undefined
Wakpala def. Crazy Horse, 20-25, 25-15, 25-14, 25-20
Gillette Invitational=
Pool C=
Sheridan, Wyo. def. Spearfish, 25-18, 27-25
Spearfish def. Newcastle, Wyo., 25-17, 25-21
Pool D=
Rapid City Christian def. Wheatland, Wyo., 15-25, 25-22, 15-7
Thunder Basin, Wyo. def. Rapid City Christian, 25-12, 24-26, 15-6
Pool E=
St Thomas More def. Burns, Wyo., 25-9, 25-6
St Thomas More def. Sundance, Wyo., 25-14, 25-9

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

US envoys Witkoff and Kushner are in Moscow in a new push for peace between Russia and Ukraine

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner arrived in Moscow on Saturday to try to revive a stalled push to end Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian state news outlets reported.

The visit came as both sides escalated their aerial attacks. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukraine would halt airstrikes during the envoys' trip and urged Moscow to do the same. Moscow did not publicly respond to the proposal.

Washington's push to end the fighting, now in its fifth year, has lost momentum as U.S. attention has been focused for the last six months on its war with Iran.

The envoys were met at the airport by Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev, Russia's state news agency Tass said. Dmitriev shared photos of him meeting the U.S. delegation as they disembarked, alongside the caption, "Welcome to Moscow Peacemakers."

The last known visit to Moscow by Witkoff and Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law, was in January, when they met Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. They have never visited Kyiv, but Zelenskyy said he was expecting them in the Ukrainian capital on Sunday.

With peace efforts stalled, Russia intensified its attacks on Kyiv and other cities with relentless bombardments recently stretching into daylight hours, taking advantage of Ukraine's shortage of air defensive

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systems.

On Friday, a Russian drone hit one of the most important government buildings in Kyiv — the headquarters of Ukraine's Security Service, known as the SBU, which is one of the agencies involved in carrying out deep-strike operations inside Russia.

The long-range strikes by Ukraine have hit Russian military facilities, oil refineries and e-commerce hubs, seeking to undermine the Kremlin's war effort and economy, as well as make ordinary citizens feel the consequences of the war.

Zelenskyy links Russian strikes to envoys' visit

The air war between Russia and Ukraine has intensified as troops have struggled to make progress along the 1,250-kilometer (775-mile) front line. Russia has recently been using fast-flying, jet-powered drones, and the recurring wail of air-raid sirens has become part of daily life in Kyiv.

In a social media post on Saturday, Zelenskyy said that Russia had carried out overnight strikes on Kyiv and Boryspil international airports, and linked the attack to the planned U.S. visit.

"Clearly, these Russian strikes on the airports are a reaction to the discussions and preparations for the possibility of the U.S. side using an aircraft to travel to Ukraine," he said.

"We have taken note of this Russian move, and next week we will adjust our operation accordingly regarding Russian airspace, which has become dangerous because of our drones and missiles in the sky. Of course, there are and will be no threats to diplomacy from our side."

Strikes kill 5 at Ukrainian industrial site

Russian attacks killed five people and wounded five more at an industrial facility in Ukraine's southern Dnipropetrovsk region, local military administration head Oleksandr Hanzha said. He described those killed as employees at the site. "A locksmith, an electrician, a plumber and a machinist. People of peaceful professions. They were simply working their shift. They were doing their job when enemy missiles cut off their lives," he said.

A 62-year-old man was wounded and several homes and an apartment building were damaged in a separate attack on the region's Nikopol district, Hanzha said.

In a statement Saturday, Russia's Ministry of Defense said it had carried out strikes on two metallurgical plants in the region, describing them as "major suppliers of metal products for Ukraine's military production."

A further two people were wounded in an overnight Russian attack on Ukraine's Kyiv region, said Tymur Tkachenko, head of the regional military administration. In the Boryspil district, a fire sparked by a strike partially destroyed a nine-story residential building.

Russian forces also repeatedly struck a shopping center in the southern Mykolaiv region with drones overnight, damaging retail premises and sparking fires, Ukraine's state emergency services said. A 72-year-old man and a 17-year-old girl were hurt.

Emergency crews responding to the incident were repeatedly forced to withdraw to safety because of the threat of further strikes, returning whenever conditions allowed, the emergency services said.

Russia launched ballistic missiles from its Rostov and Voronezh regions and deployed 167 attack drones overnight, Ukraine's air force said. The drones included Shahed-type aircraft — around half of them jet-powered — as well as Geran and decoy drones. Ukrainian air defenses shot down or suppressed 128 drones, according to the air force.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian attacks wounded three people, including a 14-year-old girl, in Russia's border region of Belgorod, local officials said.

In a statement, Russia's Ministry of Defense said that its forces had shot down 53 Ukrainian drones overnight.

Turning Point is laying the groundwork to shape Republican presidential primary in 2028

By HANNAH FINGERHUT and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Alongside the familiar sounds of roosters crowing and thrill seekers screaming on rides at the Iowa State Fair, there was a chorus of boos from Turning Point Action activists who were heckling Democratic politicians making their way through the crowds.

Videos of the confrontations got hundreds of thousands of views on social media, a burst of attention for a conservative youth organization that is charting its next chapter after last year's assassination of its leader Charlie Kirk. But the true test of Turning Point Action's clout was unfolding inside the exhibition center, where staff members were registering voters, handing out buttons and signing people up for social events.

"Building the foundation for 2028," said one of the flyers.

While Democrats have punted Iowa from the top of its presidential primary calendar, the state's caucuses will still kick off Republicans' next nominating process. Turning Point Action is positioning itself to shape that contest, a reminder that preparations for the next White House campaign are already in motion even though no candidates have announced and the midterm elections aren't over yet.

Turning Point Action wants at least one staffer in each of Iowa's 99 counties to mobilize the conservative grassroots.

"It is important to us to see high voter participation in the caucuses," said Tyler Bowyer, the organization's chief operating officer. "That's your measuring stick."

In addition to Iowa, Turning Point Action grew its footprint in New Hampshire and Nevada for this year's midterms, which could also help in 2028.

The likely beneficiary of this initiative would be Vice President JD Vance, who is widely expected to launch a campaign. Turning Point leaders including Erika Kirk, Charlie's widow, have been clear they're ready to throw their support behind Vance if he jumps in.

More than a dozen Republican officials, activists, lawmakers and strategists in Iowa said Turning Point's imprint in the state was visible but still something of a mystery, and some privately question whether the organization's impact will match the buzz that it generates online.

But others have eagerly welcomed the organization to the state.

"A year ago, Iowa was virgin — no Turning Point. And many of us complained," said Kelley Koch, a former Dallas County Republican chair, to a gathering of MAGA Nation Iowa, the grassroots organization she founded. "Finally, Turning Point Action listened to us."

Early state investments could benefit Vance

When asked about his 2028 ambitions, Vance demurs and says he's focused on his current job, but he's expected to be an immediate Republican frontrunner if he decides to seek the presidency. Bowyer said Turning Point Action wants to be supportive without "being pushy."

"We haven't officially endorsed as an organization yet because no one's announced, right? But, you know, depending on who announces and when we endorse — yeah, of course we'll be out campaigning on behalf of who we endorse," he said.

Bowyer said Vance can bridge the gap between the Make America Great Again movement, which Trump launched more than a decade ago, and younger voters who were attracted to Charlie Kirk's brand of conservatism.

"It's a natural fit," he said.

Bowyer acknowledged that Turning Point Action's growing infrastructure in early primary states could cause some agitation on the right if it is seen as throwing its weight behind one presidential candidate. But, he said "that's not why we do it," describing the goal as boosting turnout in the Iowa caucuses to send a strong signal heading into the general election.

Other potential candidates include Marco Rubio, Trump's secretary of state. However, Rubio has said he wouldn't run against Vance.

Sen. Ted Cruz has not announced a campaign, but he has already made several visits to Iowa this year

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and said in a recent podcast hosted by Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick that, "It's no secret that I want to be president."

New staff on the ground in Iowa look to grow the grassroots

Although Iowa has shifted rightward over the last decade, it's considered a political battleground in this year's midterm elections because of Trump's sagging approval ratings, declining access to healthcare and tariff-driven turmoil in the agricultural industry.

Sen. Joni Ernst and Gov. Kim Reynolds, both Republicans, are retiring, and there are fiercely contested races to replace them. Democrat Josh Turek and Republican Ashley Hinson are seeking the Senate seat, while Democrat Rob Sand and Republican Zach Lahn want to be governor. Two battleground congressional districts will help determine control of the House as well.

The spotlight on Iowa this year is an opportunity for Turning Point Action to demonstrate its clout.

The organization said it hired four staffers on the ground last year. After Lahn's surprise win over Trump-endorsed Rep. Randy Feenstra, Turning Point Action said it would double its manpower in the state before the midterms.

Young activists regularly post on social media from county fairs and Republican committee meetings. They upload selfies on sidewalks or stoops to show days spent knocking on doors.

"We're newer in Iowa," a Des Moines-based senior field staffer, Kylie Kloewer, told a visitor who stopped by Turning Point Action's booth at the state fair.

The booth featured signs emphasizing that there are only two genders and one that said "men can't get pregnant," the kind of confrontational culture war messaging that Charlie Kirk practiced on college campuses. Some people nodded and chuckled, while others raised their eyebrows as they wandered by.

Those who walked up to the table could sign up for social clubs that host events, including barbecues and volleyball games.

"Any involvement is success," said Kelsey Newberry, who is based in the organization's Phoenix headquarters and was helping at the Iowa State Fair. "You're bringing people together as a community. The more you talk to your neighbors, the better."

"And even if they're not ready to get activated now," Newberry added, "being around like-minded people might encourage them in the future."

A golf course for 'the people' faces a presidential makeover

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A pack of cyclists whisked by along the circuit at East Potomac Park while the golf course parking lot filled with luxury SUVs parked next to older, inexpensive economy cars, all with the Washington Monument in the background.

The scene highlighted what residents say are the park's best features: its accessibility and affordability right in the nation's capital.

The historic park, especially the golf course, has caught the eye of President Donald Trump, who wants to turn it into a world-class golf venue. It's part of his grand vision for Washington, D.C., where he has torn down storied structures, remade or renamed others and deployed the National Guard for more than a year.

But some residents fear the planned changes to the golf course — where Trump has visited with a cabinet member, a well-known golf course architect and blueprints — risk altering the character of a place that has served Washingtonians of many stripes for more than a century. Turning the park into an upscale golf course will mean costlier fees and a loss of public space, residents worry.

"It takes away the history of the links here as well as deprives people of having a reasonably inexpensive place to play that is readily accessible to everyone," said Joe Foley, who said he was in his 70s and had just finished nine holes of golf for \$36, including a cart.

A park created by Congress for 'the people'

East Potomac Park, including the East Potomac Golf Links, was created by a congressional act in 1897, which established the park for the "recreation and the pleasure of the people." The course opened in 1919.

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Trump, who has multiple projects underway in Washington, including a \$400 million White House ballroom and the soon-to-begin construction of his triumphal arch, began talking about the city's public courses in late 2025.

Two months earlier, debris from the demolished East Wing of the White House was dumped at East Potomac, forming a three-story mound near one of its three golf courses, which remains there. The National Park Service has said that the debris tested positive for lead, chromium and other toxic metals.

"When completed, this Course will have the ability to host Major Golf Tournaments, including The U.S. Open, The Ryder Cup, The PGA Championship, and other top PGA Tour events," Trump posted on social media in June. He said then that work was meant to begin on Sept. 1, but there were no signs of activity on the grounds this week.

An image unveiled in May by Interior Secretary Doug Burgum showed an 18-hole course that he said would deliver "championship-quality golf at affordable, highly discounted rates."

A lawsuit challenging the golf course renovation argues that the Trump administration's redevelopment would violate the congressional act that created the park. The government is challenging the standing of the plaintiffs to sue.

At the park, people who spoke to The Associated Press noted that in some of Trump's other Washington projects, the administration has moved to make irrevocable changes and act faster than courts can respond.

"The government currently is either playing by a different set of rules or just not playing by any rules at all," said Jason Levitt, 54, ending an hour of high-speed laps on his bike.

At a court hearing Thursday about the park, U.S. District Judge Ana Reyes said as much, telling the government's attorney she understood the plaintiff's wariness about changes made before they received proper approval, though she said she had not seen evidence of that in the golf course case.

The administration has already removed dozens of trees from the park, although it says that is routine maintenance work.

The park draws a broad array of visitors

On a visit this week, the park drew cyclists, as well as retirees, workers on lunch break, and a couple of people who declined to speak to The Associated Press because they were meant to be at work as they hit the links for an afternoon of recreation.

With dark clouds rolling in and patrons rushing to the clubhouse, the demographics were on full display: Men, women, black, Hispanic, and white golfers. They said they visited because of the park's location, cost and history. They were aware that the park and golf courses, as they know it, might be on borrowed time.

Foley, a retired lobbyist, said the region has many "championship caliber courses already" and said he was worried about the president's plans.

"No one knows what he's going to do. Are the incredibly popular bike paths in jeopardy, too? Just look at how many bike riders are coming through Potomac Park and the golf course area at noon on a Wednesday," he said.

Levitt, the cyclist, said he has been coming to the park for 20 years and rides about four times a week. A road that runs the perimeter of the park in one direction offers safe riding away from normal city traffic, but within the city.

"This is seen as a relatively safe place to come and kind of stay out of the way of traffic and everything else."

Changes are coming, he said. "Let's just hope that they make changes that are beneficial for everyone rather than just a certain type of golfer."

Congress controls many of Washington's local affairs

Washington has long been at the whim of the federal government. Congress maintains significant control over the city's affairs, including approving the budget and all laws passed by the D.C. Council. The Home Rule Act of 1973 lets residents elect a mayor, a council and neighborhood commissioners.

