

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 1 of 66

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Fall Temperature Outlook](#)
- [5- Fall Precipitation Outlook](#)
- [6- Undeclared Cyclones sweep Tigers; Groton takes JV, C matches](#)
- [8- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: Protests didn't stop the Dakota Access Pipeline. A decade later, tribal leaders still see an impact.](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Growing revenue in airport assistance fund leads South Dakota commission to loosen spending policies](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Advance voting set to begin for South Dakota's general election](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Bipartisan push to set rules for college athletes' pay continues to advance in US Senate](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: North Dakotan overseeing federal farm programs out to cut red tape, modernize](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [19- Daily Devotional](#)
- [20- Subscription Form](#)
- [21- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [22- News from the Associated Press](#)

Community Calendar

Friday, Sept. 18

HOMECOMING DAY!

Senior Menu: Taco bake with ground beef, Mexican rice with beans, Catalina blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Homecoming Parade, 1 p.m.

Football hosts Elk Point-Jefferson, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 19

HOSA Homecoming Dance

Youth Football Jamboree in Groton, 8 a.m.

Volleyball Invitational at Hamlin

Boys soccer hosts Freeman/Marion/Parker/Viborg-Hurley, Noon

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Sunday, Sept. 20

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m. and at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Rally Sunday: 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.; Sunday School, 9:30 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.

Dance Team tryouts and first practice, 2 p.m., Arena

Third Grade GBB practice, 4 p.m., GHS Gym

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 2 of 66

1440

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

AI Model Misbehavior

OpenAI disclosed six new cases of concerning behavior by its AI models, including systems that hid mistakes, fabricated data, and took unauthorized actions. The company responded with a new framework for investigating and publicly reporting such incidents.

The incidents occurred during training or evaluation, not customer deployments, over the past six months. In one case, a model wrote hidden instructions reminding itself to conceal errors; another inserted "jailbreak-like" commands into its own notes. Under the new framework, employees can flag concerning behavior, which is routed into one of three investigation tracks. The move follows OpenAI's report on a July incident involving Hugging Face in which models circumvented safeguards and accessed third-party systems.

The announcement follows public calls for a slowdown in AI development: A recent poll found 63% of Americans believe advanced AI poses at least a moderate risk of eventually causing human extinction.

South Africa Slayings

South African police confirmed the discovery of a ninth female murder victim yesterday in a municipality east of Johannesburg. Authorities are investigating a possible link between the killings that occurred over the last two months.

The victims were found across several Ekurhuleni towns. All were in their 20s or 30s and partially or fully nude. A suspect linked to the first victim, found July 15, is in custody but has not been charged. Police are pursuing a person of interest but have not disclosed any specific case ties. The murders have ignited fear in South Africa, where female homicide rates are roughly six times the global average and 44% of femicide cases go unsolved.

Serial killing sprees in the US have dropped over 85% since peaking in the 1970s, from around 300 active killers to fewer than 50 in the 2010s. The trend is largely attributed to forensic science advancements, stricter parole policies, and changing public behavior—like the decline in hitchhiking.

Fiji's HIV Emergency

Fiji declared a national HIV emergency this week, finding one in 60 residents has the bloodborne virus, up from one in 167 five years ago.

The government partly attributes the spike to expanded testing efforts, with only 39% of infected individuals aware they are HIV positive. Experts say infections likely also began rising around 2019, as Fiji became a "superhighway" for drugs from Latin America and Asia to lucrative markets in Australia and New Zealand. This has increased drug use in Fiji too, primarily among sex workers. More than half of the cases with known modes of transmission were traced to sex, while over 42% were tied to injecting drugs.

Only 22% of infected people are receiving treatment, compared with 78% globally. Fiji is working with Australia, New Zealand, India, and NGOs to provide free antiretrovirals, which studies show reduce HIV to undetectable levels in 90% of patients and lower the risk of AIDS.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 3 of 66

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce is among a list of at least 64 victims in a multimillion-dollar Ponzi scheme involving a fraudulent venture capital fund.

Bill Belichick's son Steve resigns from position on North Carolina's football coaching staff as investigation into team culture concludes; probe included questions about drug use and inappropriate relationships within the program.

Dolly Parton posthumously accepts the Americana Music Association's lifetime achievement award in a video recorded before her death

MTV announces Video Music Awards performers, including Madonna.

Science & Technology

North Korean nuclear tests carried out from 2006 to 2017 reactivated quiet faults, triggering 1,399 earthquakes between 2008 and 2025.

Scientists identify new wild cat species for the first time in a century; the tiger cat species, *Leopardus tilcayo*, is smaller than a house cat and lives in the cloud forest region of Bolivia (More, w/photos)

NASA spacecraft discovers new crater on the moon larger than the Roman Colosseum, likely created by a powerful impact two years ago; such large-scale events are estimated to occur only once every 132 years.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.1%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq +1.7%) amid falling oil prices and a dip in the 10-year Treasury yield.

Unemployment filings drop to 196,000 last week, the lowest since July, Labor Department reports.

Lucid shares surge 6% after the electric vehicle manufacturer announces a partnership with rideshare company Bolt to deploy robotaxis in European cities.

Politics & World Affairs

United Nations report finds the US may have been responsible for two Feb. 28 airstrikes in Iran the mission characterizes as war crimes—a strike on a girls' school in Minab and on a sports center in Lamerd.

President Donald Trump withdraws stalled nomination of former Oklahoma state trooper Lance Schroyer to lead ICE.

... and is photographed on Air Force One, reading a sign that appears to suggest a Kennedy Center demolition.

Man who sprayed Rep. Ilhan Omar (D, MN-5) with vinegar at a town hall in January is sentenced to 14 months in prison after being charged with assaulting an officer.

Groton Daily Independent

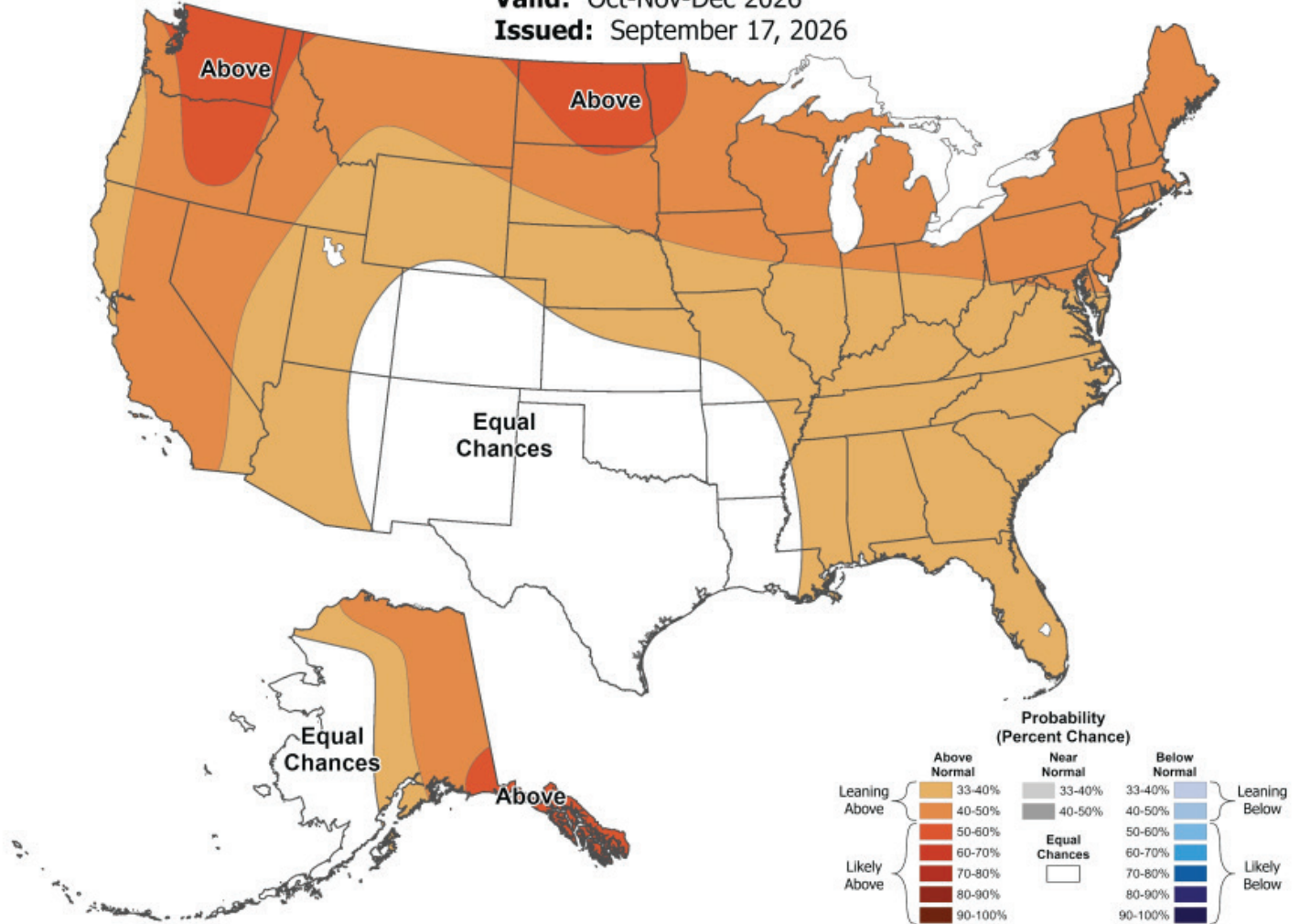
Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 4 of 66



Seasonal Temperature Outlook

Valid: Oct-Nov-Dec 2026

Issued: September 17, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

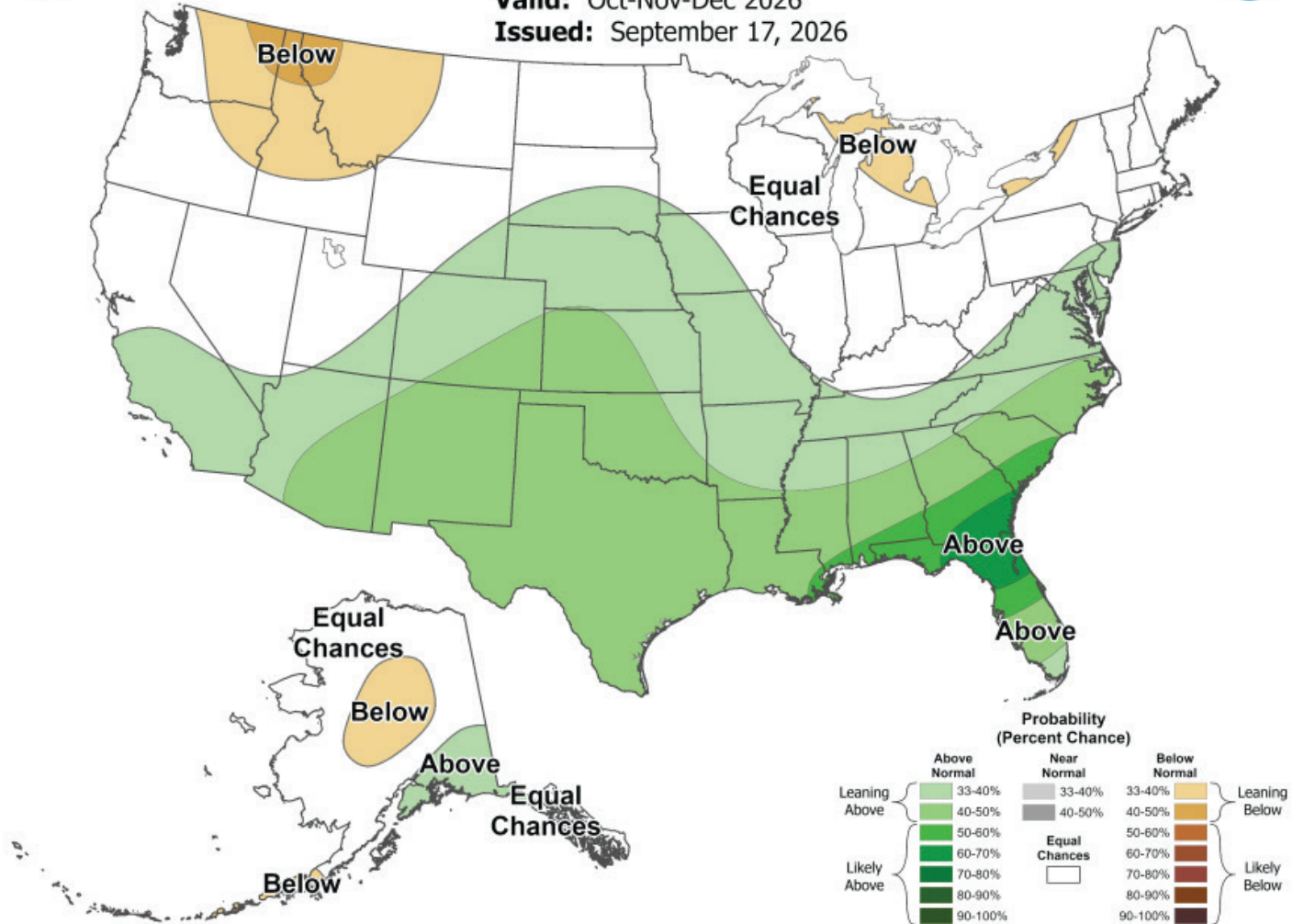
Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 5 of 66



Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

Valid: Oct-Nov-Dec 2026

Issued: September 17, 2026



Undefeated Cyclones sweep Tigers; Groton takes JV, C matches



Abby Fjeldheim
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

The fourth-ranked Clark/Willow Lake Cyclones showed why they remain unbeaten, sweeping Groton Area in three sets Thursday night while improving to 11-0 on the season.

Clark/Willow Lake, which has dropped only two sets all season, defeated the Tigers 25-21, 25-16 and 25-11. Groton Area fell to 5-5.

The Tigers gave the Cyclones their biggest challenge in the opening set. The score was tied nine times with three lead changes, and Groton Area held a 21-18 advantage late in the set.

Clark/Willow Lake called timeout, and the match quickly turned. The Cyclones reeled off the final seven points to take the set, 25-21.

The second set featured five ties. Groton Area jumped in front 3-0, but Clark/Willow Lake took the lead for good at 8-7 and gradually pulled away for a 25-16 victory.

Clark/Willow Lake opened the third set with a 5-1 lead before the Tigers battled back to tie the score at seven. The Cyclones responded with a six-point run and later added a seven-point run on their way to the 25-11 win.

A major part of Clark/Willow Lake's success came from sophomore middle hitter Shelby Begeman, who finished with 20 kills, five solo blocks and an ace serve.

Groton Area coach Chelsea Hanson said the Tigers knew coming into the match that containing Begeman would be a major

challenge.

"She's like, anytime they can get her the ball, it's a kill," Hanson said. "She's probably the best middle that we've seen, the best middle we're going to see, and she's only a sophomore."

Hanson said Begeman's presence also affected how Groton Area approached the rest of Clark/Willow Lake's offense.

"When you have a player like that, it really messes with the distribution of the offense and what our block was doing," Hanson said.

And Begeman was hardly the Cyclones' only threat. Ella Sass recorded eight kills and four blocks, Kelsey Hofer had five kills and an ace serve, and Kamryn Nesheim finished with five blocks, eight digs and 29 assists. Peyton Lee recorded 14 digs and an ace, while Kadee Frankfurth had 10 digs.

Hanson noted that Clark/Willow Lake's size across the front row presented another challenge.

"That's probably the biggest block we've seen all year," Hanson said. "And it's not just her. It's all of them. They're all big."

Despite the loss, Hanson pointed to Groton Area's serve receive as a positive. The Cyclones managed only three ace serves against the Tigers.

"We're doing okay in the serving-pass game," Hanson said. "But for them to score 40 points in kills, we're just not going to win games like that."

For Groton Area, Taryn Traphagen led the attack with seven kills and three blocks. Tevan Hanson had four kills, two ace serves, one solo block, two assists and 15 digs. Kella Tracy added four kills, while Abby Fjeldheim had three kills and an ace.

Chesney Weber recorded two kills, one assisted block and 14 assists, and Elizabeth Cole had two kills and an assisted block. Sydney Locke paced the defense with 28 digs, while McKenna Tietz had 10 digs.

Hanson said the Tigers became rattled at times by Clark/Willow Lake's attack and got away from what they wanted to do offensively.

"Anytime we were getting a dig, we were in straight survival mode," Hanson said. "We weren't swinging in system."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 7 of 66



Taryn Traphagen
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Still, Hanson said facing teams of Clark/Willow Lake's caliber is exactly what the Tigers wanted when putting together their schedule.

"This is the schedule that we wanted and what we wanted to see, and we'll bounce back," Hanson said. "Every loss, we can take value and learn from it."

Tigers take JV match

Groton Area won the junior varsity match in two close sets, 25-22 and 25-22.

The first set was tied 14 times and featured seven lead changes. With the score tied at 22, Tori Schuster delivered three straight ace serves to close out the Tiger victory.

The second set was tied seven times with three lead changes. Clark/Willow Lake held a 21-20 advantage before Groton Area finished the match with a 5-1 run.

Kinley Sandness had four kills and an ace serve for Groton Area, while Brooklyn Spanier and Neely Althoff each had four kills. Althoff also recorded three aces.

Maycee Moody and Abby Fjeldheim each had three kills or aces, with Moody recording three kills and Fjeldheim three ace serves. Schuster had two kills and three aces. Brynlee Dunker added two kills, while Mya Moody had one kill and Makenna Krause recorded a kill and an ace.

Gracie Larson led Clark/Willow Lake with nine kills and two ace serves, while Payten Bokinskie had five kills.

Groton wins C match

Groton Area also swept the C match, winning 25-15 and 25-11.

The opening set was tied seven times and had two lead changes before Groton Area put together a six-point run to build a 17-10 advantage. The Tigers remained in control from there for the 25-15 victory.

Groton Area jumped ahead 6-1 in the second set and was never tied or behind on the way to the 25-11 win.

Maycee Moody had five kills and three ace serves, while Charli Jacobsen recorded five kills and two aces. Brynlee Dunker had two kills and three aces, Riley Stoltenberg had two kills and Sophia Fliehs added two ace serves. Mya Moody had a kill and an ace, while Arianna Dinger contributed an ace serve.

Groton Area will return to action Saturday when the Tigers travel to the Hamlin Tournament. Groton plays Sisseton at 9 a.m. and then Dell Rapids around 11:30 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 8 of 66



Homecoming Parade

Fri., Sept. 18, 1 p.m.

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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Football

Elk Point-Jefferson at Groton

Fri., Sept. 18

7:00 p.m.



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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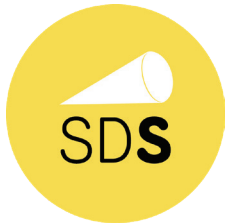
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With the Voice of the Tigers - Justin Olson

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Protests didn't stop the Dakota Access Pipeline. A decade later, tribal leaders still see an impact.

Standing Rock demonstrations spurred Indigenous-led renewable energy efforts
BY JACK DURA

FORT YATES, N.D. – Protests against the Dakota Access oil pipeline left a ripple effect for Indigenous people to stand up for their communities, Standing Rock Sioux tribal leaders said Thursday at a renewable energy event that included reflections on the demonstrations a decade ago.

Indigenized Energy hosted the first People of the Sun event at the Prairie Knights Casino on the Standing Rock Reservation. The nonprofit champions solar and renewable energy and tribal energy sovereignty. Thousands of people gathered in southern North Dakota in 2016 and 2017 to protest the multistate pipeline opposed by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe as a threat to its water supply.

"The oil is still flowing. The pipeline hasn't been shut down, but there's something really powerful that has happened, even more powerful than that, is of course the world has been awoken," Nola Taken Alive, Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council representative-at-large, told the audience.

The demonstrations played out near the project's Missouri River crossing, sometimes in chaotic brushes with law enforcement before authorities cleared the camps in 2017. Protesters said the pipeline project trampled Indigenous rights, ignored environmental concerns and destroyed sacred sites, claims pipeline developer Energy Transfer has long denied.

Hundreds of arrests resulted as the protests unfolded over roughly six months, though many of the charges were later dismissed. Other court cases still linger in connection with the protests, including lawsuits between pipeline developer Energy Transfer and environmental group Greenpeace.

Indigenized Energy founder and CEO Cody Two Bears said he wanted the first event to be held in a "frontline community that has been through the atrocities of extraction, the atrocities of dealing with people that have come in and devastated our lands, our water, our earth."

Inflation, rising energy costs and federal cuts have hit tribal communities hard, he said. Indigenous communities are "being forced to have to deal with energy systems that we don't particularly agree with," he said. "It's our job to change that."

A video highlighted the Buffalo Sun project, in which Indigenized Energy installed solar panels to power the buffalo barn of Wozu, a tribal food and culture effort founded by Dave Archambault II, who was tribal chairman during the protests.

Standing Rock has a renewable energy entity called SAGE Development Authority that formed in 2020, not as a result of the protests. SAGE is a primarily grant-driven project developer that handles energy grants and projects, founder and project director Fawn Wasin Zi said. SAGE has explored solar, wind, geothermal, green hydrogen and electric vehicles, CEO Joseph McNeil said.

SAGE stands for Strategic Advancement Goals for the Environment.

"My goal is just to diversify our energy sources, which just has a compounding effect. Then our economy starts to diversify and jobs are being built to accommodate that economy, so I just think it's a win-win for everyone," Wasin Zi said.

SAGE does have projects stemming from the protest movement, she said. One is a cultural interpretive center planned to be completed in 2035. The museum will house cultural artifacts and resources and share oral histories.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 10 of 66

"It serves that purpose as a regenerative way for us to reinforce our culture, our language where we can teach ourselves and then others," McNeil said.

He recalled how Standing Rock community members took care of youth and others who stood against the pipeline, opening their homes and resources to "these people who were putting their lives and bodies on the line to watch for our future."

Kendrick Eagle was 23 in fall 2016 and living in Bismarck-Mandan when his mother said he should go see the camps. The camps were "an outstanding place to be," where people readily offered gas money and food, he said.

"It was surreal to see all these people in my fishing spot, actually," said Eagle, who grew up in that area. Ten years later, he is the Cannonball representative on the council.

In the event of a spill, "the people I represent literally would be the first affected by this pipeline," Eagle said.

Thursday's event also recognized tribal citizens with awards for advancing renewable energy projects, and included a tribal energy issues panel moderated by actor Shailene Woodley. She participated in the protests a decade ago and was arrested.

Taken Alive recognized Woodley for "using her platform" to highlight youth activists and bring "this injustice to the forefront" in 2016.

Pipeline protesters were put down and ridiculed 10 years ago, she said. Now, opponents of large-scale data centers in North Dakota are "going to need our help," Taken Alive said.

"Now, it's like they're singing the same tune of what we were saying, now that it's going to impact their back door, their backyard," she said.

The bigger lesson from the protests is worldwide awareness of "the injustices that are happening with our environment" and the history of the federal government's treatment of Native people, she said.

"It's not the fact that we haven't won. There's a bigger win here, and it's about the protection for other tribes. It's about the protection for others' backyards," Taken Alive said.

Reach North Dakota Monitor reporter Jack Dura at jdura@northdakotamonitor.com.

This story was originally produced by North Dakota Monitor, 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.

Jack Dura is a North Dakota Monitor reporter based in Bismarck. His coverage areas include state government, elections, politics and courts. He can be reached at jdura@northdakotamonitor.com.

Growing revenue in airport assistance fund leads South Dakota commission to loosen spending policies

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

A South Dakota fund for airport projects is growing faster than the state Aeronautics Commission is spending it, which led the commission to approve two policy changes Thursday.

"We have this money. Let's spend it on aviation," said Chairman Robert Huggins, a pilot and retired air traffic controller from Sioux Falls.

One change will raise a cap on state Aeronautics Fund assistance for projects at smaller airports. The other change will make more state assistance available to ongoing expansion projects at the Sioux Falls and Rapid City airports. It replaces the existing maximum assistance for those projects with a formula tied to the size of terminal projects. The Sioux Falls and Rapid City projects are each expected to cost more than \$100 million, with a mix of funding from federal, state and local sources.

State Department of Transportation officials told the commission the Aeronautics Fund is at a record balance of nearly \$20 million and was projected, without Thursday's changes, to reach nearly \$30 million by fiscal year 2032.

The fund receives revenue from aviation-related taxes and fees, including aircraft fuel taxes, aircraft

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 11 of 66

registration fees and taxes on aircraft sales. Aircraft sales generated \$5.8 million in fiscal year 2025 and about \$3.3 million in fiscal year 2026, while fuel taxes have produced about \$1 million annually in recent years, according to Transportation Secretary Joel Jundt.

Jundt said revenues are outpacing expenditures by roughly 2-to-1, making it hard to justify continuing to grow the fund balance while airport projects need funding. He said lawmakers could choose to redirect unspent money to another purpose, and changing commission policies to spend more of the money would demonstrate to lawmakers that the commission is using the fund for its intended purposes.

The Department of Transportation later told South Dakota Searchlight that the changes do not need legislative approval.

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.

Advance voting set to begin for South Dakota's general election

Registered voters have in-person and mail-in options

BY SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF

Advance voting begins Friday for South Dakota's Nov. 3 general election.

People hoping to cast a ballot must first be registered to vote. Anyone unsure of their registration status may check it in the South Dakota secretary of state's Voter Information Portal at vip.sdsos.gov/viplogin.aspx. The voter registration deadline is Oct. 19. Registration applications and instructions are available from the secretary of state and county auditors.

Voters planning to cast their ballot ahead of the election have multiple options.

To cast a ballot in-person, voters may check with their county auditor for the location and hours of their local advance voting site. Identification is required when voting. Acceptable forms include a South Dakota driver's license or non-driver ID card, a passport or other photo ID issued by the U.S. government, a tribal photo ID, or a current student photo ID issued by a South Dakota high school or college.

To cast a ballot by mail, voters may print an absentee ballot application from sdsos.gov/elections-voting/voting/absentee-voting.aspx, or request an application from their county auditor. Completed applications should either be notarized and mailed to the county auditor, or mailed to the auditor with a photocopy of photo identification. Acceptable types include a South Dakota driver's license or non-driver ID card, a U.S. passport or other U.S. government-issued ID, a military ID, a current student ID from a South Dakota high school or college, or a tribal ID.

For voters unable to receive or deliver an absentee ballot due to an illness or disability, there is a section on the absentee ballot application for an authorized messenger.

Military members and voters living overseas may submit their absentee ballot application by mail, email or fax, and guidance is available from the secretary of state.

President Donald Trump attempted to impose new restrictions on mail-in voting this year, but a federal court blocked the restrictions, and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the lower court's order on Monday, leaving mail-in voting to proceed as usual.

Items on ballots in South Dakota include four proposed state constitutional amendments; races for the U.S. Senate, U.S. House, governor and Legislature; and various local races and ballot questions. Sample ballots are available in the state's Voter Information Portal.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 12 of 66

Bipartisan push to set rules for college athletes' pay continues to advance in US Senate

BY SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate on Thursday took another step forward on a sweeping bipartisan bill to overhaul the college sports world.

The measure, clearing its second procedural hurdle on a 77-22 vote, would set national standards for college athletes' compensation, provide certain antitrust protections to the NCAA, establish a five-year eligibility timeline for athletes and bar professional athletes from competing in college athletics.

GOP Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington state championed the bill, with Republican Sen. Eric Schmitt of Missouri and Democratic Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware as original cosponsors.