That autonomy has only been further squeezed under Trump, who last year launched a law enforcement surge in the city that briefly federalized the local police force and deployed the National Guard through to 2029. His imprint on the city has affected not just iconic landmarks and tourist sites but also areas that

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locals visit frequently, such as East Potomac Park.

Outgoing Mayor Muriel Bowser said this week the city could "stand to attract world-class golf."

But she told reporters after an event focused on using sports to draw visitors to the nation's capital, "we still need public access."

Ryan Bates, 44, said he took up golf as an adult and has been coming to the park weekly for three and a half years. He noted that he has a membership at a private club but prefers to golf at East Potomac, citing its convenient location.

"The most important tenet of it," he said, packing up his clubs after a round, "is that golf should be an approachable game for people that come from all walks of life."

Iran accuses the US of targeting a tanker near Kharg Island, and other Mideast news

By The Associated Press undefined

Iran on Saturday accused the U.S. of attacking an Iranian tanker near Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf. The U.S. did not immediately comment, but a new strike would raise the risk of sparking a new round of Iranian attacks on U.S. allies and interests in the region.

Meanwhile in Yemen, Iranian-backed Houthi rebels accused the government of killing three people in an attack and Israeli strikes killed three people in southern Lebanon.

Here's a look at the news in the Middle East. Full coverage can be found [here](#).

Iran accuses the U.S. of striking its oil tanker

Iranian state TV said Saturday that four U.S. missiles struck a tanker about six miles (10 kilometers) from Kharg Island. It said the crew was being evacuated and there were no casualties.

The report did not provide evidence and did not include comment from Iranian officials. U.S. Central Command did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Kharg Island is Iran's main oil export terminal and a strategically important hub for the country's crude shipments. It has been repeatedly targeted during the U.S.-Iran conflict, including U.S. strikes on military sites there in March. The latest report comes days after the U.S. resumed strikes on Iranian targets following a monthlong pause, as fighting around the Strait of Hormuz has intensified.

Houthis accuse Yemen's government of killing three people

The Iranian-backed Houthi rebels said that airstrikes by government forces in western and southwestern Yemen killed at least three people.

The attacks Friday occurred in the provinces of Hodeida and Taiz and came as Yemen's military said it launched more than 15 airstrikes on the Houthis along the front lines in those provinces.

The Houthi authorities in Hodeida said a father and daughter were killed in an attack on their house in the southern Jarahi district. In Taiz, a shelling attack killed a man and wounded another, according to the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel.

The attacks come as fighting's intensified between the Houthis and government forces along Yemen's west coast near an important supply route.

Israeli strikes kill three people in Lebanon

Lebanon's health ministry said Saturday that Israeli strikes killed three people and wounded nearly two dozen in southern Lebanon and the eastern Bekaa Valley.

Israel's army said it struck Hezbollah positions late Friday in response to a drone launched by the group towards Israeli forces in southern Lebanon. The drone was intercepted and no Israeli soldiers were injured, it said.

In June, Lebanon and Israel signed a U.S.-mediated framework deal under which Israeli forces were to withdraw from areas they are occupying in southern Lebanon in exchange for disarmament of the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, but little progress has been made in implementation on the ground.

The latest Israel-Hezbollah war began when the Lebanese militant group fired rockets into Israel days

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after Israel and the U.S. launched their war on Iran on Feb. 28. Israel invaded Lebanon and has since occupied a large swath of the country's south.

Hezbollah has been vehemently opposed to the direct Lebanon-Israel talks.

Nearly 2,000 fall ill in suspected food poisoning linked to Indonesia's free school meals program

By NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Nearly 2,000 people, most of them students, fell ill in suspected food poisoning outbreaks linked to President Prabowo Subianto's flagship Free Nutritious Meals program this week, raising fresh concerns about food safety as the government rapidly expands the multibillion-dollar initiative nationwide, officials said Saturday.

The incidents, reported between Tuesday and Thursday in East Java, Central Java, West Sumatra, Aceh and South Sulawesi, affected about 1,950 students, teachers and Islamic boarding school pupils who became sick after consuming meals distributed under the government program, known by its Indonesian acronym MBG.

The outbreaks are the latest setback for Prabowo's signature free meals program, which has been rolled out across the archipelago despite repeated food poisoning incidents and corruption allegations.

The largest outbreak was reported in Central Java's Rembang regency, where 752 students and 25 teachers at State Senior High School 1 Lasem, suffered diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and stomach pain after eating meals provided through the program, according to Rembang Health Office head Ali Syofi'i.

In Sidoarjo, East Java, 730 people, most of them students at the Manbaul Hikam Islamic boarding school, were affected in another suspected food poisoning incident linked to the program. Sidoarjo health office chief Lakhsmie Herawati Yuwantina said 706 victims had been discharged and were recovering at home.

Authorities also reported 276 suspected cases involving students and teachers in Agam regency, West Sumatra, where food distribution from the local nutrition service center was suspended pending an investigation. In Aceh's Bener Meriah regency, 15 elementary school students and a school principal were treated after experiencing dizziness, nausea and other symptoms following a school meal.

Another 152 students from two junior high schools in Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, were treated at three hospitals after developing symptoms consistent with food poisoning. Regent Zadrak Tombeq ordered hospitals and health centers to prioritize treatment for the victims.

No deaths have been reported, and authorities are investigating the causes of the outbreaks.

The latest incidents add to a growing number of food poisoning cases linked to the program since its launch in January 2025. According to Health Ministry surveillance data as of Sept. 2, food poisoning incidents associated with MBG have affected 50,059 people in 560 cases across 245 districts and cities in 36 provinces.

In a hearing with the House's Commission IX overseeing health issues, National Nutrition Agency chief Sudaryono said internal reviews found that roughly 80% to 90% of previous food poisoning incidents were linked to failures to follow food safety procedures, including rules governing food storage, receipt of ingredients, temperature control and consumption deadlines.

"The recent incidents in Sidoarjo, Agam, Rembang and other areas have been a major blow for us," said Sudaryono, who like many Indonesians uses a single name.

He said the agency was tightening oversight of meal providers and reviewing about 27,000 meal distribution centers nationwide. Inspectors have found hundreds of allegedly fictitious facilities, while at least 833 kitchens have been shut down for failing to meet hygiene and sanitation standards.

The free meals program aims to combat malnutrition and reduce childhood stunting by providing meals to nearly 90 million students, toddlers and pregnant women. The initiative, expected to cost about \$28 billion through 2029, is a cornerstone of Prabowo's administration and one of his key campaign promises.

Women gathered in a small Iranian town for a wedding. Then deadly strikes hit

By AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

KUHESTAK, Iran (AP) — Women with their children were gathered in the house and yard, waiting for the bride and groom to arrive to kick off a wedding celebration in this small town in southern Iran. Then an explosion turned the scene to carnage.

The town of Kuhestak is still reeling from a barrage of strikes that killed five people during an American bombardment of southern Iran on Tuesday evening. Lampposts at the entrance to the town displayed large posters of four of the dead — a 4-year-old boy, a 16-year-old and two women. Another woman, one of more than 60 people wounded in the blasts, died Thursday at a hospital.

On Friday, an Associated Press team made a rare visit to the town on the coast overlooking the Strait of Hormuz. Within a densely built neighborhood of houses and unpaved alleys stood the compound of the Mallahi family, which was struck as relatives celebrated their daughter's wedding.

A U.S. weapons expert who reviewed images from the scene said the evidence suggests the strikes were carried out with American guided bombs.

Blast left a gaping hole in the roof

Ali Mallahi, a cousin of the bride, pointed to a gaping hole in the roof of a room that took a direct hit in one of the compound's four houses. Big cracks ran through walls decorated with floral designs. Windows were shattered, and twisted sections of roofing and metal framework lay across the courtyard, among carpets and household appliances that the family had pulled out of other damaged rooms.

Video of the immediate aftermath aired in Iranian media showed colorful decorations and palm fronds strewn across the ground.

Weddings in the area are traditionally segregated by gender, and on Tuesday evening, roughly 150 women were gathered in the house, while the men held a separate celebration in another building about 50 meters (yards) away, Mallahi said.

A strike hit the room where the women were due to be served dinner, but at the time, celebrations were only just getting started, Mallahi said. The bride and groom had not yet arrived.

"Thank God, the casualties were not higher," he said. The father of the bride, his uncle, is also named Ali Mallahi.

Sasan Zarei, a neighbor, said she rushed to the Mallahis' home and helped people out of the rubble. "Most of the injured were kids. The scenes were very heartbreaking."

Vance says US is investigating

U.S. Vice President JD Vance said Thursday that he was briefed on the wedding attack. "We're investigating it very fully," he said. He said the U.S. never targets civilians in combat but added, "Sometimes things happen."

Residents described to the AP how a series of heavy explosions shook Kuhestak, lighting up the night sky. The blasts came amid the latest round of American bombardment in southern Iran that the U.S. military said targeted air defenses, radar systems and maritime assets.

Also hit was a communications tower by Kuhestak's port, just over 100 meters (yards) from the Mallahi's home. AP footage showed the tower toppled and heavy damage to the neighboring building that houses the town's telecommunications department.

Hassan Sayadi, a technician with the department, said the tower had provided telephone and internet connections across the area. The Hormozgan provincial telecommunications department said Wednesday that U.S. attacks had disrupted landlines and mobile phone service in multiple locations, including Kuhestak, and that it was working to restore services. On Friday, mobile phones and data services were operating.

Town is not far from site where US hit a primary school

Kuhestak is about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the town of Minab, where more than 100 children were killed in an American missile strike that hit a primary school on Feb. 28, the opening day of the war

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launched by the U.S. and Israel.

Following Tuesday's strikes, residents and Iranian media showed fragments of munitions found at the scene, including a thermal battery unit, a segment of a control fin and part of the exterior body of the munition.

Weapons experts told the AP that they believe imagery of fragments found at the site points to an American guided munition. Trevor Ball, a former U.S. Army explosive ordnance disposal technician and an analyst at Armament Research Services, said the imagery shows remnants of both a JSOW and GBU-39, which are types of guided, air-delivered glide bombs.

The images were "being evaluated to determine if one of these munitions, or another model, was responsible," he said.

Videos released by U.S. Central Command of its operations that night in Iran show aircraft heading on missions, including an F/A-18E loaded with a JSOW.

The AP could not immediately determine where the remnants were collected or whether they all came from the wedding venue or also from the communication tower.

Months after ceasefire, Israel and Hezbollah battle over a strategic hill in Lebanon

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Since a ceasefire went into effect between Israel and Hezbollah more than two months ago, fighting has stopped in much of Lebanon, but not on a strategic hill overlooking parts of a main southern city.

In recent weeks, Ali Taher hill has been the scene of daily shelling and airstrikes by Israel's military. Hezbollah, a militant group backed by Iran, has repeatedly attacked Israeli forces in the area with drones.

The United States, which is mediating talks between Lebanon and Israel, had wanted Hezbollah to hand over the hill to the Lebanese army as part of larger plan to disarm the militant group and dismantle its infrastructure. But Hezbollah has refused.

Lebanon and Israel reached a framework agreement in June stating Israel will withdraw from Lebanon as Hezbollah is disarmed. The militant group was not a party to the negotiations and has rejected calls to disarm in areas north of the Litani river, which is where Ali Taher is located.

A full-on battle over this hill near the city of Nabatiyeh could escalate fighting across the country, and unrest in Lebanon complicates efforts to resolve the war in Iran.

On Thursday night, Israel's military announced it had taken "operational control" of Ali Taher and a network of tunnels beneath it that Hezbollah uses to shelter its fighters and weapons. It is unclear how far Israel's control extends. Just before Israel's announcement, its air force was still targeting the hill, according to Lebanese state media.

There has been no official statement from Hezbollah since Israel's announcement.

US pushes Lebanon to pressure Hezbollah

Hezbollah firmly rejected a proposal from the Lebanese government to hand over Ali Taher to the country's army. It fears Israel would then seize control of the hill from the Lebanese army and then demand the handover of more territory.

Israel had occupied Ali Taher for 18 years before it withdrew from Lebanon in 2000.

The hill has a strategic location overlooking several villages as well as main roads leading to Nabatiyeh. Losing full control of it would disrupt Hezbollah's presence and supply lines in the area.

The Israeli military says the site is also important to Hezbollah because of tunnels it built there, with funding from Iran.

Israel said in its statement Thursday that the hill housed underground command centers, weapons storage rooms, generators, living quarters, showers and a kitchen. Israel said it cleared Ali Taher of Hezbollah fighters and was working to "neutralize underground infrastructure sites."

Hezbollah legislator Ihab Hamadeh questioned why the Israeli military was still attacking the hill if it was

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really in control of the area, according to the Arabic-language version of Russia's state-funded news outlet Sputnik. An Associated Press photographer who visited the nearby village of Kfar Rumman on Friday saw no sign of Israeli military presence on the hill.

The hill, topped with a shrine to a Muslim scholar, sits north of the Litani river, which has become the de facto boundary of the area captured by Israel since its latest war with Hezbollah began in early March.

Fighting in the area has heated up in recent weeks

Israel has been conducting military operations around Ali Taher since July, said Nasser Khmour, a Middle East researcher at the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, or ACLED, a U.S.-based group that tracks conflicts around the world.

Hezbollah official Mahmoud Qamati told a Lebanese podcaster in late August that the group's fighters were repelling attempts by Israeli troops to take Ali Taher. But he, and others, downplayed the significance of the site should Israel take it.

"Ali Taher is important, but if it is lost it does not mean the end of Hezbollah," Qamati said.

In mid-August, Israel carried out a series of airstrikes on southern Lebanon that it described as retaliation for a Hezbollah drone attack on Ali Taher that seriously wounded three soldiers. The Israeli strikes, which killed 11 people, including women and children, were the deadliest since the U.S.-brokered ceasefire went into effect in late June.

On Aug. 27, Israel carried out a series of airstrikes, killing one person and wounding six, after the military said Hezbollah fired two explosive drones at Israeli troops in the area. Hezbollah did not claim responsibility for any of the attacks.

Lebanon says Israel is hindering its army

Lebanon's Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri told an Arab TV station in late August that the Lebanese army was ready to take over Ali Taher.

He accused Israel of blocking the army due to its own political considerations ahead of Israeli national elections on Oct. 27.

"The problem is not in the Lebanese army's readiness but in Israel's stance," he said.

Lebanese and Israeli officials are set to meet for negotiations in Rome later this month. Meanwhile, Hezbollah, which has always refused to speak directly to the U.S., appears to be changing its policy after the major setbacks it has suffered during its wars with Israel since 2024.

A Lebanese official told The Associated Press that indirect contacts are going on between the U.S. and Hezbollah, but refused to give any details. He spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, Michel Issa, said recently that Washington is ready to speak with Hezbollah if the group agrees to disarm.

Still, Hezbollah is not likely to take any move forward regarding talks with the U.S. without a green light from its main backer, Iran. While talks with the U.S. over their war have stalled, Iran has sought guarantees that Israel will halt its attacks on Hezbollah as part of any permanent deal.

Capture of Ali Taher could lead Israel to other Hezbollah strongholds

The capture of Ali Taher would open the way to Nabatiyeh and also lead to the nearby Apple Province and Rihan Mountain, where Hezbollah has been building up its presence since the late 1990s.

Israeli leaders have repeatedly pledged to leave troops in Lebanon and threatened to escalate military pressure until Hezbollah disarms.

"Israeli control of the area is an operational and military setback for Hezbollah," said Khmour of ACLED. He said clearing these sites helps Israel protect towns in the northern part of its country, and increases pressure on Hezbollah.

"This will strengthen Israel's position in any future negotiations over its withdrawal," said Khmour.

Mudslide kills 1 and leaves 11 missing in China after heavy rain brought by tropical storm Saudel

BEIJING (AP) — A mudslide on Saturday killed one person and left 11 others missing in eastern China, damaging a dozen houses following days of torrential rain brought by tropical cyclone Saudel, authorities said.

The mudslide hit part of a village in Suichuan County in Jiangxi province in the early hours, prompting rescuers to rush to the scene and relocate residents to safer ground to prevent further danger, authorities said in a statement. One person pulled out was found dead, while two others were rescued alive and in good condition, it said.

Typhoon Saudel made two landfalls in Zhejiang Province on Aug. 28 and made a third landfall as a tropical storm in Fujian Province Thursday, Chinese official news agency Xinhua reported. Both provinces neighbor Jiangxi.

In Fujian, local authorities said Friday that multiple residents were left unaccounted for after days of heavy rain, Xinhua reported. The exact number is unclear, but more than 100 houses collapsed in Huating Town in Putian city, it said. A dike overtopped and breached Thursday afternoon, flooding villages and trapping residents, it added.

About 600,000 residents have been evacuated from risky offshore and onshore areas in Fujian as of Friday night, Xinhua reported.

Images from state broadcaster CCTV showed that some streets were turned into rivers, while rescuers deployed inflatable boats in their efforts.

For feminists, the deaths of Parton and Steinem days apart deliver a double dose of grief

By LAURIE KELLMAN and BILL BARROW Associated Press

One shaped and delivered the language of feminism. The other rejected the label but showed how feminism can be done: with a microphone dusted in rhinestones, and without apology.

Gloria Steinem and Dolly Parton embodied two towering versions of the same idea: that women should know themselves well enough to make their own choices about matters intimate and societal. Their deaths eight days apart sent a double dose of grief around the world and across generations as many women (and some men!) asked who would take their places at the forefront of women's rights.

Steinem, overtly political, went undercover as a Playboy bunny to deliver an exposé, founded Ms. Magazine and spent the rest of her life urging women to support each other. Parton, on the other hand, defined herself as a larger-than-life daughter of the American South who told stories with music and included everybody — but refused to play politics or call herself a feminist.

"Dolly taught us to dream big. Gloria taught us to speak up," wrote DeMond B Nason, a New York City singer. "Both reminded us that a woman could walk into a world that told her who she was supposed to be — and simply decide to become something else."

Animated by the same idea, even if they didn't call it the same thing

Parton didn't say so, but Steinem insisted more than three decades ago that the pair fit together under the same feminist flag.

"If feminism means each of us finding your unique power, and helping other women do the same, Dolly Parton certainly has done both," Steinem wrote in 1987, when Ms. Magazine named the singer one of its "Women of the Year."

Many shared the sense that Steinem and Parton belonged together.

"Both believed in women: in our ability to decide who we are, make our own choices, take care of one another and shape the world around us," wrote Swati Narayan in a column for American Kahani, an online news outlet for Indian and South Asian Americans.

Between Parton's death on Aug. 25 and Steinem's on Sept. 2, Ms. Magazine re-ran Steinem's essay with

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an editor's note: "Steinem celebrated Parton not only as a gifted songwriter and magnetic performer, but as a shrewd businessperson who transformed femininity into a source of humor and power — and used her success to lift up working women, poor communities and the mountain people of her native Tennessee."

The embrace wasn't mutual, at least not publicly. And that, Parton acknowledged, was by design.

"I don't do politics. I have too many fans on both sides of the fence," she said in 2019 on "Dolly Parton's America," Radiolab's podcast. "Of course," she added, "I have my opinion about everything, but I learned years ago to keep your mouth shut about things."

The star was asked directly whether she thought of herself as a feminist.

"No, I do not," she said flatly, later explaining that she did not want to be associated with what she viewed as political extremes even as she advocated for women and their opportunities.

"I do not like extreme things," she said. "I don't believe in crucifying a whole group just because a few people have made mistakes. To me when you say just the word 'feminist' is like, 'I hate all men.'"

Parton was clear, though, that her lyrics were intended to shine light on women's hardships and the realities of a world that the superstar agreed was dominated by men. She wrote about teenage pregnancy, abortion and adoption in "Down from Dover." She supported equal pay (See: "9 to 5," the movie and the song). One of her most famous songs is called, "Just Because I'm a Woman."

"People say to me, 'Well, wasn't it a man's world back when you got in the business.' I said, 'It sure was, and honey, I had a ball,'" she said at a 2019 awards show. "I have never met a man that I didn't like, and I've never met a man whose ass I couldn't kick if he didn't treat me with the right respect."

She just didn't use words like "oppression" or "patriarchy." And unlike Steinem, Parton didn't endorse political candidates. Asked on CNN during the 2016 presidential campaign whether she preferred Republican Donald Trump or Democrat Hillary Clinton, she replied: "I think they're both nuts."

Onstage at the 2017 Emmys, Parton demurred when fellow "9 to 5" costars Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda took a thinly veiled shot at Trump. Parton pivoted to humor.

"They're Lily and they're Jane and I'm Dolly," she said later. "So they did their thing, I did mine."

There's more than one torch-passer

Feminism splintered under the pressure of public policy debates over such issues as abortion and the rejection of Clinton in the 2016 elections, the rise of Trump and the modern-day emergence of identity politics.

Steinem's version of feminism today is more aligned with Democrats at a time when, at least for now, the country has swung Republican. Steinem lived to see the Supreme Court overturn the 1973 ruling *Roe v. Wade*, eliminating the constitutional right to abortion, a pillar of the 1960s feminist movement she embodied. The Equal Rights Amendment remains unratified. And Americans have yet to elect a woman president.

So if you're an opponent of abortion rights or if you voted for Trump, can you still be a feminist in 2026? And would you want to be called that in public or on social media? To the end, Steinem insisted it wasn't the label that mattered. What counted as feminist was whether a woman knew herself well enough to make her own choices rather than be defined as the daughter or wife of a man.

But partisanship surfaced even in the ritual public mourning for the two women.

Parton's passing touched off an immediate expression of grief from sources ranging from Trump to her fans in the LGBTQ+ community. Trump ordered flags to be flown at half-staff as a show of "respect" for her.

In contrast, there was no such rush to recognize Steinem beyond her liberal and centrist constituency, even from conservatives who had expressed respect for her accomplishments as an influential historical figure.

Their silence two days after Steinem's death contrasted with the outpouring of grief, thanks and respect for Steinem from leading figures on the left, particularly of her generation. Hillary Clinton, who also saluted Parton, said Steinem's activism was built on optimism despite abundant roadblocks for women.

"The lived experience became much more real and applicable to our entire society when Gloria began to point it out," Clinton posted.

For her part, Steinem said for years that she's using her torch to light others. "If we each have a torch,

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there's a lot more light," she told the National Press Club in 2013.

Social media offered evidence that supporters of both women would pass it on. Liz Webster, an American hair and makeup artist living in Germany, called Steinem and Parton "two very different women who shaped the way I saw what a woman could be."

"Feminism will never be just a word to me. The freedoms we have are incredibly new," she wrote on Facebook. "So be the example. Use your freedom. Protect it. And make damn sure the women coming after us have even more."

Missouri asks US Supreme Court to allow use of new Trump-backed congressional districts in midterms

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Missouri appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday to allow the use of new congressional districts backed by President Donald Trump in the fast-approaching midterm election.

The appeal comes after Missouri's highest court blocked the new map and ordered a statewide vote in November on whether to keep or reject it.

It's part of a national redistricting battle that Trump launched last year. Missouri's new congressional boundaries were drawn to help Republicans win an additional seat and hold onto their slim House majority in November's midterm elections.

The Missouri Supreme Court weighed in after redistricting opponents submitted over 300,000 petition signatures seeking to put the map to a vote of the people. Republican Secretary of State Denny Hoskins rejected the petition on primary Election Day, asserting that Missouri's constitution doesn't allow referendum petitions on congressional redistricting. He successfully defended his decision in a lower court, but on Thursday lost in front of the state's highest court.

The court said the referendum petition effectively suspended the new districts, retroactive to last December, pending voter approval. Although the new districts were used in the August primary, Missouri's top court said the previous districts enacted after the 2020 census must be used in the general election.

Missouri Attorney General Catherine Hanaway said no other court has ordered congressional maps after a primary but before a general election.

"No court in American history has ever given such an extraordinary remedy, which inflicts unprecedented chaos on Missouri," her office wrote in the appeal. "Looking forwards, the State is genuinely unsure whether it can switch its governing congressional map in time to run a timely federal election."

She asked the Supreme Court to halt the state court's decision immediately.

State law sets a Tuesday deadline to make changes to the November ballot. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who hears appeals of case from the region, asked critics of the new map to respond to the appeal by Monday.

Backers of the referendum have said a statewide vote would give the state's residents a voice in the process.

Missouri currently has six Republicans and two Democrats in the U.S. House. The new maps reconfigured a Kansas City-based district held by longtime Democratic Rep. Emanuel Cleaver.

Congressional districts typically are redrawn at the start of each decade, based on new census data. But Trump's quest for a midterm election advantage triggered an unusual mid-decade redistricting battle that spread to more than a dozen states led by Democrats and Republicans.

Mistrial is declared in Lindsay Clancy child killings case after jury deadlocks

By MICHAEL CASEY and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — A judge in the Lindsay Clancy murder trial declared a mistrial Friday after jurors failed to reach a verdict in a case that sharply divided many Americans over whether the Massachusetts

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woman should be criminally responsible for killing her three young children.

The trial generated intense interest for weeks, drawing attention to maternal mental health after childbirth.

Clancy, a 36-year-old former labor and delivery nurse, never disputed that she killed the children. But her attorney said she had a rare condition called postpartum psychosis when she strangled her kids — the youngest just 8 months old — then tried to take her own life in 2023. Prosecutors said Clancy knew what she was doing.

Friday's mistrial, on the seventh day of deliberations, leaves the case unresolved. In the end, the decision seemed to surprise no one in the courtroom. Neither Clancy nor her family showed emotion as the judge announced the trial was ending without a resolution.

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

Clancy's attorney believes she was close to acquittal

Clancy remains charged with murder and is expected to stay at a psychiatric hospital until her case is resolved.

Her lawyer, Kevin Reddington, said he believes she would have been acquitted if not for a juror who was the subject of a dispute over whether the judge's instructions were being followed.

Reddington said Clancy was "not good" when a reporter asked how she was doing after the mistrial.

Her parents and her sister were escorted from the courthouse by state police, saying nothing to reporters. Ex-husband Patrick Clancy, the trial's first witness, has said in past interviews that he forgives her and believes her actions were the result of mental illness.

A statement released by his attorney Friday said "the prospect of reliving this tragedy through another trial is extraordinarily painful."

Lindsay Clancy could face another trial

The prosecutor who decided to charge Clancy said there would not be an immediate decision about a second trial. He said public opinion would not be a factor.

"This was and has always been about getting justice for those three little babies," said Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy Cruz. "This case is not about the healthcare system, or about how women are treated in it, or what diagnoses there are."

He pointed out that the two trial prosecutors were "both mothers themselves."

The deliberations took a dramatic turn Friday when the judge said he was going to declare a mistrial before suddenly changing course and letting Clancy's attorney appeal that decision to the top court in Massachusetts. But the court declined to stop the judge from declaring a mistrial.

Clancy's attorneys argued that one of the jurors revealed a possible bias against people with mental illness, without elaborating. They argued the juror should, at minimum, be questioned more thoroughly by the judge, or even dismissed outright before a mistrial was declared.

The jury said it couldn't reach a verdict 3 times

Prosecutors said Clancy acted deliberately when she strangled 5-year-old Cora, 3-year-old Dawson and 8-month-old Callan Clancy with exercise bands. They said she contrived to get her husband out of the house on Jan. 24, 2023, by sending him to pick up medicine for one of their children and dinner for the family.