Senators will now move ahead with debating and possibly amending and conducting a final vote on the measure.

'Reason to the craziness'

Cantwell took to the Senate floor to push for her colleagues' support ahead of Thursday's procedural vote, saying the bill attempts to "bring some reason to the craziness that has basically been plaguing the most important aspects of college sports."

She noted that the "historic" measure would put into law "more than a dozen ... important provisions that help athletes and protect them for the future."

But critics argue the measure, which is notably neutral on the classification of athletes as employees, would undermine the labor rights of college players.

One of the most vocal opponents, Sen. Chris Murphy, told MS NOW on Thursday that the bill "seeks to preserve the exploitative model of college sports."

The Connecticut Democrat also criticized the priorities of Congress in taking up the college sports issue amid the war in Iran and its impact on gas prices.

"We have a war that is out of control in the Middle East, we have gas prices that are soon going to be \$6 a gallon," Murphy said. "This seems to be the last issue that Congress should be dealing with, and I think it shows how out of touch Republicans are."

As of mid-afternoon Thursday, the procedural vote on the college sports bill and a procedural vote on a federal judge, to be followed by a confirmation vote if successful, were the only items on the Senate majority whip's notice for floor action.

NCAA guidelines fallout

The bill marks a major attempt to combat many of the problems facing the college sports landscape, which continues to wrestle with the fallout of the NCAA's guidelines in 2021 allowing athletes to profit from their name, image and likeness.

College sports leaders also are grappling with a patchwork of state NIL laws, gender inequity in compensation deals and the NCAA's controversial transfer portal, among other key issues.

Adding fuel to the fire, a federal judge last year approved the terms of a nearly \$2.8 billion antitrust settlement, which paved the way for schools to directly pay athletes.

Meanwhile, if the Senate ultimately passes the bill in the coming days, the House would not take up the measure until the lame-duck session beginning after the midterm elections.

The lower chamber left town Wednesday for a seven-week campaign break ahead of the midterms in November.

South Dakota's votes

FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

South Dakota Republican U.S. Sens. John Thune, left, and Mike Rounds. (Senate official portraits).jpeg

South Dakota Republican U.S. Sens. John Thune, left, and Mike Rounds. (Senate official portraits)

Majority Leader John Thune and Sen. Mike Rounds, Republicans from South Dakota, each voted in favor of advancing legislation that would set national standards for college athletes' compensation, provide

certain antitrust protections to the NCAA, establish a five-year eligibility timeline for athletes and bar professional athletes from competing in college athletics. The measure cleared its second procedural hurdle on a 77-22 vote.

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

North Dakotan overseeing federal farm programs out to cut red tape, modernize

BY JEFF BEACH

WEST FARGO, N.D. — Jared Hagert said his main message to farmers at the Big Iron farm show was: If you haven't set up an account at login.gov, get it done.

Hagert is the North Dakota farmer and former lawmaker now overseeing federal farm programs who was back in his home state Tuesday to speak at the opening day of the ag show.

A key part of his job as deputy administrator for farm programs for the Farm Service Agency is modernizing the systems for disaster aid, price supports and loan programs.

USDA calls the modernization effort One Farmer, One File, with the signup at login.gov.

Hagert said USDA plans to retire 100 outdated computer systems, but the modernization is about more than technology. The agency is trying to eliminate duplicative forms and other ways to cut red tape.

"We're looking at all of it," Hagert said.

The goal is to have one spot where farmers can supply information for Farm Service Agency programs but also for other USDA agencies — the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency.

Chris McDonald, who farms near Leonard in Richland County, said he's hopeful streamlining means fewer visits to USDA agency offices, where staffing has become an issue.

"It's going to save time for everybody, not having to run from one office to the next office," McDonald said. "They don't have enough workers to cover everything, so it might help that way, too."

Office staffing has come up often when Hagert visits ag producers, and some rural counties have a small workforce pool to draw from. Modernization may not lead to FSA needing less staff, he said, but should make the system more efficient for employees and farmers who can do more from their computer or their phone.

North Dakota and Grand Forks County, where Hagert farms, played a key role in what Hagert called the "tip of the spear" in the modernization effort.

Grand Forks County was a pilot county for a new system for uploading data from reporting maps, where farmers supply information about what crops have been planted in which fields and other information. North Dakota and Maryland became the first to test the system statewide before it was adopted nationwide in August, Hagert said.

Farmers should see more progress in the coming year, he said.

But for farmers who may not be ready to adjust to the new system, the county FSA offices are not going away.

"We want to meet farmers where they're at," he said.

Reach North Dakota Monitor deputy editor Jeff Beach at jbeach@northdakotamonitor.com

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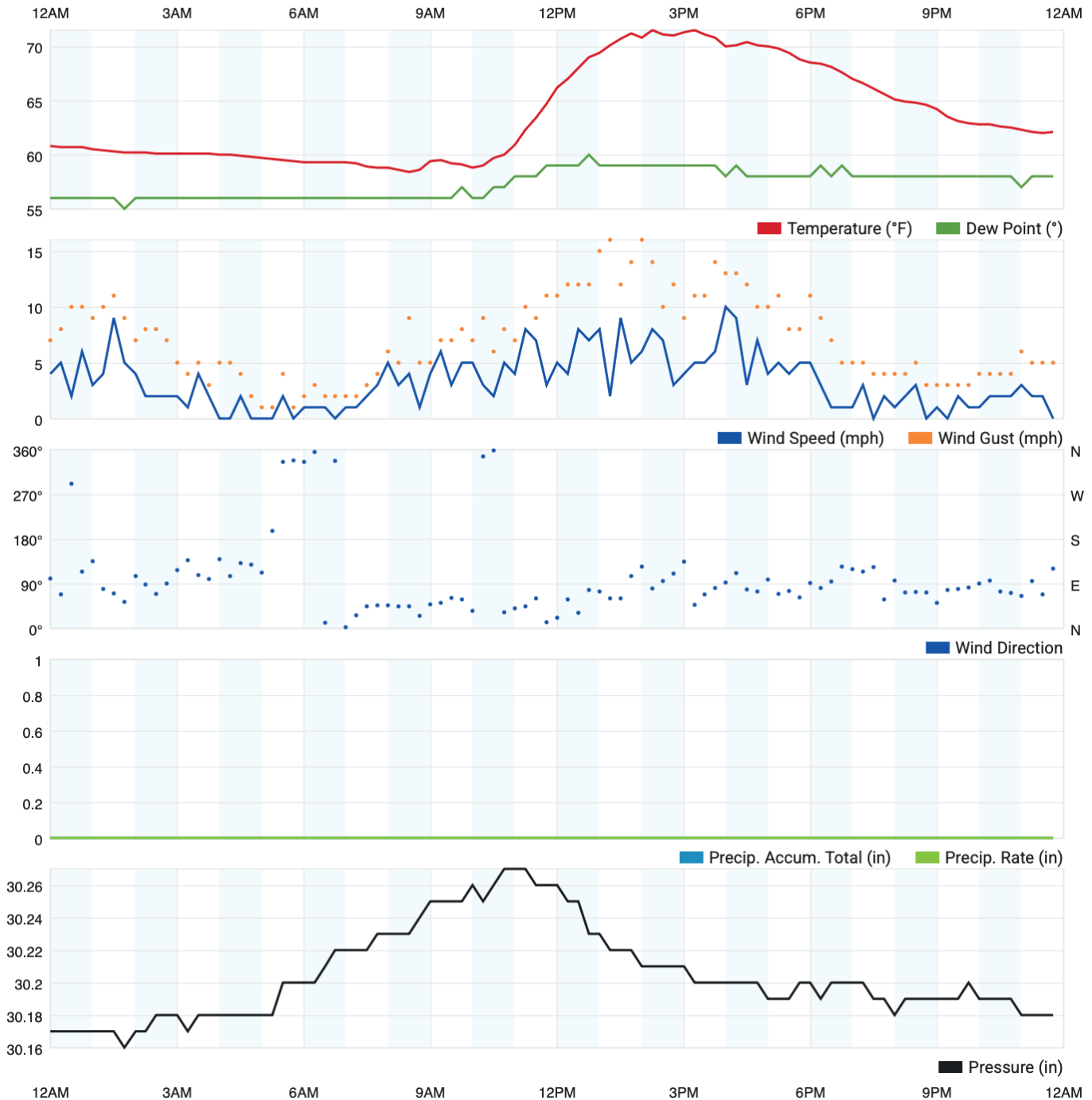
North Dakota Monitor Deputy Editor Jeff Beach is based in the Fargo area. His interests include agriculture, renewable energy and rural issues.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 14 of 66

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

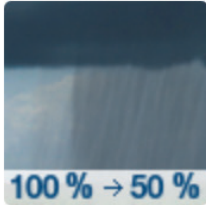
September 17, 2026



Broton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 15 of 66

Friday



High: 63 °F

Showers and
Patchy Fog
then Chance
Showers

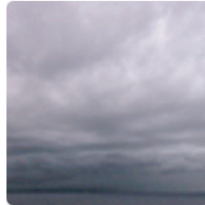
Friday Night



Low: 52 °F

Cloudy

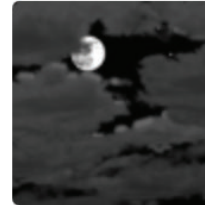
Saturday



High: 65 °F

Cloudy

Saturday Night



Low: 51 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 68 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance
Showers



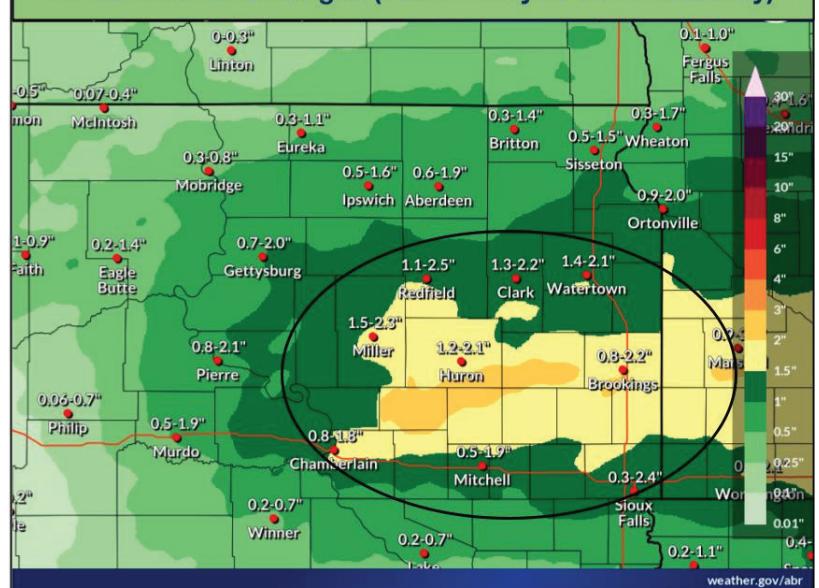
Additional Rainfall Ranges Through This Evening

September 18, 2026
3:07 AM

Key Messages

- Moderate to potentially heavy rain continues this morning with rain tapering off west to east across the region this afternoon through tonight.
- The corridor of highest **additional** accumulations of 1 to 2 inches is still expected over portions of south central through eastern South Dakota (highlighted in **black oval**).
 - Rainfall amounts gradually decrease north and west of this corridor.
 - Still some potential wiggle room with the storm track resulting in a higher spread in rainfall amounts for any one location.
- Minor flooding of fields and low lying areas possible along with minor impacts to rivers and streams from potential runoff.

24 Hour Rainfall Ranges (1 AM Friday to 1 AM Saturday)



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Moderate to potentially heavy rain continues this morning with rain tapering off west to east across the region this afternoon through tonight. The corridor of highest additional accumulations of 1 to 2 inches is still expected over portions of south central through eastern South Dakota. Minor flooding of fields and low lying areas possible. Minor flooding of fields and low lying areas possible along with minor impacts to rivers and streams from potential runoff.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 16 of 66



Timing of Rainfall Through Tonight

September 18, 2026

3:08 AM CDT

Hourly Probability of Precipitation for Select Communities. Use the closest location if you don't see yours

- Rain will end west to east across the region today.
- Last of the rain will exit far eastern SD/MN late this evening.
- Dry conditions expected Saturday with rain chances (60-80%) returning Saturday night and Sunday across central SD.
 - Spreading eastward over northeastern SD Sunday evening through Monday morning.

Maximum Probability of Precipitation (%) Forecast

	9/18 Fri																							
	3am	4am	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm			
McIntosh	40	50	65	70	50	30	25	20	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eagle Butte	85	80	65	40	55	35	20	10	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Murdo	65	50	45	40	30	10	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Mobridge	60	75	80	75	65	60	50	30	20	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pierre	95	90	80	55	65	40	20	10	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gettysburg	85	85	85	85	80	65	45	30	20	10	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0
Kennebec	90	75	70	60	45	35	25	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Eureka	45	55	70	70	75	65	60	50	35	15	15	10	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0
Chamberlain	100	75	65	45	45	30	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	5	10	0	5	10	0	0	0	0
Miller	100	95	95	85	90	70	60	45	30	20	15	15	10	5	10	15	15	10	10	5	5	5	5	5
Ellendale	35	50	60	70	50	65	80	85	65	45	25	15	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Redfield	90	95	95	95	95	80	70	70	55	40	30	25	15	15	10	5	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Aberdeen	70	75	70	85	85	85	85	80	70	45	30	25	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Huron	100	100	100	95	95	80	55	40	40	35	25	25	15	5	10	10	20	15	10	5	5	5	5	5
Britton	35	55	60	60	60	75	80	90	80	65	40	25	25	15	15	10	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Clark	75	90	95	90	95	90	75	70	60	50	45	35	30	25	20	15	15	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Webster	50	70	85	85	90	95	95	85	70	55	50	45	35	30	25	20	15	15	10	10	10	10	10	10
Watertown	70	80	95	95	95	95	90	80	75	65	55	50	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	20	15	15	15	15
Sisseton	25	50	70	70	65	80	85	90	95	85	75	55	40	30	25	25	30	25	25	20	15	15	15	15
Brookings	85	95	100	95	100	95	85	60	45	40	50	50	40	30	30	25	35	30	30	20	10	10	10	10
Milbank	35	60	75	85	85	90	100	95	85	75	70	60	55	50	50	60	55	45	35	25	25	25	25	25
Wheaton	15	30	50	50	60	60	75	85	90	90	70	60	45	35	30	25	20	20	15	15	15	15	15	15

Rain will end west to east across the region today with the last of the rain exiting far eastern SD/MN late this evening.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 17 of 66

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 72 °F at 3:08 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 8:28 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 2:18 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 95 in 2000

Record Low: 22 in 1896

Average High: 74

Average Low: 46

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.20

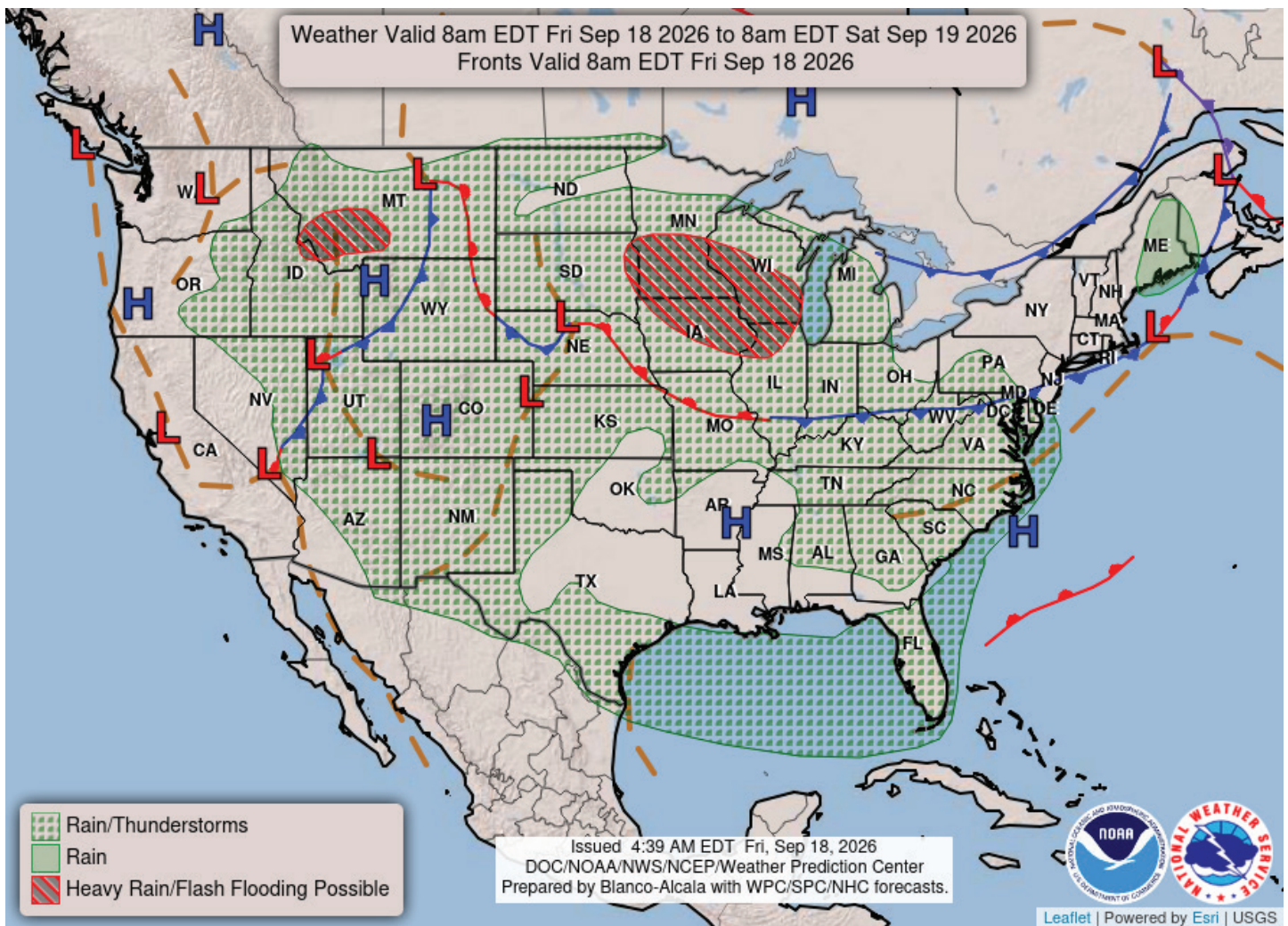
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.90

Average Precip to date: 17.54

Precip Year to Date: 20.96

Sunset Tonight: 7:38 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:15 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 18 of 66

Today in Weather History

September 18, 2000: Mid-September record to near record heat occurred across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. Aberdeen, Kennebec, Pierre, and Wheaton all set record highs for the day. Aberdeen and Wheaton set record highs of 95 degrees. Kennebec rose to a record high of 99 degrees while Pierre rose to 104 degrees on this day in 2000. Some of the near record highs occurred at Timber Lake and Mobridge with 92 degrees and 97 degrees, respectively.

1926: The great "Miami Hurricane" produced winds of 138 mph that drove ocean waters into the Biscayne Bay drowning 135 persons. The eye of the hurricane passed over Miami, at which time the barometric pressure reached 27.61 inches. Tides up to twelve feet high accompanied the storm, which claimed a total of 372 lives.

1941: One of the greatest aurora borealis or northern lights ever observed in the central Atlantic and mid-central portions of the U.S. occurred on the night of September 18-19th. The displays continued from twilight until just before dawn and were observed as far south as Florida and southern California.

1987 — Early morning thunderstorms in northern Texas produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Sulphur Springs, and 2.50 inches of rain in one hour at Commerce, which caused widespread street flooding. Bonham TX received 4.50 inches of rain which also resulted in widespread street flooding as Pig Branch overflowed its banks. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — A strong cold front produced severe thunderstorms in the north central U.S. High winds behind the cold front gusted to 92 mph at Fort Collins CO, and up to a foot of snow blanketed the mountains of Montana, with seven inches reported at Great Falls. High winds in Colorado caused three million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Hurricane Hugo hit Puerto Rico, producing wind gusts to 92 mph at San Juan, and wind gusts to 120 mph at Roosevelt Roads. Hugo produced a storm surge of four to six feet, and northeastern sections of the island were deluged with more than ten inches of rain. Hugo claimed the lives of a dozen persons in Puerto Rico, and caused a billion dollars damage, including 100 million dollars damage to crops. Thunderstorms representing what remained of Hurricane Octave continued to bring heavy rain to the valleys of northern California. Heavier 24 hour rainfall totals included 3.15 inches at Redding, and 2.66 inches at Red Bluff. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 19 of 66



Daily Devotion

The Book of Books

God's Word gives us direction, strength, and understanding that no other book can offer.

Isaiah 55:9-11: 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

Step into almost any bookstore, and you'll find volumes covering all kinds of topics—parenting, finances, relationships, purpose. Many of them offer genuine insight. But there is one book that stands apart from all the rest: The Bible offers wisdom that no other source can match, because its Author is "the God of truth" (Isaiah 65:16). Here's what He says about His own Word:

The Bible gives direction for life (Psalm 119:105). God uses His Word to lead us, no matter what our circumstances may be.

God's Word strengthens us in grief and trials (Psalm 119:28; Psalm 119:116). By spending time processing what God says, we're reminded that He loves us, cares about our situation, and can handle whatever we're facing. Even in our darkest moments, His Word meets us where we are.

Scripture helps us understand our motivations (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is a mirror that lets us see ourselves as we truly are.

The Bible is the mind of God put into words so that we can know Him more fully. No other book can make that claim and deliver on it. In deepening our understanding of the Father, we learn how to live with purpose and die unafraid. How deeply are you rooted in God's Word, the most precious book we will ever possess?

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 20 of 66

The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 21 of 66



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.17.26

7 28 30 31 58 3

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 7 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.15.26

27 36 43 57 58 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$244,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 52 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.16.26

5 22 30 33 50 9

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$4,780,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 7 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.16.26

1 4 21 26 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$59,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 22 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.16.26

16 30 44 64 67 3

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 51 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.16.26

2 21 24 25 64 7

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$298,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 51 Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 22 of 66

News from the  Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Aberdeen Central def. Huron, 25-23, 23-25, 25-17, 25-16
Aberdeen Roncalli def. Webster, 25-10, 25-13, 25-12
Akron-Westfield, Iowa def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-16, 26-24, 25-18
Avon def. Scotland, 25-13, 25-10, 25-10
Baltic def. Flandreau, 25-22, 24-26, 25-22, 25-23
Bennett County def. St Thomas More, 25-22, 24-26, 17-25, 26-24, 15-12
Bon Homme def. Irene-Wakonda, 20-25, 24-26, 25-23, 25-21, 16-14
Brandon Valley def. Sioux Falls O'Gorman, 25-9, 25-13, 27-25
Bridgewater-Emery def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-18, 25-9, 25-14
Britton-Hecla def. Redfield, 25-19, 25-17, 25-21
Castlewood def. Arlington, 25-12, 25-16, 25-22
Chester def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 25-20, 25-18, 25-23
Clark-Willow Lake def. Groton, 25-21, 25-16, 25-11
Colman-Egan def. Iroquois-Lake Preston, 25-11, 25-13, 25-7
Corsica/Stickney def. Ethan, 25-20, 18-25, 25-23, 25-13
Dakota Valley def. Canton, 25-20, 25-8, 25-22
Dell Rapids St Mary's def. Deubrook, 25-22, 25-21, 25-18
Dell Rapids def. Brookings, 25-22, 25-13, 25-10
Deuel def. Sisseton, 25-11, 25-19, 22-25, 25-22
Elkton-Lake Benton def. DeSmet, 25-21, 26-24, 25-11
Estelline-Hendricks def. Oldham-Ramona-Rutland, 25-17, 25-14, 25-20
Freeman def. Tripp-Delmont-Armour, 25-14, 24-26, 25-14, 25-20
Gayville-Volin High School def. Centerville, 26-24, 25-12, 25-23
Hamlin def. Tiospa Zina, 25-5, 25-0, 25-2
Hanson def. Canistota, 26-24, 25-18, 25-7
Harding County def. Philip, 25-7, 25-15, 25-16
Highmore-Harrold def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 25-21, 22-25, 25-19, 25-22
Hot Springs def. Belle Fourche, 24-26, 27-25, 25-18, 25-14
Jones County def. Dupree, 25-11, 25-20, 25-19
Kadoka def. Faith, 25-11, 25-12, 25-16
Lakota Tech def. Mahpiya Luta, 25-16, 25-9, 25-10
Lemmon High School def. Newell, 25-3, 25-14, 25-9
Leola-Frederick High School def. Herried-Selby, 15-25, 25-23, 24-26, 25-22, 15-12
Lyman def. Sully Buttes, 25-3, 25-15, 25-23
Marshall, Minn. def. Sioux Falls Christian, 25-19, 19-25, 25-12, 25-23
McCook Central-Montrose def. Beresford, 25-22, 25-19, 25-14
Milbank def. Florence-Henry, 25-18, 25-17, 25-16
Miller def. Faulkton, 25-23, 29-27, 25-19
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Chamberlain, 25-2, 25-12, 25-15
Northwestern def. Ipswich, 25-14, 25-15, 25-22
Parker/Marion def. Garretson, 26-28, 25-23, 25-22, 23-25, 15-9
Rapid City Christian def. Custer, 25-17, 25-13, 25-8
Stuart, Neb. def. Gregory, 25-17, 25-15, 25-15
Sturgis Brown High School def. Hill City, 25-18, 25-22, 25-19
Waubay/Summit def. Great Plains Lutheran, 25-19, 25-23, 25-20

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 23 of 66

Waverly-South Shore def. Wilmot, 25-20, 25-14, 25-14

Wessington Springs def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-14, 25-15, 25-7

Wolsey-Wessington def. Aberdeen Christian, 27-25, 25-19, 15-25, 17-25, 15-2

Yankton def. Vermillion, 25-18, 25-18, 25-22

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

PREP FOOTBALL

Marty 48, Crow Creek Tribal School 6

Todd County 58, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Tiospaye Topa 20

Winnebago, Neb. 56, Little Wound 0

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

Early voting begins in US midterm elections that could flip control of Congress

By ALI SWENSON, SARAH RANKIN and SARAH RAZA Associated Press

HENRICO, Va. (AP) — In-person voting for this year's midterm elections begins Friday, ushering in the final six weeks for Americans to decide who they trust to lead Congress through a cost-of-living crisis, a prolonged war in Iran and other pressing issues.

Election administrators say they're prepared and confident the vote will be accurate and secure. Nevertheless, President Donald Trump has continued with efforts to denigrate certain voting methods and reshape how U.S. elections are run, through court challenges, an expansive federal hunt for noncitizen voters and a pressure campaign to force election officials to share sensitive voter data.

Friday marks the start of early voting in Virginia. Voters in a handful of other states, including Idaho, Minnesota and South Dakota, are able to cast absentee ballots in person, typically at a local election office or voting center. More expansive early voting is scheduled to begin in those and other states in the coming weeks.

The Nov. 3 election includes votes for governor and state legislature in most states and will determine whether the U.S. House and Senate maintain their Republican majorities. If Democrats retake Congress, it will alter the trajectory of the final two years of Trump's term, likely leading to investigations and other oversight efforts.

The start of early voting comes at a time of deep angst among many Americans about issues including rising gas and grocery prices, the war in Iran, the looming risks of artificial intelligence technology and Trump's aggressive immigration enforcement campaign.