Clancy's lawyer said she should not be held criminally responsible because of her postpartum psychosis, a rare mental illness linked to the stress, sleep deprivation and hormonal changes that follow childbirth.

On three occasions, jurors said they were unable to reach a unanimous decision. The jury's foreperson told the judge Thursday that a single juror wouldn't follow the court's instructions about reasonable doubt.

Outside the courthouse Friday, Reddington blasted the juror he believes stood in the way of a verdict.

"They (the jury) know they were robbed by one man, for whatever his agenda was, who stole seven weeks of the life of these other jurors that were so attentive, so beautiful, so wonderful," he said.

It was not clear how the jury was split or whether it favored conviction or acquittal. Clancy could have been sentenced to life in prison if convicted of murder. But if acquitted, the judge could have ordered her

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confined to a mental health facility.

The judge ordered that the names of the jurors be shielded for at least 14 days, saying the case garnered significant and divisive attention.

What Trump said about the Lindsay Clancy case

Millions across the U.S. watched the livestreamed trial. Even President Donald Trump said he was following the coverage.

"It's a terrible situation. Look, she did a horrible, horrible thing," Trump said Friday. "Can't be worse. But you'll find out what the price to pay is. There'll be a price — a mental institution or jail or something."

Most days women supporting Clancy and dressed in pink would attend the trial. Many referenced their own postpartum stories or troubling experiences with the healthcare system. On Friday one of those women, Marta Quijano, a 55-year-old surgeon, said the mistrial left her "very sad for the family, for Lindsay."

"I don't think she deserves to have to go through this all over again. I think this should have been resolved," Quijano said, starting to cry. "It's very unfair. I feel as women we are treated very unfairly. We get dismissed. Things are minimized. Even what's happened to today, I think one person failed her."

The judge acknowledged early during deliberations that the trial had been emotionally and physically exhausting for everyone. Much of the testimony was excruciating to hear, from the heartbreaking 911 call made by the children's father who found their bodies, to the descriptions of how they died.

Clancy was brought to tears several times. At one point, the judge called a short break as Clancy's loud sobs filled the courtroom while the children's autopsy photos were shown.

Lindsay Clancy's mental health was the focus of the trial

Over 21 days of testimony, jurors heard how Clancy's mental health collapsed after Callan's birth.

Deeply anxious, unable to sleep and experiencing what she called a disturbing brain fog, Clancy sought care from experts in postpregnancy mood disorders, who prescribed multiple psychiatric medications.

Clancy's family members testified that she expressed concern about her decline. Her former mother-in-law, Susan Clancy, called her a nurturing and loving mother who was "begging for help."

Clancy checked herself into a psychiatric hospital early in 2023, but her stay was short. She killed the children 19 days after she was discharged, leaving their bodies in the basement of the family's home south of Boston. Clancy then jumped from a second-story window and remains paralyzed from the waist down.

Prosecutors conceded that Clancy had severe mental illness, but insisted she was able to understand and control her actions. They emphasized that although she claimed to have heard a male voice commanding her to kill the children, she never disclosed that to her mental health providers before the killings.

Midterm mail ballots start to go to voters as litigation over Trump's order creates uncertainty

By SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

Statewide mail voting for this year's midterm elections kicked off Friday amid a churning legal battle over President Donald Trump's attempts to limit the practice and mounting concern over Postal Service changes that some state officials blame for a rise in rejected ballots.

The developments have created a sense of uncertainty about a popular voting method used by one-third of the nation's voters.

North Carolina on Friday became the first state to widely distribute mail ballots for this year's elections, which will determine the balance of power in Congress for the remainder of Trump's term.

Election officials said that while they are closely monitoring the litigation, ballots will be mailed out as expected and the state is prepared to administer a secure election even if the new limits go forward.

"We believe that we are well positioned," Sam Hayes, executive director of the State Board of Elections, told reporters during a news conference in Raleigh on Thursday.

Trump frequently castigates mail voting and has falsely blamed it for his 2020 loss to Democrat Joe Biden, which he sought to overturn. Though he has repeatedly voted by mail himself, the president is pushing to curtail access for others.

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In March, Trump signed an executive order seeking to limit mail balloting. States would have to submit lists of eligible voters to the Postal Service through an online portal that apparently is still inactive. Ballot envelopes also would have to comply with new Postal Service rules and include barcodes.

Trump's directive has been held up by multiple lawsuits, one of which led to a preliminary injunction Friday against its implementation, a decision the administration quickly appealed.

Election offices move forward, try to combat voter confusion

Election officials warn that headlines about the executive order and court fights have already confused some voters.

"The biggest part of this is that it has sparked questions about what it is. 'What does this mean? What are you guys doing? Can I not vote by mail anymore?'" said Michael Dickerson, director of the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections.

"I just want people to be assured that, yes, you can still vote by mail," he said, adding "it's a safe and secure process."

While the issue has ping-ponged around the courts, election workers in North Carolina had been working hard to get ready for the Friday deadline, officials there said in interviews.

Wake County elections employees have been processing absentee request forms, which come in daily online and in paper form, said Olivia McCall, the county's director of elections. They've also been coding ballots, running pre-election accuracy testing and packaging absentee packets that include a ballot, instructions and photo ID fliers, she said.

About 5,000 ballots will go out during Wake County's first wave, she said.

The turnaround time for ballots being returned could be quick, too, noted Dickerson, especially for military and overseas voters who can vote through an online portal.

"I guarantee you" votes will begin rolling in that way by Saturday, he said.

'Business as usual,' North Carolina election official says

North Carolina Attorney General Jeff Jackson is among Democratic state officials who have aligned in one of the lawsuits challenging Trump's executive order and the changes proposed by the Postal Service.

In a recent court filing, a representative of the office argued it was "far too late in the election cycle to introduce such dramatic changes" and warned that implementing them would "imminently cause significant harm, confusion and disruption in North Carolina election administration."

The League of Women Voters of North Carolina is issuing its standard advice to voters, while urging them not to wait until the last minute to return their mail ballot.

Officials with the State Board of Elections, which is led by a Republican majority, have projected confidence for a midterm cycle that is expected to see robust turnout, especially with a competitive U.S. Senate race on the ballot.

"It is business as usual, as far as I'm concerned," Hayes, the board's executive director, said during the news conference.

The board has confirmed it has taken some initial steps to comply with the executive order, including submitting its envelopes to USPS for review. Hayes said they were approved. The state opted against submitting its voter information while the legal proceedings are pending.

A whistleblower told Congress this week that with the voter portal, the Postal Service is rushing an untested product that is likely to be riddled with errors that could lead to millions of mail ballots being rejected. On Friday, Postmaster General David Steiner issued a statement saying the agency's standards are not being compromised and he stands behind "the rigor of our process."

He also sought to address the growing concerns about the agency's ability to deliver ballots and return them on time.

"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 should their election officials choose to use the mail for ballot delivery," he said.

USPS operational changes blamed for spike in rejected mail ballots

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Election officials elsewhere are warning voters to avoid delays in returning mail ballots, but not for reasons related to Trump's attempts to alter the rules.

They are pointing to a change in how the Postal Service processes mail — with postmarks stamped at distant processing centers rather than local post offices — as a reason for what they say has been a spike in mail ballot rejections. In many states, mail ballots arriving several days after an election can still be counted as long as they are postmarked by the final day of voting.

In California, nearly 150,000 voters had their mail-in ballots rejected in the state's June primary, mostly because they were postmarked too late. Wisconsin officials wrote to the Postal Service after hundreds of ballots arrived too late to be counted during elections in April, which has prompted at least some of the state's 1,850 municipal clerks to start sending mail ballots to voters earlier than usual.

In Washington, where voting is done almost entirely by mail, state officials issued a report this week saying the number of mail ballots rejected in the August primary because of a late postmark was 32% higher than the primary two years earlier.

"Why are we disenfranchising Americans when we've had one of the best systems in the United States?" Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell said during a news conference in her home state to promote the report.

The Postal Service has addressed the issue on its website, saying it is not changing its postmarking practices but acknowledging that "adjustments to our transportation operations" mean that postmark dates might not match the day mail was picked up by a letter carrier or dropped off at a post office. The agency said voters can request a manual postmark at a local post office.

More states are preparing to deliver mail ballots to their voters

Other states will soon follow North Carolina in kicking off their mail ballot process throughout September, including Alabama on Sept. 9. By the middle of the month, all states are required to send ballots to military and overseas voters.

David Becker, executive director of the Center for Election Innovation and Research and a former Department of Justice lawyer, said the time to implement any major election changes for this year's midterms "has long since passed."

The group has filed legal papers supporting states in the fight against the new postal rules.

"That's true even if they were good changes, which the mail EO definitely is not," Becker said. "The first ballots being mailed only confirms this fact."

Don Millis, a Republican who also chairs the Wisconsin Election Commission, said it was not surprising that some local clerks had already started sending out mail ballots earlier than they normally would. The fear is that if the Supreme Court gives a green light to Trump's executive order, it would tilt the election into chaos.

"There's a fundamental concern this thing is not going to work," he said.

Federal judge extends block on Trump executive order seeking to limit mail voting in the midterms

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

A federal judge on Friday extended her prohibition against the U.S. Postal Service implementing President Donald Trump's executive order seeking to limit mail voting during the midterms, putting another major obstacle in the way of the administration as the first states begin sending out mail ballots.

The preliminary injunction from U.S. District Court Judge Indira Talwani replaces a temporary order she granted blocking the Postal Service's plan.

The Trump administration had already asked the Supreme Court to lift Talwani's temporary order, and on Friday it informed her that it would appeal her latest decision to the U.S. 1st Circuit Court of Appeals.

The administration is running out of time to make big changes in voting procedures, though. North Carolina began sending out its first mail ballots Friday and more states will swiftly follow.

The legal battle could have major ramifications for this year's elections, when control of Congress is at stake. Nearly one-third of voters in the U.S. cast mail ballots and election officials contend there isn't

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enough time to revise their systems to comply with the new Postal Service directives.

Talwani, who was appointed by President Barack Obama, pointed to the tight timeline in her ruling.

"Plaintiff States are required under state law to mail millions of ballots to voters on a prescribed timeframe. As detailed below, they are unable to pivot this late in the election cycle, nearly guaranteeing significant disenfranchisement for eligible voters," she wrote.

The White House did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

The order allows states to voluntarily use the new Postal Service system. To date, not a single state has announced that it will do so.

Trump has long sought to limit mail voting, even though he himself often uses that method to cast his own ballot. He has falsely blamed mail balloting for his 2020 election loss, spreading baseless claims of fraud, but has so far been unable to change the longstanding voting procedure.

An initial executive order Trump issued last year to change election rules, including a requirement for people to show documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote, was halted by federal judges. They ruled that the Constitution gives states and, in some cases, Congress the power to set voting procedures, not the president.

After Trump issued his mail voting executive order in March, Democrats and voting rights groups filed several lawsuits. Two ended up before Talwani, who placed an initial hold on the order in June, prohibiting its implementation until after November.

But the Supreme Court late last month overturned that order. Its conservative majority pointedly did not say Trump's move was legal but found the lawsuits were filed prematurely before the Postal Service issued its rule on how it would implement the order. The rule came out just before the Supreme Court released its ruling, and the plaintiffs re-filed their suits.

Key moments in the Lindsay Clancy case: the 911 call, mental health care, mistrial

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — A mistrial was declared in the Lindsay Clancy murder trial on Friday after jurors failed to reach a verdict on whether she was criminally responsible for killing her three young children at her Massachusetts home.

Judge William Sullivan declared the mistrial on the seventh day of deliberations after jurors sent a note saying: "It is with a heavy heart that we report we are unable to come to a unanimous decision and will not be able to."

The emotionally charged case has sharply divided many Americans and generated intense interest for over a month as it's drawn attention to issues around maternal mental health after childbirth.

Clancy, 36, never disputed that she killed her children. But her attorney said she had a rare condition called postpartum psychosis when she strangled her kids, the youngest just 8 months old, then tried to take her own life in 2023. Prosecutors said Clancy knew what she was doing.

Here are some key moments from the trial:

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

Her former husband made an anguished 911 call

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

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

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

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

Jurors listened to the 911 call he made after finding his wife outside in the snow. She had jumped from

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a second-story window. Clancy can be heard speaking with his wife, then telling the dispatcher he's going to check on the children.

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

"She killed the kids!" he yells.

Everyone knew Clancy was struggling

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

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

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

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

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

The defense questioned the quality of Clancy's medical care

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clancy said she heard a voice telling her to kill them

Paul Zeisel, a clinical and forensic psychologist who visited Lindsay Clancy in the hospital after she killed the children, testified that he overheard her saying that a disembodied male voice had told her she had no choice but to kill her children and then herself. Zeisel said he believed Clancy wasn't responsible for her actions because of her deep mental illness.

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

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

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

The lawyers got the last word

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

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

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

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

"She was depressed. She was exhausted. She was done. She didn't want to try anymore. She felt dam-

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aged," Sprague said. "But those kids, those kids were her protective factor. Those kids were keeping her from ending her misery."

Jurors share emotional note that they still can't reach a decision

Starting Tuesday, the fourth day of deliberations, jurors said they couldn't unanimously agree. The judge asked them to keep deliberating. On Wednesday, they told him they were still at an impasse. He told them again to keep trying.

Then, on Thursday, the jury's foreperson told the judge that a single juror wouldn't follow the court's instructions about reasonable doubt.

The judge brought in each juror individually and questioned them in private. He then reread his instructions on reasonable doubt before sending them back to continue deliberating.

Jurors returned Friday for their seventh day of deliberations, but not long after resuming they told the judge again they were unable to agree.

Whiplash courtroom drama ends with a mistrial

The judge said he didn't feel he had any choice but to declare a mistrial. That prompted an audible gasp in the courtroom.

But after several minutes, Reddington requested he be allowed to file an emergency appeal to the state's highest court. Sullivan told Reddington he'd give him an hour.

Less than three hours later, the judge confirmed Reddington's high court appeal had been denied and formally declared a mistrial.

Outside the courthouse, Reddington blasted the sole juror who he believed stood in the others' way of an acquittal.

"They know they were robbed by one man, for whatever his agenda was, who stole seven weeks of the life of these other jurors that were so attentive, so beautiful, so wonderful," he said.

The prosecutor who originally decided to charge Clancy said there would not be an immediate decision about a second trial.

Trump calls Iran conflict 'small potatoes' and defends Vance's position that it's not a 'war'

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday said the conflict in Iran is "small potatoes" as he defended Vice President JD Vance for asserting that months of on-and-off attacks in the Middle East are not a "war."

Asked during an Oval Office exchange about Vance's comments made a day earlier, Trump said U.S. strikes on Iran are now "intermittent" and "a lot of people don't call it a war." The conflict has cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$37.5 billion and left 18 U.S. service members dead.

"I can understand what he's saying," said Trump. He added: "I call it a military conflict because it's small potatoes for us. It's not a big thing."

Vance, during a White House press briefing Thursday, rejected the use of the word "war" to describe the U.S. fighting with Iran and steered clear of predicting that the 6-month-old conflict would be over by November's midterm elections, in which Republicans are trying to hang on to their narrow majorities in Congress.

"I wouldn't call it a war," Vance said after being asked about whether the fighting could end before voters cast their ballots in the Nov. 3 elections. "Right now, there is no active shooting."

Vance's assertion came even as Iran fired at U.S. Gulf ally Kuwait on Thursday in retaliation for rounds of U.S. strikes on Iran earlier in the week.

Trump in Friday's exchange with reporters added that the U.S. death toll in the Iran conflict is relatively lower than some other recent U.S. wars. The U.S. and Israel have only carried out air strikes in the Iran war, which began Feb. 28, and have not deployed troops into the country.

"We did Venezuela and we did this. In Venezuela, we lost nobody," said Trump, referring to the January

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U.S. military operation to seize former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and spirit him to New York City to face federal drug trafficking charges. "And this, we lost 18 people. And, in Vietnam we lost 100,000 people. And in other conflicts, we lost tens of thousands of people."

A total of 58,220 members of the U.S. armed forces died during the Vietnam War, according to records from the U.S. National Archives.

Pressed by a reporter on describing the conflict as "small potatoes" when 18 U.S. service members have been killed, Trump responded by reiterating his argument that the conflict — one that he said at the outset of the war would last a matter of weeks — has led to the defanging of Iran's nuclear program.

"Iran will not have a nuclear weapon because if they did you probably wouldn't be standing here," Trump said.

WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert to retire in December after transformative and tumultuous tenure

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert is retiring at the end the year, bringing to a close her seven-plus years at the helm of the league and a stewardship that has been transformative and at times tumultuous.

Engelbert is the second-longest tenured WNBA president or commissioner, and she helped negotiate a lucrative collective bargaining agreement this past spring that resulted in the league's first set of million-dollar player salaries.

That growth has been accompanied by a series of headline-grabbing distractions for the league under her leadership, especially in the last year. She had a strained relationship with the players during the contract negotiations, and the 2026 season has been dominated by controversies surrounding officiating and the transgender debate along with a large amounts of social media backlash against WNBA participants.

Engelbert told The Associated Press that the decision to leave was solely her own and that she did not feel any pressure to step down from NBA or WNBA stakeholders before Friday's announcement. She insists she has a good relationship with players.

While talks between the commissioner and players have been complicated, New York Liberty forward Breanna Stewart, vice president of the WNBA players' union executive committee, said Friday that she is happy for Engelbert.

"What she's done for the league is incredible," Stewart said. "Obviously, the CBA negotiation was a tough one, but the way that both sides continue to have a huge win is really important. So really happy for her and hope that she continues to remember that and reflect on that."

Stewart had said before July's All-Star Game that there was a respect for Engelbert among the players but not much of a relationship.

Engelbert, who turns 62 in November, told AP she has been thinking about retiring for months.

"When I first came to the league I intended to do this for 3 1/2 years," she said in a phone interview. "The 7 1/2 years exceeded that time. This is a really good time given the financial transformation journey we've been on. Getting the collective bargaining agreement done, getting a long-term media rights deal done, getting expansion done."

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver praised Engelbert in the announcement.

"Cathy has presided over the WNBA through the most significant period of growth in the league's 30-year history," he said. "We are grateful for Cathy's leadership and unwavering commitment to the advancement of women's basketball."

Engelbert: Several unidentified successors on league's radar

The WNBA commissioner said she has been working on a succession plan over the last few years. While she didn't give any specifics on who might be considered for the position, Engelbert did say there are both internal and external potential candidates on the league's radar.

"It's a good time to hand it off to the next leader to take the 'W' into a better phase," she said. "I'm proud of the team we built and everything we accomplished. A leader knows when it's time to drop the

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mic and move on after building a powerhouse team in the league office.”

Engelbert added that she has mixed emotions about leaving.

“I love women’s basketball and am not going anywhere yet. We’ll run a real succession process in the remaining four months. If we don’t find someone I’ll stay on,” she said. “I had no transition. I walked in the door and I was by myself as no one transitioned me into this role.

“Hopefully I can help this next leader transition in especially considering the elevation of this league.”

The WNBA has grown at an exponential rate during Engelbert’s tenure as commissioner, with record television ratings, strong attendance, a new long-term media rights deal and expansion to 18 teams by the end of the decade.

“I was brought in as a business leader to transform the business,” she said. “I look at revenue and merchandise, viewership and attendance,” she said, noting how they’ve all improved. “A great leader senses when it’s time for someone else to come in. When I came in, this league was facing questions about our long-term viability and sustainability.”

Turmoil and tension part of Engelbert’s tenure

Engelbert said the growth of the league has “blown away her expectations” since she stepped into her role after leaving her previous position as president of Deloitte in 2019.

Besides the new CBA, the list of things she is most proud of includes getting charter travel for players, keeping the league going during the coronavirus pandemic, the historic media rights deal and exponential increase in the value of WNBA franchises. In 2019, the average value of a WNBA franchise was \$10 million; in 2026, it is about \$460 million.

Along with the financial gains, however, turmoil and tension have accompanied the WNBA’s growth.

Players say they have seen more social media vitriol directed toward them over the last few years and some don’t feel the league has done enough to ensure their safety. The league also has been at the center of discussions about transgender athletes playing in the league.

Engelbert has repeatedly said the online attacks of players are unacceptable and she backs league initiatives to protect players. She also said there should be no confusion on the transgender question.

“We have no current eligibility issues in the WNBA,” Engelbert said, adding that “if we did, we would have a thoughtful policy discussion with the (players’ association) and the players.”

Engelbert sent a letter to all the players Friday morning in which she wrote that she had “enormous pride in what we’ve accomplished together, profound gratitude for the opportunity to lead alongside of you, and complete confidence that the future of the WNBA is brighter than ever.”

What’s next in Engelbert’s future?

Engelbert said she is ready to do what most retirees plan: spend more time with family.

She also admitted that the online hate she receives has affected her family, though she did not share details of the impact.

“There have been some hard parts of that on my family with the vitriol and hate I get online,” Engelbert said.

Her retirement will make her mother happy.

“My mom is turning 90 this year, and she said that ‘it would be good if you were retired to spend more time with me,’” Engelbert said, laughing. “I have two children, one I barely see.

“I’m one of eight kids (and I) have five brothers. They always say can you retire so you can spend more time with us.”

Come Jan. 1, her family will get its wish.

Stocks fall after a surprisingly strong jobs report raises prospects of an interest rate hike

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

U.S. stocks fell and Treasury yields rose Friday after the government reported that employers unexpectedly added 162,000 jobs last month, a development that could increase chances that the U.S. central bank

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will raise interest rates later this month.

The S&P 500 fell 0.4%, though it managed to eke out a modest gain for the week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.5%, and the Nasdaq composite gave back 0.3%.

Wall Street expects the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates before the year ends in an effort to cool inflation, which has been running hot due to rising oil prices amid the U.S. war with Iran and remains well above 3%. The Fed has a stated goal of cooling inflation to a target of 2%.

The surprise increase in hiring last month could give the central bank's policymakers leeway to raise the Fed's benchmark short-term interest rate to fight inflation at their next policy meeting in less than two weeks.

"Today's jobs report does lean toward the Fed increasing rates," said Terry Sandven, chief equity strategist at U.S. Bank Asset Management Group, noting, however, that a rate hike is "not a foregone conclusion."

The Labor Department reported that hiring in August far exceeded the 65,000 forecasters had expected, according to a poll by FactSet. Labor Department revisions also looked good, adding 55,000 to June and July payrolls. The unemployment rate held steady at 4.1%.

The stronger jobs market could make matters more complicated for the Fed, which has to balance supporting job growth with fighting inflation. Raising interest rates can help tame inflation, but it can also slow economic growth as borrowing costs rise for households and businesses.

Expectations for a rate hike in September increased to 60.4% on Friday following the release of the jobs report, up from 49.4% Thursday and from 57% a week ago, according to CME FedWatch.

"Given the strength of the payroll report, a rate hike on Sept. 16 appears increasingly likely," according to Jeffrey Roach, chief economist for LPL Financial. "Ironically, a rate hike may generate less market volatility than another meeting in which policymakers choose to stand pat."

The government will release August inflation figures Sept. 11, shortly before the Fed's policymaking committee's next meeting, which ends on Sept. 16. The closely watched consumer price index, or CPI, which measures costs for consumers, is expected to show that inflation rose last month at a 3.4% rate, the same as in July. Inflation has held stubbornly above 3% for most of the year.

"With the August CPI report now on deck, the question is whether the combined impact of stronger-than-expected hiring and a stiff inflation tail wind will push policymakers to the tipping point of raising rates later this month," said Jim Baird, chief investment officer with Plante Moran Financial Advisors.

Fed Chair Kevin Warsh said last week at the Fed's annual economic symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, that inflation had not shown sufficient improvement and that the central bank might have "more work to do," a sign he is weighing a rate increase at the Fed's next meeting.

On Thursday, Federal Reserve governor Christopher Waller said that if new data next week shows inflation is cooling, he "would be inclined" to keep the Fed's benchmark interest rate unchanged. Should the data show hotter inflation, he would consider a rate hike.

U.S. government bond yields, which had eased the last couple of days, rose as the bond market weighed the implications of the jobs report.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury, which influences mortgage rates, rose to 4.78% from 4.77% late Thursday. 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, rose to 4.37% from 4.34%. It remains significantly higher for the year, though, and was as low as 3.50% at the beginning of 2026.

Meanwhile, gains in technology stocks helped limit declines in other sectors Friday. Nvidia rose 0.8%, Advanced Micro Devices added 4.7%, Sandisk jumped 11.9% and Micron Technology gained 6.1%.

Lululemon Athletica sank 17.4%, the biggest decline among S&P 500 stocks, after the retailer reported quarterly revenue that fell short of analysts' estimates and lowered its fiscal full-year outlook again.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 29.11 points to 7,718.60. The Dow dropped 271.86 points to 53,414.25, and the Nasdaq lost 77.07 points to close at 26,506.99.

Markets ended mixed in Europe and Asia.

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In energy markets, oil rose Friday, adding to a sharp run-up in prices earlier in the week as the six-month long U.S. war with Iran intensified. Iran fired at Kuwait on Thursday in retaliation for U.S. bombardments earlier in the week. The Strait of Hormuz remains effectively closed.

The price of Brent crude, the international standard, rose 0.8% to settle at \$96.28 a barrel. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 0.2% to settle at \$91.48 a barrel. For the week, they are up 9.2% and 9.7%, respectively.

U.S. gasoline prices will be higher this weekend than they have ever been at this time of year, according to AAA.

Diesel hit an all-time high for any time of the year on Friday, soaring to an average of \$5.85 a gallon. Because diesel is used for many freight and delivery networks, higher diesel prices mean higher transportation costs for a long list of everyday goods, a price shock that can impact prices for consumers.

U.S. stock markets will be closed Monday for the Labor Day holiday.

Russian drone strikes Ukraine security service headquarters as US talks on the war are expected

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian drone struck the headquarters of Ukraine's security service in central Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Friday, ahead of diplomatic talks with U.S. officials on ending the war.

The air war between Russia and Ukraine has intensified as the conflict stretches toward five years since Moscow's invasion of its neighbor. Russia recently has been using fast-flying, jet-powered drones, and the recurring wail of air-raid sirens has become part of daily life in Kyiv.

Ukraine's security service headquarters, near the historic St. Sophia Cathedral and international hotels, is among the agencies carrying out deep strike operations inside Russian territory. Twelve people were wounded in Friday's attack, local authorities said.

"The drone was deliberately targeted at the head of the SBU's office in that building," Zelenskyy said Friday.

Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram that acting security chief Oleksandr Poklad had briefed him on a response, including possible targets.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called Friday's drone strike a "major escalation" that came as potential peace talks were building momentum.

"Moscow launched this strike during a renewed push for peace — laying bare its true rejection of diplomacy," he said in a post on X.

US envoys expected in Moscow and Kyiv

U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed Friday that envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner will travel to Moscow and then Kyiv over the weekend and into early next week. The U.S. has not provided more specific timing for the stops.

"They are bringing with them a proposal to end the war," Trump said.

This would be their first visit to Kyiv. U.S. efforts to negotiate a settlement have yet to produce a path to peace.