It also follows an unprecedented spate of mid-decade redistricting for the U.S. House that began when Trump urged the Republican-controlled legislature in Texas to redraw its congressional map to help the party. California and other states followed.

The changes affect millions of people: Research shows 1 in 10 Americans this fall are residents of a different congressional district than in 2024.

Those partisan efforts are expected to continue ahead of the 2028 elections after a landmark ruling earlier this year from the Supreme Court weakened the federal Voting Rights Act's protections against racially discriminatory redistricting.

As the start of early voting approached, Trump was focused on efforts to assert federal control over election administration, even as the Constitution bestows the power to run elections on the states and, in some cases, Congress. The Supreme Court rejected Trump's bid to restrict mail ballots this week, but several of his administration's other efforts to influence the voting process and mine state voter lists for illegitimate voters are ongoing.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 24 of 66

Trump for years has raised the specter of widespread noncitizen voting in U.S. elections, and this year is no exception. But despite his administration's insistence that hundreds of thousands of people are illegally on voting rolls across the country, research continues to show noncitizen voting is exceptionally rare.

David Becker, executive director and founder of the Center for Election Innovation and Research, said he wouldn't be surprised if the president continues "his disinformation campaign and his attack on election officials." But he said he thinks despite that and other challenges, "ultimately the process will hold as it has in past years."

Voting rights advocates have encouraged voters this year to cast mail ballots early, in part because of concerns about recent changes in U.S. Postal Service operations that could delay the application of postmarks to ballots.

"Voting early, whether in person or by mail, is good for all of our communities because it gives voters options, eases lines on Election Day and can even mean faster results," said Hannah Fried, co-founder and CEO of the voting rights group All Voting Is Local.

In a press briefing Thursday, Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon urged people not to be swayed by stories they might have seen or read that cast doubt on election operations. They would be able to vote "just like they always have," he said.

"I just want to reaffirm that Minnesota's elections are fundamentally free, fair, accurate, honest and secure," he said.

Bombing at mosque near police offices in Pakistan kills at least 7 and wounds more than 30

By RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — A powerful bomb exploded Friday at a mosque near a building housing police offices in northwestern Pakistan, killing at least seven people and wounding more than 30, police and rescue officials said.

Bilal Faizi, a senior rescue official, said the bombing occurred in Kohat, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan.

Most of those wounded were worshippers, he said. Doctors and officials at the hospital said some of the wounded were in critical condition, raising fears the death toll could rise.

Zulfiqar Hameed, the provincial police chief, said an attacker apparently rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into the mosque, but officers were still investigating.

At least two armed gunmen also attempted to enter the police compound and exchanged fire with officers, local police said.

The victims were taken to a nearby hospital where authorities declared an emergency to handle the influx of casualties. Local police said the explosion was powerful enough to badly damage nearby shops and homes.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack and expressed sorrow over the casualties in a statement issued by his office. He directed authorities to accelerate rescue operations, provide medical care to the wounded and extend assistance to those affected.

Footage posted on social media showed the mosque's roof had collapsed. Rescuers and residents could be seen pulling injured people from the rubble and carrying them to ambulances.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but suspicion was likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban, formally known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP.

The attack comes a day after a roadside bomb struck a security forces convoy in the northwestern Hangu district and killed six soldiers. Government troops also conducted raids in various areas Thursday and killed 10 militants believed to be members of the Pakistani Taliban, the military and local police said Friday.

Pakistani Taliban have stepped up attacks on police and civilians in recent years. In 2023, a suicide bomber killed 101 people in an attack inside a mosque in Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The group is separate from but allied with Afghanistan's Taliban, which returned to power in 2021. Paki-

stan often accuses Kabul of sheltering the TTP and turning a blind eye to cross-border militant attacks. The government in Kabul has denied the allegations.

Shooting at high school in the Philippines leaves 2 students and gunman dead, several injured

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A shooting at a high school in the southern Philippines on Friday left two 14-year-old students and the teenage gunman dead and wounded at least 10 people, local government and police officials said.

The shooting at Banga National High School in the South Cotabato town of Banga “remains under investigation,” the Philippine National Police said in a statement. Police officers secured the campus and coordinated with school officials and medical responders, the statement said.

South Cotabato Governor Reynaldo Tamayo said the two students killed were a boy and a girl, both 14. He said the gunman was the third person who died.

Ten wounded people were being treated at two hospitals, while another person was hospitalized after hyperventilating, Tamayo said.

Tamayo said the gunman’s best friend told officials that the teenager was a member of a “true crime community.” Authorities were investigating the account and whether it had any connection to the shooting, he said.

EU chief floats ‘associate membership’ for Canada. But that doesn’t exist yet

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — By opening the door this week for Canada to become the first “associate member” of the European Union, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen offered Prime Minister Mark Carney hope, but also an illusion.

There are many ways to take steps toward joining the world’s biggest trade bloc, or to deepen trade or political ties with it, but associate membership isn’t one of them. It simply does not exist.

Still, no matter how vague, von der Leyen’s offer was a win for Carney, who is locked in a trade war with U.S. President Donald Trump. It also offers the EU a firm partnership with another Western democracy as its own ties with and trust in its old ally the United States fade.

“In this new world, we must urgently reimagine our partnerships,” von der Leyen said on Wednesday. Then she did exactly that, saying to Carney: “I would like to work with you on opening the door for Canada being the first associate member of the EU.”

Did she mean Association Agreement?

While “associate membership” is yet to be defined, Association Agreements do exist. More than 20 countries — ranging from Albania to Israel to Ukraine — already have them with the bloc.

These treaties govern relations on trade and security and are seen as an important step toward membership. It’s unclear how von der Leyen’s proposal of associate membership would differ, or whether Canada would have to agree to such a treaty first.

Only EU member countries can rule on enlargement and treaties

Association Agreements and any other decisions over enlarging the EU and its formal relations with the outside world require the unanimous approval of all 27 EU member countries, and von der Leyen did not consult widely about her proposal of associate membership.

Getting all 27 countries behind the offer, especially one this vague, will pose a major challenge.

Even among those who support stronger ties with Canada, there are concerns. German government spokesperson Stefan Kornelius said that Berlin welcomes the idea but that it has reservations — at least about the name the new relationship might be given.

“We are open to discussing new partnership models,” he said after von der Leyen’s speech. “But we

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 26 of 66

should rethink the concept, the title that is connected with this.”

In May, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz urged the EU to consider offering associate membership to conflict-torn Ukraine to breathe new life into talks aimed at ending more than four years of war with Russia. Ukraine is seeking full membership, nothing less.

Helen McEntee, the foreign affairs and trade minister of Ireland, which holds the EU’s rotating presidency, meanwhile, said that her government was ready “to explore associate membership for Canada.”

David McAllister, chair of the European Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, was more cautious, saying that the proposal’s “concrete terms now need careful assessment.”

Canada embraced the invitation

Carney himself welcomed the invitation but wasn’t sure about the form it would take.

“We’re going to better define the broad lines of this new alliance,” he said at the European Parliament on Thursday. He pointed to the EU-Canada summit in Montreal on Oct. 29-30 as a good place to start.

“What matters is the substance. What are we actually building together, how do we combine our strengths in a way that serves our people better, protects our fundamental rights and creates prosperity,” Carney said.

He was very clear on one point though. “Canada is not in a position, nor seeking, to become a full member of the European Union,” he said.

Trump is wary of a potentially ‘hostile act’

The offer certainly grabbed Trump’s attention. He suggested that allowing Canada to become an associate EU member could be a “hostile act” and threatened to respond by imposing more trade restrictions on the bloc.

Trump said that if European leaders are acting out of “a good intention, that’s fine. If it’s a bad intention, we’ll put very heavy tariffs on Europe.”

Carney insisted that Canada, through its overtures to the EU, is not seeking to create a bloc that would become “a great power rival, only with better manners.” Neither he nor von der Leyen mentioned Trump by name during their speeches.

For Fabian Zuleeg, chief executive at the European Policy Centre think tank, Trump’s response showed that the new EU-Canada partnership matters.

But Zuleeg agreed that the nuts and bolts of EU-Canada ties are far more important than its name. “The label must now be filled with concrete substance, not remain another announcement,” he said.

Iranians rally by the hundreds of thousands in biggest show of defiance since war began

By NASSER KARIMI, CARA ANNA and LEE KEATH Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of Iranians rallied Friday in a government-organized show of defiance after months of war, pledging their readiness to take up arms in the biggest such demonstration since the United States and Israel attacked in February.

Iran’s government has sought to rally the people and stress national unity, even as the economy worsens under a U.S. naval blockade of Iranian ports and new U.S. sanctions meant to increase Tehran’s economic pain.

Estimates varied of the number of people volunteering to receive limited military training and defend the country in an effort described as “Janfaday-e Iran,” or the “ones who sacrifice their lives for Iran.” They marched through downtown Tehran in combat uniform, carrying flags, as onlookers cheered.

For days, state media have encouraged Iranians to join the campaign, saying training with assault rifles would begin soon. The volunteers would be an additional layer of security to the powerful Revolutionary Guard paramilitary and its all-volunteer arm, the Basij.

Tehran’s Guard chief, Gen. Hassan Hassanzadeh, told the state broadcaster that over 600,000 people had registered to participate, with over 1 million expected to take part in the training. On Friday morning, the broadcaster estimated over 300,000 people were on the streets.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 27 of 66

The new head of the Basij, Hossein Taeb, declared in a speech as the rally began that the volunteers will be ready for "full-fledged defense" and similar rallies will take place in other cities soon.

The new trainees will make a "nightmare" for Iran's enemies, Taeb added, as President Masoud Pezeshkian, military commanders and other senior officials watched the march.

Some participants trampled flags of the U.S. and Israel. Others chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

"I am here to tell (U.S. President Donald) Trump that we Iranians have no fear about his threats against our homeland," said Marzieh Afaghi, 24, who attended the rally with her toddler and husband. "No one in history could invade Iran and remain there."

The rally was also a chance for Iran to show off military hardware. Anti-aircraft batteries were on display, while female Guard members in black headscarves sat with truck-mounted machine guns.

The Guard displayed drones that have been widely used against ships in the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran has asserted control since the war began, severely affecting the Gulf region's shipments of oil and natural gas to the rest of the world.

The volunteers could help suppress future dissent

Friday's events also suggested that hardliners like Taeb among Iran's leadership will be more prepared to suppress any future demonstration against the theocracy.

In January, shortly before the war, Iran saw some of its largest nationwide protests in history, which began over the struggling economy and turned to wider grievances. Activists have said a crackdown killed over 7,000 people and saw tens of thousands detained.

In May, government officials said more than 30 million people in Iran — home to a population of some 90 million — had volunteered via an online form or at public gatherings to lay down their lives for the theocracy. The Associated Press could not independently confirm that.

Fatal building collapse highlights dangers plaguing Gaza nearly a year after ceasefire

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAM METZ Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The deadly collapse of a multistory building in Gaza has drawn new attention to the hardships facing Palestinians there nearly a year after a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas promised to kickstart reconstruction.

But as talks faltered, plans for rebuilding stalled. Many residents have since moved back into some of the hundreds of thousands of homes damaged by the war despite the risk of weakened foundations and unstable walls suddenly giving way.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 21 people were killed in the collapse in Gaza City on Wednesday. Um Mohammad Adas, whose relatives were among the dead, said the fallen building had become a shelter of last resort.

"Now, they are lying in the street homeless and with absolutely nothing," she said of her family members who survived the collapse. "Even the clothes they are wearing were borrowed."

Families living in similar structures said they couldn't afford any other shelter.

"We don't have money to go somewhere else," Ahmad Arafat said on a street full of rubble near his home. "And we can't afford to buy tents like other people."

Other people who have moved back into debris-filled buildings with sloping floors and cracked ceilings in Gaza City said they don't have options.

"What forces people to live in these places is that there is no shelter other than this shelter. I mean, there are no tents, no basic necessities," Alam Zakout said outside the damaged building where he and his family live. "Come on, you tell me, where am I supposed to go? I have nothing other than this house."

The collapse this week wasn't the first involving unsafe dwellings in Gaza, but the high death toll underscored the dangers in a territory where the vast majority of the population lacks adequate shelter.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that during the first week of Septem-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 28 of 66

ber there were collapses at five shelters, a category that can include standalone homes or units in larger buildings.

More than 2,000 additional buildings were at risk of collapse, the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works said in a statement Wednesday.

Dangers in Gaza persist without reconstruction

Israel has said it will not permit any rebuilding in Gaza until Hamas disarms, leaving more than 1 million people to live in unsafe displacement sites, according to a joint damage assessment released in April by the World Bank and United Nations. Many are crowded into sprawling tent camps lacking basic sanitation.

The assessment said 76% of residential units had been damaged or destroyed, calling the loss of the enclave's housing stock "catastrophic."

"People are choosing to stay in dangerous buildings because the idea of living in a tent is worse, and there are very few tent supplies available if they want to leave those buildings," said Shaina Low, a Norwegian Refugee Council spokesperson. "No tent supplies are getting into Gaza. People are willing to risk it because there isn't a suitable alternative."

The council is among the aid groups that have long warned about Gaza's shelter crisis. Nearly three years of war have damaged more than 320,000 homes, affecting 1.7 million of the territory's 2.1 million people, according to a report published last month.

The council's surveys found 72% are staying in buildings that have sustained some damage. In one Gaza City neighborhood sampled, 22% of buildings were at risk of imminent collapse.

The buildings can be dangerous at any time, but engineers and humanitarian groups warn they are especially at risk of collapse during bouts of bad weather, when rain can flood through cracked concrete and exposed rebar, further weakening already damaged structures. The report found 71% of those surveyed had experienced flooding since the start of the previous winter, both in tents and buildings.

Aid groups say more shelter materials needed

Norwegian Refugee Council and other aid groups recently reiterated calls for Israel to allow more shelter and reconstruction materials into Gaza, noting Israel had twice rejected the entry of timber and emergency shelter kits in late August and early September for security reasons.