Zelenskyy said Friday that he was expecting Witkoff and Kushner to visit Kyiv on Sunday, after visiting Moscow. He said in a Telegram post that Ukraine will refrain from airstrikes during the negotiations and called on Russia to reciprocate to allow the talks to proceed safely.

"As with previous diplomatic visits by the American side, we will ensure the normal functioning of Russian airspace so that the negotiators can arrive safely. We are concerned about their safety, not about Russia," Zelenskyy said.

Speaking with journalists Friday, presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov refused to confirm reports that Kushner and Witkoff would visit Moscow, saying only that the media would be informed if such a meeting took place.

Kushner and Witkoff last visited Moscow in January, where they met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. After that meeting, Russian presidential aide Yury Ushakov described talks as constructive but said

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that "reaching a long-term settlement can't be expected without solving the territorial issue."

Further talks have lost momentum, with the White House's attention focused on its conflict with Iran.

Deadly strikes in Ukraine

The latest diplomatic developments coincided with a "massive" overnight Russian attack on the Odesa region that killed one person and injured at least five others, including a child, regional head Oleh Kiper said in a post on Telegram. The attacks damaged multiple residential buildings, including two multistory blocks.

Overnight strikes elsewhere in Ukraine killed two police officers in Dnipro, officials said, while a drone attack in Kyiv wounded three people after hitting a residential building.

Russian forces have relentlessly struck civilian areas. Previously, these attacks occurred mostly at night, but now they are happening during the day as well. The front line in eastern and southern Ukraine remains largely deadlocked.

Russian oil depots set ablaze

In Russia, a large-scale Ukrainian drone strike hit the Black Sea resort city of Sochi and the nearby district of Sirius, regional officials said Friday. They said the attack sparked a blaze at an oil depot but gave no further details. Russian media outlets reported two depots were hit, with one fire in Sochi and another in Sirius.

Ukraine has repeatedly targeted oil facilities that form the backbone of Russia's economy, one of the world's largest energy producers. Growing economic pressure and public frustration have mounted in Russia after months of escalating Ukrainian strikes on refineries and e-commerce hubs that have caused nationwide disruptions.

The barrages prompted Putin last month to decree that the state can temporarily seize control of critical infrastructure facilities if private owners fail to protect them from Ukrainian drone attacks or don't rebuild them after strikes. Analysts said the move was aimed at forcing companies to pay for their own security and bring damaged assets back into service, despite the cost.

Drone washes up in Finland

Finnish authorities said they were investigating how a Russian-made drone ended up on a rocky shoreline in the Pellinge archipelago east of Helsinki.

Finland's Border Guard said what appears to be a Geoscan 701 drone, manufactured by a Russian company, was found on the shore. "The device model in question is used by both state and civilian operators, and it is not possible at this stage to determine its intended use or identify the country or entity operating it," the Border Guard said in a statement.

State broadcaster Yle reported the drone was discovered Tuesday by a fisherman.

Geoscan describes itself as one of Russia's leading drone manufacturers, and says the 701 model is designed for large-scale aerial surveying.

Trump administration scrubs data on gender-based bullying from school civil rights survey

By SHARON LURYE and ANNIE MA Associated Press

The Trump administration this week quietly released an update to a major survey on civil rights in schools that was scrubbed of all data related to nonbinary students or bullying based on gender identity.

The numbers come from the Education Department's Civil Rights Data Collection, a federal survey of nearly every public school in the nation. The release this week covers the 2023-2024 school year, when the survey included "nonbinary" as a gender category alongside male and female.

However, an Associated Press analysis shows that in every column for information related to gender identity, the numbers were replaced with a code indicating "Suppressed in Compliance with Executive Order." That refers to an executive order that President Donald Trump signed on his inauguration day calling for the federal government to define sex as only male or female.

The government also suppressed the number of allegations of harassment or bullying on the basis of gender identity in schools, information about whether the districts had written policies prohibiting such

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harassment, and any links to those policies.

Those questions in the data collection are designed to capture the experiences of transgender and nonbinary students — whether they experience harassment, participate in sports or face overly harsh discipline, said Seth Galanter, a senior fellow at the Edley Center on Law and Democracy and a former attorney with the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights under the Biden and Obama administrations.

Only school districts that already collected data on trans and nonbinary students were required to report it to the federal government, Galanter said, and roughly 1,800 out of the more than 13,000 U.S. school districts reported data in the last collection.

"We're losing the granular experience of those kids," Galanter said. "They exist in the world, their schools acknowledge their existence, but we now no longer have any way to have any kind of local, state or national picture about these kids and what their school experience is like."

In a written statement, the Education Department said the Office for Civil Rights would be releasing more data in coming weeks. It also said the Trump administration is "realigning the functions of OCR to align with its statutory mandate."

The White House has targeted efforts to accommodate trans students

The data suppression reflects the Trump administration's wider efforts to target protections for transgender and nonbinary students in schools. The White House has repeatedly clashed with schools and colleges over accommodations for transgender students, with the Justice Department this week announcing a federal lawsuit against the school system in Kansas City, Kansas, over its policies on transgender students.

It's also one of many instances in which the administration has removed data related to gender from government resources.

The Williams Institute, an LGBTQ+ law and policy research center based at the UCLA School of Law, has identified around 360 cases where the Trump administration removed information related to sexual orientation or gender identity from federal data collections, ranging from Medicare surveys that asked about discrimination in doctors' offices to data on homeless youth.

The author of the Williams Institute's report, Lauren Bouton, said the Office for Civil Rights could have used the data to identify schools that have a problem with bullying of nonbinary students and then require them to follow an action plan to improve. "No one's being held accountable to these kids," Bouton said.

The Civil Rights Data Collection is one of the country's most important and comprehensive sources of data related to educational opportunity in public schools. As required by federal law, the Office for Civil Rights collects information from every school in the country on topics like discipline, corporal punishment, bullying and harassment, and access to advanced coursework.

The lack of transparency around the most recent update could erode public trust the government has worked to build for its civil rights data, said Ivy Morgan, director of research and data at EdTrust, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that advocates for educational equity.

"The way this data was released is part of a long-standing pattern that we have observed for the last two years," Morgan said. "This administration just does not care about data, doesn't care about research, doesn't care about evidence. And it particularly doesn't care about that information when it is helping us understand the experiences of students and people who are marginalized in our society."

The survey went to schools shortly before Trump took office

Preparations for the latest data collection began under President Joe Biden's administration, and Morgan said the attempt to gather data on nonbinary and trans students was one of the most comprehensive efforts to date from the federal government. The survey went out to schools a month before Trump was inaugurated.

While Trump had previously announced his administration would remove questions related to gender identity, it was unclear whether that would affect the 2024 data or only future surveys.

The last time that the data collection was updated, under the Biden administration, it came with a detailed report on trends in educational equity and opportunity, including findings that Black and Latino students were far more likely than white students to attend schools where the majority of teachers were not certi-

fied and were far less likely to have access to advanced math courses in high school.

This year, the new data came out with no accompanying report. There was no official announcement from the Education Department that new data had arrived. The only indication of the change was a single row added to the department's list of data tables. As of Friday, the homepage of the data collection website listed 2021-2022 data under the heading "What's New?"

Watchdog report: Ex-Labor Secretary Chavez-DeRemer oversaw hostile work environment, misused funds

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer oversaw a "toxic, intimidating and humiliating" work environment and engaged in numerous violations of department policy, according to a new report from the department's Office of Inspector General.

The report alleges that Chavez-DeRemer "engaged in an inappropriate relationship" with a member of her security detail and repeatedly directed staff to perform personal tasks on government time. It also accuses her of inappropriately combining personal and official travel, violating the department's alcohol policies, and failing to report gifts through proper channels.

Based on interviews with dozens of current and former labor department staffers and a review of more than 500 documents, images and videos, the report includes several striking allegations.

During a personal trip to Oregon, it reports, Chavez-DeRemer allegedly stopped at a strip club featuring partially nude dancers and directed her limousine driver to come inside and give money to a performer, despite his hesitation. She then "took additional money from her purse and asked the agent to drop the bills one by one onto the partially nude woman," despite his protests.

Chavez-DeRemer, who resigned earlier this year, could not immediately be reached for comment.

She is also accused of repeatedly directing staff to perform personal tasks during work hours. That included, at one point, directing her personal aide and executive assistant to travel to her home and organize her bedroom closet. After completing the task, they were asked to provide a video documenting their work. The report includes a photo of neatly hung, colorful blazers, alongside purses and shoes.

In other instances, it alleges, she sent staffers to her home to retrieve packages from the mail room, instructed them to make personal purchases that weren't always reimbursed, and directed a Hispanic federal employee to communicate with Spanish-speaking workers, including a house cleaner and movers.

The report alleges Chavez-DeRemer developed and maintained an inappropriate and unprofessional relationship with a senior agent on her security detail, documenting in extensive detail witness reports of her massaging the agent's shoulder, the two golfing and gambling together, and leaving an event walking arm-in-arm.

Investigators obtained electronic hotel door lock records that suggested the two were spending time overnight in each other's rooms. And they obtained key fob records and video footage to document his visits to her home.

The relationship, they said, "appeared to continue even after he was placed on administrative leave and was suspended from his official duties."

The office also concluded that the former secretary and senior staff consumed and stored alcohol on federal property without permission, that she combined personal and official travel, including visits to family, personal residences and Las Vegas. And it identified a handful of gifts that were not reported, including tickets to attend a rodeo, an alligator-hide wallet and cowboy hats.

The report also alleged that Chavez-DeRemer oversaw a hostile workplace, with senior staff "routinely engaged in threatening, demeaning, and abusive verbal and written communication" that she was seemingly aware of but did not take action to stop.

Witnesses described the work environment as "toxic, intimidating and humiliating," with staff accused of berating employees in front of colleagues, openly discussing performance issues in the presence of other staff, and frequently making threats of termination.

Senior staff were also accused of making staffing decisions based on physical appearance instead of qualifications, including relocating one employee's desk because they did not want a "fat person" seen in the front office.

Hiring burst of 162,000 jobs in August puts the focus squarely back on inflation in the US

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. labor market bounced back in August as employers added a surprising 162,000 jobs, ending a summer of lackluster hiring with a bang.

The unemployment rate remained at a low 4.1%.

Hiring far exceeded the 65,000 jobs that forecasters had expected, according to a poll by FactSet. Labor Department revisions also looked good, adding 55,000 to June and July payrolls. Employers created 21,000 jobs in July; the Labor Department had originally reported that they'd cut 23,000.

Two months before the midterm elections, President Donald Trump welcomed the strong hiring report Friday. "Great jobs number just announced, breaking all estimates (except mine!) by double and triple - And you haven't seen anything yet!" Trump wrote in a social media post.

But inflation has dominated conversations this year in business and households. Voters are increasingly frustrated by higher costs, particularly fuel prices that have hit record levels since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran in late February.

And meager pay raises have made rising prices more painful for many. Average hourly wages rose 3.1% last month from a year earlier, the weakest year-over-year increase since May 2021.

Restaurants and bars added 59,000 jobs last month, construction companies 22,000 and manufacturers 16,000. Factory jobs are up by 58,000 since hitting a recent low in December, the Labor Department noted.

And the U.S. labor force — the number of people working or looking for work — jumped by 683,000 last month after falling in June and July.

Diane Swonk, chief economist at the tax and consulting firm KPMG, called the report "incredible. It's a summer heatwave." She noted that a broad measure of the unemployment rate — which includes people so discouraged they've given up looking for work and those working part time because they can't find the full-time jobs they want — dropped to 7.7%, the lowest in more than a year.

So far this year, employers — companies, government agencies and nonprofits — have added an average of more than 80,000 jobs a month. That is up from a dismal monthly average of 9,700 last year.

But job creation remains well below the 166,000 monthly jobs that were the norm in 2023 and 2024, let alone the 491,000 a month recorded during the 2021-2022 hiring boom that followed pandemic lockdowns.

Hiring has bounced around this year. From May through July, employers added a lackluster average of 38,000 jobs a month. Then came the burst of new jobs in August, which left some economists skeptical. "The rebound in hiring this month is encouraging," wrote Thomas Simons, chief U.S. economist at the investment bank Jefferies, "but we suspect that it's more of a payback from weakness over the prior three months rather than a sign of significant acceleration."

Friday's report may increase the likelihood that the Federal Reserve will raise its key short-term interest rate when it next meets Sept. 15-16. Solid hiring sends a signal that current borrowing costs aren't necessarily high enough to restrain the economy and cool inflation.

Fed Chair Kevin Warsh said last week that inflation, at 3.7% according to the Fed's preferred measure, remains too far above the central bank's 2% target and added that without further progress, the Fed would have "work to do."

With hiring seemingly healthy, the Fed's focus will shift to a critical inflation report due next week. On Thursday, Fed governor Christopher Waller said he is leaning toward keeping the Fed's rate unchanged, but would support a hike if inflation comes in high.

U.S. employers are contending with a shortage of workers — the result of President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown and the retirement of baby boomers.

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Instead of looking to hire from a diminished pool of available workers, "businesses are increasingly focused on boosting efficiency through technology and AI and increasingly seek to do more with their existing workforce," EY-Parthenon economists Gregory Daco and Lydia Boussour wrote in a commentary this week.

The information industry, which includes employers in telecommunications and data processing, lost 23,000 jobs last month and is down 97,000 since the start of 2026, a decline that has arrived as artificial intelligence does work that was once handled by people.

Trevor Freel, a senior recruiter at the American Medical Association, said that AI appears to be replacing people in customer service and software development. He asked one job candidate in customer service why he was looking for a new job. The answer: "Well, I got replaced by a robot."

Karp & Iancu, a fast-growing Milwaukee law firm that specializes in divorce and family law, has added three employees this month. As technology, specifically AI, changes legal work, managing partner David Iancu said that he's looking for applicants with technical skills, or those who are willing to learn. But that's not all.

"AI is an incredible tool. It's not much more than that," said Iancu, whose firm has 55 employees, including 30 lawyers. "It does not substitute for good people or human relationships. I don't know about you, but when I try to call customer service and I have to talk to a robot – I'm not feeling it ... Especially where people are dealing with something that's difficult like divorce or medical (problems) – they don't want AI as a substitute ... I have no plans to replace people with AI."

US issues sanctions on Turkish bank that it calls a 'critical financial lifeline' for Iran

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and ANDREW WILKS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration announced Friday that it has imposed sanctions on a Turkish financial institution as part of its latest effort to sever "critical financial lifelines" for the Iranian government.

The actions against Golden Global Yatirim Bankasi Anonim Sirketi come after Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent last week launched "Operation Economic Outcast," Washington's new effort to isolate already heavily sanctioned Iran from its remaining trading partners to try to get it to capitulate to U.S. demands after more than six months of war.

The Treasury Department accused the Turkish bank and its entities of being established to enable Iran's efforts to transfer oil revenues from China to Turkey, where they could then be converted to cash and gold. It also said the institution "knowingly offered" banking services to Iranian financial entities, including those already sanctioned by the U.S. government in 2022 for funneling Tehran's oil sales.

Bessent, who had told The Associated Press earlier this week that another bank would face economic penalties, said financial institutions with ties to Iran will "continue to find out the hard way that we are serious about Operation Economic Outcast."

"While we hope no more banks will need to be sanctioned, that ultimately depends on how quickly the international community comes to its senses and ceases support of the murderous Iranian regime," he said in a press release Friday. "We know who you are, we know where you are, and we will continue to take action together with our allies and partners until we have buried the head of the Iranian snake."

But so far, the goal to force those that still do business with Iran to cut off financial ties or face U.S. retaliation has fallen flat, with promises of an "economic D-Day" for a group of countries that could include China and India quickly turning into warnings and negotiations with Iran's trading partners.

Bessent had previously told reporters that he wanted countries to have an opportunity to shift away from Iran before it was too late in a bid to avoid upending the global financial system.

The Trump administration's reluctance to penalize major trading partners that still do business with Iran was on display last week when the U.S. took steps to limit an Egyptian bank's operations in the United Arab Emirates but stopped short of imposing sanctions.

The U.S. also has resumed military strikes in recent days, prompting Iranian retaliation in the region.

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It's unclear what the outcome of the two-pronged strategy will be for President Donald Trump, who has struggled to end an unpopular war with an intransigent Iranian government as energy prices rise and pose problems for Republicans before November's midterm congressional elections.

Targeted in the latest U.S. sanctions is Golden Global Investment Bank, which was founded in 2019 as Turkey's first investment bank to offer "banking services and alternative financing methods" to foreign companies, according to its website.

The Istanbul-based bank, which is largely unfamiliar to most Turks, says it aims to increase Turkey's foreign trade through target markets in neighboring countries.

The Treasury announcement came a day after Turkey's state-run Halkbank declared it had reached a settlement with the U.S. Justice Department in a nine-year case focused on violating sanctions with Iran.

In that case, senior officials at Halkbank were said to have illegally moved about \$20 billion worth of Iranian oil revenues. U.S. prosecutors claimed high-ranking Turkish government officials received millions of dollars in bribes to protect the scheme.

The Halkbank case caused a rift in U.S.-Turkey relations, with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan personally lobbying the White House to have the case dropped.

Gloria Steinem lived to see a backlash against the strides she helped make for feminism

By ALEXANDRA OLSON and CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press Writers

It was the fight for abortion rights that launched Gloria Steinem into feminism.

The idea that women couldn't reach equality without the ability to decide whether or when to have children was central to the feminist movement of the late 1960s, which Steinem came to embody until her death at age 92 on Wednesday.

The victories of that movement dramatically transformed American culture and family life, leading to a surge of women into the workforce, even as advocates continue to fight against a persistent gender wage gap, sexual harassment and unequal representation at the top ranks of companies and political office.

But Steinem lived to see the rise of a powerful backlash against her vision of feminism, with reproductive rights, motherhood, childbearing and gender roles once again at the center of the country's culture wars.

In 2022, Supreme Court overturned the 1973 ruling *Roe v. Wade*, eliminating the constitutional right to abortion; 13 states have since instituted total or near-total bans. Another four bar it after about six weeks of pregnancy, which is often before women realize they are pregnant.

Steinem called it a setback for democracy. But for Christian conservative activists, it was a huge victory and helped embolden a movement to encourage men and women to embrace traditional gender roles while often blaming feminism for the decline in birthrates, a rise in divorce and a devaluation of marriage and motherhood.

Family versus career

Through policies and rhetoric, Trump administration officials — including Vice President JD Vance — as well as influential conservative groups have launched a campaign to encourage young women to marry quickly, have more children and prioritize family over career.

"Feminism did a grave disservice to women, and men by extension, by promoting the idea that marriage and family are lesser pursuits and should be deprioritized," said Delano Squires, a co-author of the Heritage Foundation's report, "Saving America by Saving the Family," which lamented that "the disruptions to American family life caused by bad public policy in the 1960s were exacerbated by cultural upheavals that radically changed social norms around sex, sexuality, marriage, children, and gender roles."

The report, which among other ideas proposes that Congress create investment accounts with a \$2,500 deposit for men and women who marry before the age of 30, was also co-written by Emma Waters, a Heritage Foundation analyst who has emerged as an influential voice for young conservative Christians criticizing what they see as a career-first culture created by feminism to the detriment of female happiness.

In a recent article, Waters took a dig at "Ms." — both the title and the magazine founded by Steinem.

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"Today, the most countercultural thing a 28-year-old woman can do is take her husband's name and be open to the gift of motherhood," she wrote.

Surge of women in the workforce

Steinem herself never had children, a decision she said she never regretted while calling it a great choice for others. And she continued to fiercely advocate for reproductive choice as a cornerstone of women's empowerment.

Steinem pivoted into activism in her 30s after attending a meeting in 1969 where women discussed abortion rights and hearing stories that empowered her to speak up about the secret abortion she had in London at age 22.

At the time, abortion was illegal in most of the U.S. The Supreme Court had only recently guaranteed the right to birth control in the 1965 landmark *Griswold v. Connecticut* ruling.

Fewer than 50% of women were in the labor force back then, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It was legal to fire a woman for becoming pregnant, remaining so until the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978. Banks routinely asked for a male co-signer when women applied for credit cards. There were only 11 women serving in Congress.

The landscape is drastically different today. About 58% of women 20 and older are in the labor force, and that number jumps to 77% for women at prime working ages between 25 and 54. The Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974 — championed by the small number of women then serving in Congress — made it illegal to deny credit cards and loans to women on the basis of sex. There are now 152 women serving in Congress.

Many of those hard-fought rights, at least in principle, remain unassailable even among staunch conservatives. Squires, of the Heritage Foundation, said he would never question the right of women to own property, credit or be able to vote or work, even as he champions traditional gender roles.

Still, even the most radical ideas have been amplified by some in power. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, for example, reposted a video about a Christian nationalist church that included various pastors saying women should no longer be allowed to vote, sparking widespread outrage.

For those on the religious right, feminism upends the "godly" ideal of a father who leads and protects the household and encourages women to put their own needs before those of their husband and children, according to Beth Allison Barr, a women's history professor at Baylor University. "It makes it directly oppositional: that to be a good Christian, you can't be a feminist."

Unfinished business

Women's advocacy groups warn that both the curtailing of reproductive rights and the characterization of feminism as an attack on families are at their core attempts to disempower women and limit their freedom to choose their own life paths.

Fatima Goss Graves, CEO of the National Women's Law Center, said progressive proposals — such as expanded and longer paid family leave and better access to affordable child care — are in fact about championing families and making childrearing easier without pushing women to abandon careers and financial independence.

"We are really in a bigger cultural fight about who we are going to be as a nation and what women's role will be," said Goss Graves.

Despite setbacks like the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* and unfinished business such as the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment, Stanford University women's history professor Estelle Freedman said feminism in the United States is so embedded in modern life that its momentum "may be unstoppable."

The economy, for one thing, now depends on women continuing to work, she said.

The feminist movement since the early 19th century "has gone through periods of mobilization and gains, and periods of backlash and losses," but throughout "there has been continuous reorganization, rethinking to get stronger," Freedman said.

Steinem, Freedman said, lent the movement crucial continuity for more than half a century.

"The visibility that she's given will help people not forget it's a long haul. And it's work that just has to

continue," Freedman said.

In her final essay published Sept. 3 in The New Yorker, Steinem herself reflected on the setbacks with a note of optimism.

"As I write this, the world seems in a tailspin. Many feel that all the progress we've made is being reversed. When you're lucky enough to have lived a long life, as I have done, your role as an older person is to remind us how far we have come," she wrote. "Because of this movement, most people in the world have now seen women who are astronauts, union organizers and farmers, liberators and peacemakers." _____

The Associated Press' women in the workforce coverage receives financial support from Pivotal Ventures. AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP's standards for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at AP.org.

US diesel prices hit a record high, pushing up transportation costs for a long list of goods

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Diesel hit a record price in the U.S. on Friday, soaring to an average of \$5.85 a gallon for the first time as the six-month war with Iran disrupts the world's flow of fuel.

Because diesel is used for many freight and delivery networks, higher diesel prices mean higher transportation costs for a long list of everyday goods. Some businesses have already passed on costs to consumers in the form of added fees on online orders and packages in the mail. And shoppers may see more and more sticker shock trickle down to store shelves.

One of the most immediate strains is being felt in the grocery aisle, particularly with produce, meat and other perishable foods that need to be hauled in and restocked frequently — or even harvested using diesel-powered farm equipment. It can take time for all of those costs to trickle down.

Still, experts warn that price hikes could mount the longer diesel remains expensive. A range of other products are also transported by diesel trucks, trains and boats, including clothing, cosmetics and furniture.

This could add to Republicans' political challenges ahead of November's midterm elections, with many voters already sour on President Donald Trump's management of the economy and fallout of the war he launched. AP-NORC polling this summer showed 2 out of 3 U.S. adults disapproved of how Trump is handling the economy.

The price for regular gasoline has also been going up, although not as fast as the price of diesel. The average price was \$4.15 a gallon, compared with \$3.20 at this time last year, according to motor club AAA, which says gas has never been above \$4 a gallon on Labor Day.

What's driving the latest jump for diesel

American diesel prices are now nearly 56% more expensive than they were before the U.S. and Israel launched their war against Iran in late February, when the national average sat at about \$3.76 per gallon per AAA. Prices quickly climbed as the cost of crude oil — the main ingredient in diesel, as well as gasoline — soared amid supply chain disruptions across the Middle East, notably with most tanker traffic bottlenecked in the key Strait of Hormuz.

Despite prices cooling some during hopes for peace earlier in the summer, oil has now renewed its climb as fighting once more escalates between the U.S. and Iran. Brent crude, the international standard, was trading at more than \$95 a barrel Friday, up from roughly \$70 before the war. Prices at the pump always follow closely behind.

The last time businesses and drivers saw sky-high fuel prices was in June 2022, when diesel reached nearly \$5.82 a gallon on average months after the Ukraine war began and world leaders imposed sanctions against Russia, a leading oil producer.

When adjusted for inflation, however, prices have been higher in the past. Ahead of the 2008 financial crisis, for example, diesel hit about \$4.74 a gallon — equivalent to \$7.20 in 2026, according to the government's latest data. And 2022's record of nearly \$5.82 would be about \$6.56 this year when accounting

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for inflation.

That doesn't take the pain away from today's steep prices, which are already bringing ripple effects for the economy and wider costs of living. Drivers are feeling the pain with gasoline, too.

The average \$4.15 for a gallon of regular unleaded is up from \$2.98 before the Iran war (an over 39% jump), although still well below the 2022 peak of nearly \$5.02 a gallon nationwide.

Diesel has been more expensive than gasoline in the U.S. for decades, and its price has risen at a faster pace before. Some reasons include less flexibility in demand and diesel's position in global commerce overall. Individual households may find ways to drive less when gas prices are high, for example, but there's fewer immediate substitutes for networks that rely on diesel to haul goods worldwide.

All eyes on food

Diesel is integral to every part of the food supply chain. It powers farm equipment and fishing boats as well as the trains and trucks headed to grocery stores.

Fuel accounts for roughly 15% to 30% of the total cost of food, according to the Independent Grocers Alliance, a grouping of 7,500 global supermarkets. So higher diesel costs often result in more expensive groceries, although it can take a while for energy shocks to wind their way through the supply chain.

Items that need to stay refrigerated while they're transported are often the first to see prices rise, according to David Ortega, a professor of food economics and policy at Michigan State University. In July, for example, overall U.S. grocery prices were up 2.7% compared to a year prior, but seafood prices were up 7% and fresh fruit prices were up 4.9%.

Ortega cautioned other factors can be at play, too. Lettuce also faced higher transportation costs in July, but a drop in demand due to the cyclospora outbreak caused prices to fall.

Still, consumers could feel more of a squeeze the longer diesel prices remain high.

"Early on, much of the cost increase gets absorbed along the supply chain through existing freight contracts and retailer margins," Ortega said. "But as contracts reprice and fuel surcharges take hold, more of that cost makes its way to the grocery store."

More fuel shocks

Back in April, e-commerce giant Amazon rolled out a temporary 3.5% fuel and logistics surcharge on some third-party sellers. United Parcel Service, FedEx and the United States Postal Service also moved to add fees on some of the packages they ship earlier in the war, citing rising costs for fuel overall.

Ajesh Kapoor, CEO and founder of trucking technology company SemiCab, said trucking and transportation can adapt to rising diesel prices — but at some point there is a limit.