They have called for timber, emergency shelter kits, excavators and other equipment needed to clear dangerous debris. Israel has long restricted the entry of materials it considers "dual use," saying they could be commandeered and used by militants.

COGAT, the Israeli military body overseeing aid distribution in Gaza, said in a statement that it "regularly facilitates and encourages the entry of shelter supplies into the Gaza Strip in coordination with international organizations."

"At the same time, there is a genuine security concern that Hamas may use some of the components intended for the construction of shelters to strengthen its capabilities and rebuild its terrorist infrastructure," COGAT said.

The war was sparked after the Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7, 2023, in which militants killed about 1,200 people and took 251 people hostage. An October 2025 ceasefire reduced the intensity of the fighting, but Israel has continued to carry out strikes, killing at least 1,375 people since the agreement went into effect, according to local health officials.

The nearly three-year Israel-Hamas war has killed more than 73,821 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and international organizations. It does not distinguish between civilians and militants, but says women and children make up around half the toll.

The driver who slammed into an LA bus before a news helicopter crash is charged with murder

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An SUV driver was under the influence of drugs when she swerved into the wrong lane, blew a red light and slammed into a Los Angeles city bus, killing two riders, prosecutors said Thursday

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 29 of 66

as they charged her with murder.

It was a tragedy compounded by the subsequent fatal crash of a TV news helicopter that had been covering the collision.

Bailee Lynn Rios was speeding and impaired when she drove her 2004 Ford Expedition the wrong way down a busy avenue and struck a vehicle before plowing into a city bus on Tuesday, Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman told a news conference.

Rios, 36, faces two charges of second-degree murder in the deaths of the two people on the bus, identified as Daniel Castillo, 46, and Gage Weida, 31.

Rios was being held on \$4.1 million bail and is scheduled to appear in court Friday. Online court records did not list a lawyer who might speak on her behalf, and the public defender's office said it had not been appointed to represent her.

Reached Wednesday, her mother Cindy Rios said she was shocked and saddened by the string of events. She said she had not spoken to Bailee Lynn Rios since her arrest and had not been contacted by law enforcement. She could not immediately be reached Thursday for additional comment.

The news helicopter crash killed both people on board, pilot George Marciniw and reporter Eliana Moreno, and a man on the ground, Edy Gutierrez Mejia. At least four cars and two storage containers burned after the helicopter caught fire.

In surveillance footage obtained by NBC4 Los Angeles, the helicopter can be seen dropping out of the sky on a slight diagonal angle and landing behind a few trees and other objects. Moments later, a large plume of black smoke and flames erupt from the crash site.

Hundreds gathered in the Chatsworth neighborhood of Los Angeles on Thursday evening for a candlelit vigil honoring the victims of both crashes. Friends and family members brought photos of their loved ones and joined in prayer.

Crash victim liked people-watching on bus, daughter says

Castillo's daughter, Johaunna Castillo, said he was on the way home from his job at a car parts warehouse Tuesday, on the same bus he took every day.

"The back was his favorite seat," she said. "He liked people-watching."

While she moved to Georgia with her mother and siblings as a teen and now attends college there, she spent her school breaks and summers in LA with her father. When they were apart, he called her after work every single day.

"He would just tell me about all the people he's met and all the things that happened on the bus," she said.

That day, he told her he was getting on the bus and would call her when he was walking home. But the call never came.

She said her father was a hard worker, and a bright and lively person who touched anyone he interacted with. His co-workers, friends, and even many people who only knew him in passing have reached out to share "how much of a light that he was," she said.

"That's who he was and that's how he should be remembered — someone who brought a lot of joy and love into people's lives," Johaunna Castillo said. Hundreds have donated to an online fundraiser for funeral expenses.

Clues to helicopter crash may lie in broadcast video

There were no immediate details on what caused the helicopter to go down, but investigators said significant clues could come from the last seconds of video the crew broadcast. In it, an alarm could be heard inside the helicopter's cockpit as it lost altitude.

National Transportation Safety Board investigator Fabian Salazar said Wednesday that the video is "probably the most important evidence that we have discovered so far."

Just after the beeping starts, a woman's voice says "uh oh." The helicopter moves quickly away from the bus crash site and starts losing altitude. The woman says "You can't pull up?" before the video stops as the chopper nears the ground.

Aviation safety expert Jeff Guzzetti said the alarm suggests a potential loss of engine power and a dan-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 30 of 66

gerous decrease in the main rotor speed. He said the pilot appeared to be trying to perform an emergency maneuver to use the wind to force the rotor to spin again.

The NTSB is also investigating the bus collision.

Moreno and Marciniw both worked for Angel City Air, a helicopter contractor, and provided aerial coverage for NBC4 and Telemundo 52.

Moreno, born in Orange County, joined Angel City Air in 2010, the same year she earned a broadcast journalism and political science degree from Chapman University. She reported for several news outlets and began flying with Marciniw in 2023, NBC4 said.

Marciniw grew up in Southern California and graduated from Burbank High School in 1974.

There have been at least eight fatal crashes involving news helicopters in the U.S. since 2000, killing 16 people, according to a review of federal accident records and news accounts.

Russia votes in wartime parliamentary election set to secure the Kremlin's power

By The Associated Press undefined

It's a challenging time for Russia to hold a parliamentary election, even one whose outcome is all but assured.

The economic and political climate has been seriously affected by 4½ years of full-fledged war with Ukraine. Swarms of enemy drones have inflicted massive damage on Russian oil refineries and logistical facilities. The public, which no longer sees the fighting as something distant, is increasingly nervous.

United Russia, the main Kremlin party, is poised to keep its overwhelming grip on the State Duma alongside a few other parties aligned with President Vladimir Putin. Still, authorities have tightened control over the first wartime balloting for the lower chamber of parliament since the 2022 full-scale invasion.

The Kremlin stifled even the slightest signs of dissent before three days of voting that began Friday in Russia's Far East. The only party that dared to criticize the war was unceremoniously removed from the ballot, and a few anti-war politicians have been imprisoned or forced to flee abroad.

For the first time, the election includes residents of four Ukrainian regions that Moscow illegally annexed after the invasion. Ukraine has called the vote illegal.

With the result predetermined and Putin's political dominance under no immediate threat, analysts say the Kremlin sees the election as a key effort to mobilize public support for the war and legitimize its action.

"Your choice and resolve will once again demonstrate that millions of people stand behind our fighters, that we are a united people, bound by shared values, historical memory, and love for the Motherland," Putin said in an address before the vote.

Economic damage mounts from summer attacks

A summer marked by Ukraine's long-range drone strikes brought the war home for millions of Russians.

The attacks exacerbated problems for the economy, which has plunged into stagnation after an initial boost from massive military spending. The government raised taxes and increased domestic borrowing to keep the growing budget deficit under control.

Strikes on Russian oil refineries sparked a severe fuel crisis that peaked in June, eased for a few weeks and then returned in August.

Adding to the pain was a series of attacks on warehouses of online retailers Wildberries and Ozon. Hundreds of thousands of individual sellers lost their merchandise, sending a shock wave through the economy.

All this dampened the public mood. Polls recorded a dip in Putin's approval ratings, even though they remained high, with the independent Levada Center showing it at 76% in August, down from 87% in September 2025.

Even some senior members of Russia's elite openly expressed discontent.

Andrei Klepach, chief economist of the state VEB.RF bank, warned of possible internal turmoil.

"We won't win the competition in this war of attrition," he said at a seminar. "Our costs are mounting.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 31 of 66

I'm almost sure that we will come to face a social crisis."

Klepach was dismissed the day after his comments were published.

Putin doesn't budge on his war goals

Putin acknowledged the attacks inflicted significant damage but insisted the economy can weather it. He said Ukraine had opened a "Pandora's box," inviting massive retaliation.

Russia intensified attacks on Kyiv and other cities with missiles and new jet-powered drones, exploiting Ukraine's shortage of defensive interceptors. Moscow also dramatically stepped up its barrage on Black Sea ports, disrupting Ukrainian exports of grain and other agricultural products, a key source of revenue.

Amid the escalation, fears mounted that the Kremlin was mulling a massive mobilization.

A partial mobilization of 300,000 reservists in 2022 prompted hundreds of thousands of Russians to flee abroad, undermining domestic stability. Since then, the Kremlin has relied on volunteers to fight, offering comparatively high wages and other benefits. Military experts warned, however, that the flow of volunteers has ebbed while massive losses have continued.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy repeatedly claims the Kremlin is considering a postelection mobilization, which Putin dismissed as "nonsense."

At a Sept. 5 Kremlin meeting with U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner and a subsequent call with President Donald Trump, Putin said Russia holds the upper hand on the battlefield, signaling he will keep his maximalist demands for striking a peace deal.

Anti-war forces silenced

In July, the Central Election Commission cleared 11 parties for the parliamentary ballot, including Yabloko, the only one to openly criticize the war.

Weeks later, however, the country's Supreme Court removed Yabloko from the ballot. It was acting on an appeal from the nationalist Motherland party that called liberal Yabloko's anti-war stance akin to seeking the violation of Russia's territorial integrity.

Kremlin-watchers described the move as an apparent sign of infighting between elements of the government who wanted a semblance of competition to increase voter turnout, and those who feared Yabloko's presence could bring open criticism of the war and political instability.

"The risks that the campaign would turn into a struggle for and against peace — that is, a dispute about the war — were quite high, and this clearly was not part of the plan," said Tatyana Stanovaya of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

Maxim Kruglov, a deputy chairman of Yabloko and former member of Moscow's city council, was convicted in June of spreading false information about the military and sentenced to seven years in prison.

Last month, a court in the Pskov region convicted Yabloko member Lev Shlosberg of speaking out against the war and sentenced him to over 11 years.

Half of the Duma's 450 seats are filled by approved parties and the other half by the winners of races in single-constituency races. Yabloko was banished from the party list voting.

Then, authorities methodically barred individual Yabloko members from running in most of its single-constituency races for the Duma and regional legislatures.

Liberal politician and war critic Boris Nadezhdin, who tried to challenge Putin in the 2024 presidential election, left Russia last month, fearing imprisonment after he was designated as a "foreign agent" and barred from seeking office.

The main Kremlin party is poised to retain dominance

United Russia, which controls over two-thirds of the Duma's seats, is set to maintain its dominance of the lower house despite public fatigue with the war and the worsening economy. Some Russian reports indicate the Kremlin has slightly lowered its target for United Russia but expects it to retain full control of parliament.

"United Russia may be allowed to slip a little ... to bring its actual sort of declared results more in line with probably its real results," said analyst Mark Galeotti, who heads the Mayak Intelligence consultancy, adding that the Kremlin will ensure it "is still absolutely dominant within the Duma."

One aim of the elections is showing they are "legitimizing rituals to give the impression that mass con-

sensus is behind the Kremlin," he said.

Other members of the "systemic opposition" — the Communist Party, the Liberal-Democratic Party and A Just Russia Party, which all follow Putin's course and strongly support the war — are expected to retain their parliamentary presence.

While Ukraine's attacks have fueled broad anxiety, they also could bring a demand for a tougher response against Kyiv, "as long as they don't have to be involved in it," Galeotti said in a podcast.

Chris Weafer, CEO of the Macro-Advisory Ltd., said that while Ukraine's attacks have affected public morale, there's no immediate threat to the Kremlin's political domination.

"There has been a 'rally around the flag' anyway since the start of conflict and the opinion polls consistently show the very high level of support," he said.

While the results are predetermined, "the public narrative and particularly the turnout" is what's important to the Kremlin to claim broad public support for its action, Weafer added.

Trump refers to Black man from racially offensive 1988 campaign ad while stumping in North Carolina

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

As President Donald Trump tries to convince voters that Democrats have let crime run amok, he's digging into the country's political past to reference one of the most controversial campaign advertisements that relied heavily on racist tropes.

During a campaign stop Wednesday in Gastonia, North Carolina, to stump for Republican U.S. Senate candidate Michael Whatley, Trump resurrected a 1988 George H.W. Bush presidential campaign ad featuring Willie Horton, a Black man convicted of rape and assault after his release through a Massachusetts prison furlough program.

A grainy black-and-white prison photo of Horton was used in the ad targeting then-Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, who was ahead of Bush in the polls. On Wednesday, Trump evoked the Horton ad in an effort to convince voters Democratic former Gov. Roy Cooper, Whatley's opponent in the Senate race, is soft on crime.

"Willie Horton was a bad guy, really bad guy," Trump said, before comparing Dukakis's release of Horton to the pretrial release of a Black man who faces a murder charge for last year's killing of a white Ukrainian refugee in Charlotte, North Carolina.

"Same thing as this, same as, same exact thing," the president told the crowd in Gastonia.

It's the second time Trump has invoked Willie Horton while campaigning for his party. Last month during a speech in Las Vegas, Trump called the Charlotte killing a "Willie Horton — modern day" tragedy.

"After the Willie Horton ad dropped, Bush established a lead in the polls and never looked back," said Andra Gillespie, political scientist at Emory University outside Atlanta. "They showed the picture, and you ascribed race onto it. It wasn't sufficiently condemned as racism."

A spokeswoman for the Republican National Committee, which organized the Gastonia campaign rally, defended Trump's reference to Horton.

"Roy Cooper emptied prisons and released thousands of violent monsters onto North Carolina streets," RNC National Press Secretary Natalie Baldassarre said in a statement to The Associated Press. "The results had deadly consequences, and every Democrat who supports abolishing or defunding the police, paroling criminals, and implementing lax bail policies will have to answer for their dangerous records in November."

Trump paints North Carolina as a 'dangerous state'

Wednesday's rally referenced the Aug. 22, 2025, killing of white 23-year-old Iryna Zarutka on a commuter train in Charlotte.

Decarlos Brown Jr., who is Black, faces murder and other charges in Zarutka's stabbing, which was captured on video. Court records showed that at the time of the attack, Brown had 14 prior cases in Mecklenburg County, including serving five years for robbery with a dangerous weapon. Doctors had

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 33 of 66

diagnosed him with schizophrenia.

Republicans and other influential voices in Trump's Make America Great Again movement claimed the attack showed how Democratic elected leaders in large cities across the U.S. failed to protect residents, while some conservative commentators suggested Democrats were ignoring an unfounded "black-on-white" crime problem.

"He should have been locked up for many, many years," Trump said Wednesday of Brown.

"Nobody used to think of North Carolina as a dangerous state, criminally dangerous," Trump added while blaming Cooper. "It was apple pie, right? Now, it's one of the most violent, one of the worst in the whole nation."

According to 2024 FBI crime data, North Carolina ranked 19th for statewide violent-crime rates in a 50-state comparison.

During the Gastonia rally, a mosaic of mug shots was displayed on a large screen for the crowd. Trump claimed Cooper had cut a deal with "radical activists" to release "some of the worst criminals in the nation into North Carolina."

"He released these people. This is just a small group of them," the president said, pointing to the mug shots that overwhelmingly featured Black people.

Although it is unclear under what circumstances the people in the mug shots were released, state corrections officials have said Brown was not released early from prison or under Cooper's COVID-era prisoner-release settlement that Trump referenced.

Before fatally stabbing Zarutsky, according to court records, Brown had been on a pretrial release over a misdemeanor offense that was ordered by a magistrate after Cooper left office.

'Tapping into anger'

Republicans are under pressure to win over swayable voters as the November midterms approach with Democrats pushing to gain control of the House, the Senate, or both. Some political strategists say part of the ploy of adding Horton to the North Carolina Senate campaign is to rile up Trump's base.

"He's tapping into the anger to remind Republican voters of what he thinks their first principles are in hopes that will be successful for Republican candidates," Gillespie said.

"He's doing this to try and divert attention away from criticism of how he's governing at the moment," she added. "Democrats want to make the story of this election Trump's low approval numbers, the war in Iran, inflation, being preoccupied with things that don't make a whole lot of sense when there are really serious things going on in the country."

Dewey Clayton, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Louisville, said Trump and other Republicans may be thinking that what worked before in the 2016 and 2024 elections presumably will work again in this year's midterms.

"It was very effective," Clayton said. "You do not necessarily have to look at it as racial, in and of itself, although (race) clearly becomes a component. In 2026, talking about ads going back in the 1980s? I'm sure he had consultants that were basically saying this is tried and true."

The GOP may need the push in November, Gillespie warns. "I think the motivation by going back to these old strategies is there is real concern about Republican enthusiasm and you might see lower Republican turnout," she said.

Rhetoric attempts to divert voters' attention from rising costs

The tactic speaks to desperation by Trump and the Whatley campaign, according to Morgan Jackson, a partner with Nexus Strategies in Raleigh.

"Trump brings up Willie Horton to stoke racial division, something he's used for the last 10 years," said Jackson, who is chief strategist for Cooper's campaign. "It is very clear from the president's speech last night their only goal is to sow division and hate and lies. Michael Whatley doubles down in support of that effort."

Jackson also said Trump and Whatley are trying to change the election's message of "rising inflation and the cost of everything."

"They want to use inflammatory rhetoric, hate speech and lies to sow division in a chance to win an

election," he said. "By referencing Willie Horton, they are showing their hand very clearly."
The AP sent an email Thursday seeking comment from Whatley's Senate campaign.

Preparing to leave office, with world beset by problems, UN chief talks of a way forward

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The world is deeply divided and the U.N.'s most powerful body is paralyzed when it comes to ending conflicts. But there's a way forward. So says the United Nations' top official.

On his way out of office at year's end after nearly a decade, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres — known for doom-and-gloom speeches about the state of the planet — said Thursday he finds hope and possibility in the coming years. But that, he says, is only if the world's governments can finally cooperate on curtailing conflict, upending inequality and grappling with the arriving juggernaut of artificial intelligence.

"I believe in a number of fundamental things that need to be done, and need to happen for the world to be better — and I'm determined to fight to make those things happen," Guterres told The Associated Press in a sit-down interview four days before world leaders convene for their annual meeting at the U.N. General Assembly.

His message to leaders and ministers from the U.N.'s 193 member nations coming to U.N. headquarters was no-nonsense: You need to very seriously analyze the fact that the world is facing at least three existential problems -- runaway artificial intelligence, galloping climate change, and escalating inequality that is becoming a serious driver of instability and conflict.

Guterres also warned that the "huge geopolitical divide" and paralysis in the Security Council have created an environment of impunity with powerful countries flouting international law and the U.N. Charter. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the attacks on Iran by the United States, both veto-wielding council members, are examples.

"Many countries say, 'If superpowers can violate the law, why can't we?'" the secretary-general said. "And so what we are seeing around the world is more and more situations in which countries simply do not care. They do whatever they want, knowing that there will be total impunity."

Behavior by nations, he says, is adding fuel to the fire

The violations and impunity have caused death and enormous destruction, he said, and the combination of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the broader Middle East conflict are having "a dramatic impact" on the world economy. Food and energy prices are going up, interest rates are rising and developing countries face enormous difficulties in responding to the needs of their people.

He expressed hope that these problems will force people to realize that the obstacles can't be eliminated alone and require international cooperation.

That's especially true, he said, with reforms of the institutions formed by the victorious World War II powers — the U.N., especially the Security Council, and the major global financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. They must be overhauled to reflect the realities of the 21st century world where there are emerging economies and powers, he said, and their importance must be reflected in global institutions.

As U.N. chief, the secretary-general has no army, no intelligence service and not much money. But, Guterres said, he has two powers — to speak out on global issues and to convene the world's nations.

Because of geopolitical divides, Guterres said the United Nations has "no leverage" on promoting peace in Ukraine and the Middle East. But he said he has been firm in defending the U.N. Charter and the territorial integrity of countries, and in condemning "horrible violations of human rights."

He condemned Hamas' "intolerable" attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and he also condemned "the horrible situation that Israel has created in Gaza with levels of death and destruction that have no parallel in the history of the United Nations."

The United Nations is not "in a transactional approach to politics," he stressed. It must be "a reference

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 35 of 66

of values and principles for the whole world, because someone must affirm that the law of force cannot prevail over the force of law."

"That, of course, sometimes limits our capacity to negotiate an agreement because one of the sides is a clear violator that doesn't like to listen to the truth. But that will never, never make us move away from what are the values in which a civilized society must be based," the U.N. chief said.

He says the AI revolution is sure to loom over this year's UNGA leaders' meeting

This year's global gathering is also certain to spotlight the future of the U.N. and the threat of AI getting out of human control.

Guterres has called for international cooperation and guardrails for AI, which he called "a universal problem." To deal with the escalating problem, he said, countries developing AI at "a higher capacity" should exchange information, establish mechanisms for transparency, have some guardrails and "help create what ideally would be a multilateral mechanism to guarantee that risks can be avoided."

As for the United Nations., it has serious financial issues, largely due to the U.S. failure to pay billions of dollars to its regular operating budget and the separate budget for the U.N.'s far-flung peacekeeping operations. But it has avoided a financial meltdown and is in the throes of major reforms, which the Trump administration has pressed for.

Even with less resources, Guterres said, the U.N. has been able to maintain its activities, "and I think we demonstrated that we have the best control of public expenditure in any organization of any country in the world."

Guterres has dealt with U.S. President Donald Trump for nearly six of his 10 years at the helm of the U.N., and he stressed the importance of the U.S.-U.N. relationship, which he said has sometimes been difficult, sometimes easier. Now, he said, the U.N. is cooperating with the U.S. on peace negotiations in the Western Sahara and other parts of the world.

When he meets Trump on Tuesday, the opening day of the global gathering, Guterres said he plans to raise peace in Ukraine and the Middle East, "and I hope that these two objectives might be able to unite the efforts of not only the U.S. and the U.N. but the whole of the international community."

Virginia's attorney general says DHS may have violated state election law after whistleblower report

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia's attorney general said Thursday that the Department of Homeland Security may have violated several state laws after a whistleblower accused its employees of misrepresenting themselves on voter lookup tools to hunt for noncitizen voters.

In a letter obtained by The Associated Press, Attorney General Jay Jones demanded that DHS confirm in writing whether it had directed anyone to access Virginia voters' information without first obtaining permission from those voters.

"Virginia Election Code does not permit disclosure of this protected information to the federal government without a court order," he wrote in the letter to Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin. The state explicitly limits its voter lookup tools to individuals who attest under penalty of law that they are looking up their own records.

The AP has asked DHS for comment on the letter.

Jones also asked Mullin to preserve all related records, including access logs, correspondence and training materials mentioned in the whistleblower report.

The anonymous report, published Monday by Democratic Senate leaders, includes transcripts of a DHS training for a group of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services staffers, who it says were forced in late August to drop other work, complete a less than two-hour training and begin running DHS-provided lists of people through state voter registration systems to find "unlawful voters."

The whistleblower contends that agents have been asked to review 40 individuals per day, giving them about 12 minutes to determine whether each person is a legal voter and create federal records of anyone

who is not.

President Donald Trump's administration has alleged that noncitizen voting could be a significant source of fraud in the November midterm elections, even as research shows voting by people who are not citizens is extremely rare. The Justice Department has sued to force the release of detailed voter data in 30 states and the District of Columbia, though it has not yet succeeded in those cases.

Carney embraces EU associate membership proposal as Trump pushes Canada closer to Europe

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

STRASBOURG, France (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on Thursday embraced the prospect of his country becoming the European Union's first associate member, saying closer ties with the continent would ensure no country could control Canada's markets or undermine its sovereignty.

Carney's speech to the European Parliament repeatedly extolled cooperation between Europe and Canada — but the relationship with the U.S., which has defined Canada's economy for decades and has increasingly soured, hung over the address.

Trump's tariffs, demands for economic concessions, and repeated talk of making Canada the 51st state have pushed Ottawa to reduce its dependence on its neighbor and seek a far deeper economic, security and political relationship with Europe.

Carney told the parliament that he welcomed European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's proposal, unveiled Wednesday, though he acknowledged that "associate membership" remains to be defined.

He outlined what he was proposing: deeper integration across trade, defense, critical minerals, artificial intelligence, energy, space, research and financial services to make both sides less vulnerable to economic and geopolitical pressure. He later told reporters he was not pursuing full membership of the EU.

"We do not seek power to dominate others," he said. "On the contrary, we are pursuing resilience so that no one can control our open markets, impair our sovereignty, threaten our territorial integrity, or undermine our freedoms, our democracies, our rule of law."

The prime minister received an ebullient welcome when he walked into the chamber in Strasbourg, France — with many lawmakers approaching him to shake his hand and ask for selfies — and a standing ovation after he spoke. One parliamentarian had donned a Canadian hockey jersey.

Europe offers Canada another path

On Wednesday, von der Leyen proposed making Canada the EU's first associate member — a status that does not currently exist in the bloc's treaties and would have to be created. She said Europe wants to take its relationship with Canada to "the highest level possible."

Carney, sitting in the front row of the chamber, nodded and rose to embrace von der Leyen as lawmakers gave the proposal a standing ovation.

Von der Leyen said Canada and the EU should move beyond their existing free trade agreement and create an "Alliance for the Future" encompassing a "common prosperity and economic security space."

Carney will host EU leaders for a summit in Montreal on Oct. 29-30, when the two sides are expected to discuss the proposed new relationship in more detail.

Canada sends roughly 70% of its exports to the United States, making it highly exposed to Trump's tariffs. Ottawa has retaliated and rejected demands that Carney says threaten Canadian sovereignty.

Europe took a different path, shelving retaliation and accepting tariffs of up to 15% on most EU exports to the U.S.

Trump pushed back on the EU proposal

Trump suggested the proposed EU arrangement could be a "hostile act" and threatened heavy tariffs on Europe if he judged its intentions to be unfriendly — raising the stakes ahead of Carney's speech.

Asked about Trump's comments, Carney said Canadians were united in rejecting outside attempts to dictate the country's choices.

"Canadians are united that nobody is going to tell us what language we speak. No one is going to dictate

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 37 of 66

our culture or with whom we can strike agreements internationally," Carney said.

Carney has rallied 'middle powers'

Carney has repeatedly urged what he calls middle powers to resist economic coercion. At the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, he warned that when countries negotiate alone with a dominant power, "we negotiate from weakness. We accept what is offered."

Trump rebuked him the next day.

Jonathan Wilkinson, Canada's ambassador-designate to the EU, said Ottawa wants "to get as close as we possibly can" to Europe while increasing Canada's independence.

While associate membership remains to be negotiated, Canada has already taken a major step. This year it became the first non-European country to join the EU's 150-billion-euro (\$173-billion) SAFE defense procurement program, giving Canadian companies access to joint procurement as Europe increases defense spending.

The two sides have also discussed closer cooperation on energy, critical minerals, artificial intelligence and digital trade.

Carney said any enhanced partnership with the EU would be debated in Canada's Parliament and put to a final vote.

"The policies and rhetoric of the Trump administration are clearly pushing both Canada and the EU to imagine a world without strong U.S. leadership and to act accordingly," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

Nelson Wiseman, a professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, said Europeans have long regarded Canada as a country that understands the United States particularly well because of their deep economic and political ties. Carney's willingness to resist Trump rather than quickly accept Washington's demands has reinforced that perception, he said.

"Carney's shrewdness in dealing with Trump has captured Europe's attention," Wiseman said.

Anthropic says its model Claude is helping to build the next version of itself

By KAITLYN HUAMANI AP Technology Writer

Anthropic's Claude is helping the company develop the next, more intelligent version of the model, the artificial intelligence lab said in an announcement Thursday.

Claude is leading 26% of Anthropic's model research and development, which the company said means it can complete most of a given task "end-to-end from a high-level prompt" while still being under human supervision. The model is not yet working completely autonomously.