"Diesel price has a very, very direct impact on everything that moves on pretty much any mode," Kapoor said.

The ramifications extend beyond consumer goods. Some public transit buses and trains also run on diesel. And diesel generators are often used for backup or emergency power, if not central electricity sources in some remote parts of the world.

Experts warn the consequences could continue to deepen, particularly in African and Asian countries, which rely more on Middle East imports and have already been hit the hardest by energy shocks.

According to the latest data from Global Petrol Prices, diesel prices in Nigeria have surged 90% since late February — followed by nearly 87% in Indonesia and 77% in Lebanon. Price tags vary widely between countries, due to factors ranging from fuel taxes to local economic conditions more broadly. Diesel prices in Nigeria ended August at \$4.91 per gallon (1,730 naira per liter) on average. Meanwhile, the highest sticker price reported by Global Petrol Prices was in Hong Kong, where diesel costs have jumped over 25% during the war and averaged at \$17.73 a gallon (nearly 37 Hong Kong dollars per liter) Monday.

At a weekly briefing with Lloyd's List Intelligence, Neil Atkinson, energy analyst and senior fellow at the National Center for Energy Analytics, said products like diesel are becoming more expensive while physical stocks dwindle. He pointed to the strain on the global refining system.

"This cannot go on forever," he said.

EPA seeks more public comments as it struggles to devise water rule that limits scope on wetlands

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency is seeking additional public comments as it tries to redefine the scope of the nation's bedrock clean water law to significantly limit the wetlands it covers.

The request, announced Friday, comes nearly a year after the agency proposed a rule defining "waters of the United States," or WOTUS, based on a 2023 Supreme Court ruling that removed federal protections for vast areas. The plea for new information is highly unusual and reflects the complexity of the water rule, a contentious regulation that has been argued in the courts for decades and reached the Supreme Court twice since 2006.

The latest proposal is a "supplemental" rule that EPA said will help it and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers evaluate a wider range of options as they work toward a final rule that fully implements the Supreme Court's decision in a case known as Sackett v. EPA.

The 2023 ruling sharply limited the federal government's authority to police water pollution in certain wetlands. It boosted property rights over concerns about clean water in a ruling in favor of Michael and Chantell Sackett, an Idaho couple who sought to build a house near a lake.

The new rule, once made final, will cut "bureaucratic red tape" and protect water quality while "recognizing that states and tribes are best positioned to manage their own water resources," the EPA said.

The rule will provide greater predictability for landowners, farmers, ranchers, energy producers, the technology sector, developers and small businesses, the agency said. The measure will focus on relatively permanent, standing or continuously flowing bodies of water, such as streams, oceans, rivers and lakes, along with wetlands that are directly connected to such bodies of water.

"The EPA's goal is a durable WOTUS definition that follows the law and ends burdensome regulatory uncertainty," EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said in a statement.

The request for additional comment "reflects our continued commitment to transparency and public input, ensuring we have fully considered a wide range of potential policy options," he added. "We look forward to public feedback on this supplemental notice, which will help strengthen the real-world expertise behind the final rule."

The November proposal to rewrite the water rule is among dozens of environmental regulations being rolled back by Republican President Donald Trump's administration as part of what Zeldin calls a concerted effort to accelerate economic prosperity while putting "a dagger through the heart of climate change religion." Critics call the planned water rule a giveaway to ranchers and industrial polluters.

"The Trump EPA's shortsighted push to encourage industries to plow over more wetlands and streams will destroy thousands of miles of waterways critical to wildlife across the United States," J.W. Glass, a policy specialist at the Center for Biological Diversity, said when the plan was announced last year.

The proposed rule will most likely "wipe out life-sustaining waterways in every corner of the nation," Glass said, and leave vast stretches of wetlands and other low-lying areas vulnerable to increasingly destructive storm surges driven by climate change.

The EPA's proposal "declares open season" on the nation's waterways, according to Jon Devine, director of freshwater ecosystems at the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council.

"The proposal would virtually eliminate protection for freshwater wetlands" and especially hurt the western United States, he said.

Zeldin disputes that argument, saying the agency's proposal strikes a needed balance between federal and state authority. Any lands removed from federal jurisdiction will still face regulation from states and tribes, he said.

The EPA and Army Corps will accept public comments for 30 days once the supplemental plan is published in the Federal Register, expected in the next week. The agencies have held three public meetings on the proposed rule, which has generated more than 220,000 comments from a wide range of stakeholders.

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Russia now bombards Kyiv during the day as well as at night

By SAMYA KULLAB and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — For much of the war, Russian drone and missile attacks in Kyiv followed a particular rhythm. They almost always came at night.

The warnings would begin on monitoring channels on Telegram in the late evening. They announced drones moving south, missiles being launched, air defenses working. Ukrainian civilians judged whether it was prudent to stay indoors or make for shelter in the metro based on the severity of the threat.

Now, Russia has changed tactics with the use of fast-flying, jet-powered drones, and the expectation that daylight brings a return to normal life has been shattered. Since last week, attacks have come day and night, compounding the terror of overnight strikes with the exhaustion of constant daytime disruption.

In Kyiv, the recurring wail of air-raid sirens has become part of daily life. It has interrupted commutes, shopping trips and children's school, intruded on life's biggest moments, from weddings to funerals, and, as these attacks always have, taken lives. The relentless alerts are exhausting residents, leaving some wondering how long they can stay.

Air raids are woven into the routine of daily life

An alert sounds. People look at their phones or up at the sky. Moments later, in the distance, the familiar sounds of air defenses intercepting drones resound.

Plumes of smoke can often be seen rising in the distance. Photos quickly spread across Telegram channels, showing where the destruction has occurred.

An hour or two later, another siren echoes.

In malls, banks and other businesses, air-raid protocols require customers and staff to leave when an alert sounds. A bank transaction can be interrupted midconversation; a shopping trip can become a cycle of entering a store, evacuating, returning and evacuating again.

Getting the shopping done has become a nightmare for Volodymyr Bovsunovskyi, who recounts a recent family trip to a mall to buy clothes for his nearly 4-year-old daughter. They had been inside for about 20 minutes when the alert sounded. They rushed out and saw smoke rising nearby.

They never got to purchase the clothes.

"A lot has changed in the last seven days," he said. Like many residents, he hopes the attacks will relent. But, they have not yet, as Ukraine struggles to find an effective way to counter them.

Train journeys that would normally take a few hours have stretched much longer. In some cases, passengers have found themselves walking for hours through grassy fields after trains stopped on the tracks, carrying their belongings while one air-raid alert followed another.

The same uncertainty extends to getting around the city.

When GPS signals are disrupted to jam drones, using a taxi app becomes an absurd process. A car that appears to be nearby can suddenly appear to be on the other side of the world.

A pickup that seemed imminent suddenly shows an arrival time of thousands of minutes.

Life's biggest moments are interrupted

One Kyiv couple went ahead with their wedding despite the sirens. On Wednesday morning, when Iryna Baranova, 38, returned home from hair and makeup to finish getting ready, explosions were sounding across the city.

"We heard two explosions, the alarm ended, we got together and went to the registration ceremony," she said, wearing a white satin gown with strands of pearls draped around her neck.

Afterward, she and Evhen Mytsyk walked hand in hand in a botanical garden in the city.

Mytsyk, 40, said the attacks did not diminish the day.

"If you wake up in the morning, you have to make the most of that day, because there might not be another chance," he said. "At a time like this, you appreciate life and the love of your family more, and you give love more openly yourself."

In the same garden, Tetyana Shevchenko meditated inside a small wooden gazebo modeled on a Buddhist prayer space. She has practiced for years, and she says it helps her remain calm even as air raids

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sound around her.

"When the air raids first started, we couldn't stand the sound at all. It was very loud, disturbing, depressing," she said. "The body works in a way, it gets used to everything, including nighttime attacks, spending the night on the floor in the corridor, and insomnia."

Meditation has also helped her stay calm as she navigates the tedium of bureaucracy, made even more difficult by the attacks.

Shevchenko has been trying to obtain documents to recover state funds owed to her mother, who died last year. While she waited in a long line for an appointment on a recent day, an air-raid alert sounded, causing her to miss her slot. She was sent to the back of the line and forced to start the process again.

"In this period of adjustments and grieving all of us are united, united in our suffering," she said.

As she spoke, a siren blared. Moments later a thud was heard in the distance.

A week of relentless attacks has some considering leaving the city

Ivan Datsiv, an IT worker, was in his apartment in Kyiv's Podil district when a Russian drone tore through the floor on Tuesday, charring the ceilings and walls of his apartment and completely destroying the one next door.

Datsiv tries to joke about it, saying he had been meaning to repaint the walls anyway.

The alerts have become so frequent that he no longer sees the point of repeatedly going to a shelter. At this rate, he said, the only alternative would be to live in the basement.

"The alarms sound constantly," he said. "You don't even have time to go down and come back up. It's just a waste of time running back and forth."

He is thinking of leaving Kyiv. "I'm thinking of living in another city, somewhere quiet and without this danger," he said.

From the blown-out apartment next door, the view looks down onto a playground and basketball court where children are still playing.

Then a siren sounds again. Minutes later, the white zigzagging trail of an intercepted drone can be seen against the sky.

Bovsunovskyi is also considering leaving the city for a while, hoping to give his family — including his pregnant wife — a chance to rest.

The kindergarten his daughter attends must move the children to a shelter whenever an air-raid alert sounds. The alerts have become so frequent that he now simply picks her up halfway through the day.

"There is no stability," he said.

Rescuers pull 2 trapped workers from a hydropower tunnel 9 days after Nepal floods

By SHRISTI KAFLE and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Rescuers in Nepal pulled two workers alive from an underground tunnel at a hydropower plant Friday, raising hopes of reaching dozens of others believed to be trapped nine days after deadly floods swept away villages and submerged the Himalayan region in mud and debris.

Search teams first heard voices from inside the tunnel in the morning, allowing them to locate the two men, Nepalese lawmaker Shri Ram Neupane said. Images showed a rescuer carrying one of the workers, covered in mud, on his back, while soldiers on either side helped.

One of those rescued said more people are alive inside the tunnel, according to army spokesperson Brig. Gen. Raja Ram Basnet, and the search is ongoing.

"I can't explain what we are feeling at the moment. We are just grateful to god," Amir Maharjan, the brother of one of those rescued, told The Associated Press.

Basnet confirmed the first trapped worker's rescue, and Neupane posted about the second on his Facebook page shortly after.

Both men were flown to a hospital in Kathmandu, and Maharjan said his family was on its way there. One of the survivors was in critical condition, according to a statement from the prime minister's office.

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Officials identified the men as a mechanical foreman and a mechanical supervisor. They were rescued from a tunnel at the Trishuli 3A plant.

About 900 workers are missing from 12 hydropower projects in Nepal, with roughly 500 believed to be trapped in various tunnels, according to authorities.

About 115 are believed trapped in the tunnel at Trishuli 3A alone, according to the Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal.

Nepal's Communication Minister Bikram Timilsina wrote on his Facebook page that officials "are waiting for the rescue of more and more people."

At least 1,287 people were killed in the Aug. 26 floods, likely caused by a glacier collapse, and more than 5,000 remain missing, according to Nepal's disaster management agency. China said Friday 31 people were killed and 531 were missing on the Tibet side of the border, according to Chinese official news agency Xinhua.

Nepal's disaster agency estimated Friday that flooding caused at least 387.5 billion Nepalese rupees (\$2.5 billion) in damage to infrastructure and property.

Today in History: September 5, Munich Olympics massacre

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Sept. 5, the 248th day of 2026. There are 117 days left in the year.

On Sept. 5, 1972, Palestinian militants attacked the Israeli Olympic delegation at the Munich Games, killing two and taking nine others hostage; five of the militants, all nine hostages and a German police officer were killed in the following 24 hours.

In 1774, the first Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia.

In 1836, Sam Houston won the first presidential election in the newly established Republic of Texas.

In 1905, the Treaty of Portsmouth was signed, ending the Russo-Japanese war; for his efforts in mediating the peace negotiations, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the following year.

In 1957, Jack Kerouac's novel "On the Road" was published.

In 1960, Muhammad Ali (as Cassius Clay) won the gold medal in the light heavyweight boxing division at the Olympic Games in Rome.

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford survived an assassination attempt by Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a disciple of Charles Manson, in Sacramento, California. (Fromme was released from prison on parole in 2009.)

In 1977, NASA launched Voyager 1 to study Jupiter, several of its moons, and later Saturn; in 2012, the spacecraft became the first human-made object to leave the solar system.

In 1986, four hijackers who had seized a Pan Am jumbo jet on the ground in Karachi, Pakistan, opened fire on the jet's passengers; a total of 20 passengers and crew members were killed before Pakistani commandos stormed the jetliner.

In 1991, the 35th annual Naval Aviation Symposium held by the Tailhook Association opened in Las Vegas; during the four-day gathering, there were reports that as many as 90 people, most of them women, were sexually assaulted or otherwise harassed. (The episode triggered the resignation of Navy Secretary Henry L. Garrett III.)

In 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order aimed at rebranding the Department of Defense as the Department of War. The move required formal approval by Congress, which showed no immediate interest in taking up the matter.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lucille Soong (TV: "Fresh Off the Boat") is 91. Actor William Devane is 87. Actor George Lazenby is 87. Film director Werner Herzog is 84. Singer Al Stewart is 81. "Cathy" cartoonist Cathy Guisewite (GYZ'-wyt) is 76. Actor Michael Keaton is 75. Actor Rose McGowan is 53. Olympic gold medal gymnast Tatiana Gutsu is 50. Actor Carice Van Houten is 50. Mixed martial artist Francis Ngannou is 40. Olympic gold medal figure skater Yuna Kim is 36. Singer Jada Kingdom is 28. Soccer player Bukayo Saka is 25.