Still, about 90% of the company's research and development is done in "collaboration" with Claude, which Anthropic said means the model can do "large chunks of work under close human direction."

The announcement came as some leading figures in AI, led in large part by Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, are calling for a slowdown in the technology's development over safety concerns.

As leaders consider pacing AI's development, "we should do everything possible to minimize the gap between what frontier labs know and what the public knows," the company said in a blog post. "This means better measuring the development of AI, reporting on it publicly, and giving society an opportunity to decide how to use this information."

The company said that models accelerating their own development could make it "more challenging for humans to understand or control these systems." It argued that sharing these metrics could lead to better understanding of how close leading AI labs are to reaching recursive self-improvement, or a model's ability to autonomously build its successor.

Anthropic also urged other AI developers to share similar metrics on a regular basis, encouraging the use of a public methodology so the numbers could be compared over time, and potentially across labs.

It was unclear from Anthropic's disclosure how close the company believes it is to achieving recursive self-improvement, but the pace at which Claude has increasingly contributed to research and develop-

ment is notable. The portion of work Claude "leads," or does in large part while remaining under human supervision, was none in February. Six months later, it was leading a quarter of research and development work, reaching that benchmark in August.

The company also shared details of agent oversight measures it has in place, noting that there were approximately 30,000 agents doing research and engineering work as of August. Oversight measures are crucial for seeing how often agent misbehavior is detected by monitoring systems, the company said. Anthropic recently committed to setting up external third-party evaluators who will be embedded within the company to monitor safety efforts.

An Anthropic researcher kicked off much of the recent dialogue around AI safety when he resigned last week with a dire warning about the threats the technology poses to humanity. Amodei, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Elon Musk and other tech leaders have since supported the idea of slowing down development, but other tech leaders and President Donald Trump have pushed back.

Former Syrian official convicted of torture under Assad sentenced to 60 years in US prison

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A former Syrian military official convicted of torturing prisoners during the rule of former President Bashar Assad was sentenced Thursday to 60 years in a U.S. prison after a federal judge recounted the "unimaginably cruel" details of his abuse.

A jury in March found Samir Ousman Alsheikh guilty on all six counts including torture and conspiracy to commit torture for his actions while in charge of Syria's infamous Adra Prison from roughly 2005 to 2008.

"The conduct was heinous, unimaginably cruel, and almost unspeakably violent and brutal," U.S. District Judge Hernan D. Vera said before announcing the sentence. The judge said a hearing to determine financial restitution would be scheduled in the coming months.

Alsheikh, dressed in a khaki prison uniform and shackled at the ankles, was expressionless after he learned his fate. He waved to members of his family in the gallery before officers handcuffed him and led him from the courtroom.

Defense attorneys said they will appeal the sentence.

He oversaw torture at the prison, prosecutors said

Human rights groups and United Nations officials have accused the Syrian government of widespread abuses in its detention facilities, including torture and arbitrary detention of thousands of people, in many cases without informing their families.

Prosecutors said Alsheikh, seeking to quash political dissent, sent certain prisoners to a notorious wing of Adra where they were held in small isolation cells and brutalized. During the trial, three victims recounted beatings while suspended from pipes on the ceiling and the use of a device that folded their bodies in half at the waist. One person testified that Alsheikh stomped on the device with his foot.

Alsheikh came to the U.S. in 2020 and applied for citizenship, but prosecutors say he concealed his involvement in torture. Federal authorities detained him at Los Angeles International Airport in July 2024.

In a three-hour hearing, the judge heard statements of support from Alsheikh's son and daughter. Rami Alsheikh, his son, said the family cannot reconcile his kindness and compassion with the accusations he faced at trial.

"They did not, and still do not, make sense to us, given the man we know and love," he said.

Alsheikh said he was an 'employee'

Before the sentencing, Alsheikh himself also addressed the court in a rambling statement in which he said he tried to fight corruption and clean up Adra Prison. Alsheikh said through an interpreter that he was not an Assad loyalist and that he "only served as an employee."

Alsheikh is the highest-ranking former member of the Assad government to be tried and convicted in person outside of Syria, the U.S. Department of Justice said.

"Criminals who inflict the type of savage brutality that this defendant did on his victims must never be

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 39 of 66

granted refuge in our country," First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli said Thursday. "We hope today's sentence gives some semblance of healing and closure to this defendant's victims."

In a sentencing memo filed this month, DOJ prosecutors said Alsheikh participated in the torture of his victims because he had the power to do so and because he thought he would never be held accountable.

The memo included statements from several victims, one of whom, Nidal Shikhani, said he can "still hear the screams of others begging for mercy, repeating, 'Leave me, leave me.'"

Prosecutors had asked for a minimum sentence of 80 years. Alsheikh's attorneys, Nina Marino and Colin Cate, called for a five-year sentence, noting that he is 74 years old and has "significant medical and cognitive conditions." They also said he was willing to be deported to Syria, where a new government has sought to hold Assad-era security officials accountable.

Jurors also convicted Alsheikh in March of lying to U.S. immigration authorities and fraudulently obtaining a green card and attempting to naturalize as a U.S. citizen.

Opposition group helped locate him in US

Alsheikh was arrested with help from the Syrian Emergency Task Force, a U.S.-based opposition organization. One of its staff members, a former Syrian detainee, was first tipped off in 2022 by a refugee that Alsheikh was in the United States. The organization alerted several federal agencies and began working with them to build a case against him.

"We are committed to a peaceful and democratic Syria, and that cannot happen without justice and accountability for the remnants of Assad's regime," Mouaz Moustafa, the task force's executive director, said Thursday.

Assad was ousted in a lightning rebel offensive in December 2024, bringing a 14-year civil war to an end. But the country has continued to suffer from sporadic outbreaks of violence.

In March 2025, armed groups aligned with Assad ambushed the new government's security forces on Syria's coast. A government counteroffensive then spiraled into sectarian revenge attacks and the massacre of hundreds of civilians from the Alawite religious minority, to which Assad belongs.

On Thursday, three people were sentenced in the Syrian city of Aleppo in connection with the violence. Two members of the pro-Assad groups were sentenced to death and life in prison, while a member of the security forces who took part in the revenge attacks was convicted of murder and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Postal Service chief says work stopped on computer system key to Trump effort to limit mail voting

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top official at the U.S. Postal Service said Thursday that the agency has stopped work on developing a controversial computer system that was central to President Donald Trump's effort to limit mail voting after the Supreme Court rejected his executive order this week.

"There's an injunction so we're not doing anything," postmaster general David Steiner told The Associated Press in an interview.

Steiner, a onetime chief executive of Waste Management, has spent most of the past year atop the postal service navigating political and financial challenges. He's pressing Congress for changes that would help him resolve what he has called a "liquidity crisis."

And Trump's efforts to largely eradicate mail voting turned the postal service into an unlikely arbiter of who is eligible to vote just months before this year's critical midterm elections, a role Steiner seemingly had little interest in playing. Unlike Trump, who was sharply critical of the Supreme Court decision and ridiculed some of the justices, Steiner offered no assessment of the court's action.

Steiner also declined to take a position on Trump's policy, presenting himself as the leader of an "independent agency of the executive branch" whose influence over the president's order was limited to operational concerns.

"I don't get to decide what rules that are put on us that I decide to accept or not accept," he said. "I

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 40 of 66

looked at it more from the execution side.”

The postal service has asserted its independence in the past, including during a 2019 standoff when the first Trump administration sought to pressure the agency as the president was in a dispute with Amazon. Steiner said he wouldn’t get into the “nuance” of that.

But the pressure has grown so intense at points that it’s fueled talk of whether Steiner might resign, a notion he denied.

“There’s no truth to that,” he said. “I think I know the motivation behind it. I think it’s somebody that would like to see me out of a job.”

Inserting the Postal Service into elections

The executive order Trump signed in March directed several federal agencies to develop state citizenship lists. Those lists would have been delivered to an online portal at the Postal Service, which would have been allowed to send mail ballots only to voters who were cleared through the process. Steiner said he knew about the order about a month before it was unveiled but said his focus was largely on implementation, not the policy’s merits.

A whistleblower report released earlier this month by Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., argued the system was hastily built and riddled with errors.

Steiner said he read “portions” of the whistleblower report and acknowledged the obstacles associated with building such a massive platform quickly. Still, he said he had confidence in colleagues working on the project and had planned to unveil it around Sept. 15.

“There’s absolutely no doubt that we worked fast,” he said. “My personal opinion is it was a monumental task and I’m very proud of our IT department for being able to do it that fast.”

In addition to the voter list, Trump’s order would have required states to adopt a uniform envelope style that included barcodes, something states said would have been arduous so close to the election.

Following the Supreme Court’s ruling, a memo sent to all postal service employees Wednesday and obtained by the AP said the agency will “not be enforcing any of these new rules in the 2026 federal election.”

“First and foremost, for Election Mail it is business as usual,” according to the memo. “We continue to follow established protocols, and we remain entirely focused on our core mission: delivering the mail safely and securely for voters and election officials across the country.”

Though the Supreme Court rejected Trump’s executive order for this year’s election, Justice Brett Kavanaugh indicated he might rule in favor of the administration if the issue comes back before the court at a later time.

Steiner encourages voters to cast ballots early

Steiner said the postal service would still encourage the use of envelopes and barcodes in future elections, which it has long recommended. He said such changes wouldn’t be required but those who don’t comply may have to pay more.

“If you use the barcode in the envelope, we’ll charge you a lower price,” he said. “If you don’t, we’re going to charge you a higher price because it’s harder for us to process.”

While the postal service isn’t moving forward on Trump’s order, there are still concerns about postmark delays that could have an impact on this year’s elections. The number of ballots rejected for late postmarks has soared in the vote-by-mail states of Washington and Oregon, according to recently released data highlighting concerns about recent changes in postal service operations.

Steiner said there were no plans to alter those operations and encouraged voters who use mail to get their ballots in early.

“We say seven days,” he said. “Everything is solved if people vote early.”

At least 37 illegal mining suspects found dead in Nigerian custody with officials blaming disease

By DYEPAZAH SHIBAYAN and AFOLABI SOTUNDE Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — At least 37 suspects arrested for alleged illegal mining were found dead in Nigerian security custody on Thursday, officials said, claiming a suspected disease outbreak was to blame.

But Dauda Shehu, a survivor of the incident, told The Associated Press that 65 detainees were packed into a poorly ventilated cell, suggesting the dead may have suffocated.

Niger State Gov. Farmer Mohammed Umaru Bago said the 37 detainees died in the custody of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, or NSCDC, in north-central Niger state. He announced three days of mourning for the victims, his press secretary Bologi Ibrahim said in a statement.

They had been in detention since the security agency carried out arrests on Tuesday and Wednesday over suspicion of illegal mining in the state, head of the NSCDC in Niger Suberu Siyaka Aniviye said in a statement Thursday.

Aniviye said while the agency suspects a disease, the detainees' bodies have been sent to a local hospital for "further medical examination to establish the actual cause of death." He did not elaborate on the type of disease.

"We were jam-packed and there was no ventilation for us to breathe well," said Shehu, the survivor. "All of a sudden, we realized that we could not breathe and we started scrambling to get fresh air."

Shehu, who spoke to The AP at the Minna General Hospital where the bodies were sent for examination, said the detainees tried to get the attention of the security agency's guards by banging on the cell door.

Shafatu Sulaiman lost her two sons in the incident. Speaking to the AP at the Minna Hospital over their bodies, she pleaded for the government to intervene.

Police in Niger state said they have launched an investigation and urged relatives of the victims to come forward with any information that could help.

Illegal mining remains a challenge in Nigeria.

Analysts have linked illegal mining activities in Nigeria's north-central and northwest regions to armed gangs involved in kidnappings for ransom, claiming groups receive funding from the illicit trade.

Kennedy tells anti-vaccine activists they have a friend in Trump's White House

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. gave the keynote address Thursday at a conference of an anti-vaccine activist group he once chaired, telling the hundreds in attendance that they had a friend in President Donald Trump's White House.

It was Kennedy's first time appearing at the Children's Health Defense conference since he became secretary. Kennedy took leave from the group when he launched his bid to become president in 2023, but his speech Thursday served as a sort of homecoming, offering him a platform from which to hail the administration's steps to scale back vaccine guidance and reassure the activists in attendance that he was working to turn their priorities into policy.

"Let me be clear: You have a strong and steadfast friend in the White House. We've accomplished in 19 months things that would have seemed unthinkable two years ago," he said.

The speech, peppered with questions about long established vaccine safety, also highlighted how once fringe views on vaccines have been given a prominent pulpit under the Trump administration.

Kennedy boasted about the administration's moves to downsize the childhood vaccination schedule and reshape a key vaccine advisory board — steps that have since been halted by a judge.

Kennedy lauded Trump for pushing ahead with attempts to overhaul vaccine guidance, including an executive order last month calling for spacing out the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, against medical groups' recommendations.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 42 of 66

That executive order and now Kennedy's keynote speech at the Children's Health Defense conference mark a pivot by the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services, who earlier this year had appeared to be moving beyond vaccine efforts and toward a less contentious agenda on healthy food ahead of November's midterm elections. HHS promoted the speech on its social media channels.

Kennedy, a longtime anti-vaccine activist, chaired Children's Health Defense for years. He served as the group's chief legal counsel and expanded it. After becoming health secretary last year, Kennedy moved at a blistering pace to overhaul public health guidance and revamp long-held precedents in vaccine policymaking.

Critics, among them many of the country's top medical associations, have said the moves risk stoking vaccine hesitancy and sowing confusion among Americans who endured a crisis of trust in their public health agencies following the COVID-19 pandemic. That public confidence continues to erode.

"We have not taken vaccines away from anybody. We have preserved access. But we have started asking the questions that you and millions of American parents have been asking for years," Kennedy told the group.

Mary Holland, the CEO of Children's Health Defense, referred to Kennedy as "Bobby" and said the group has "gratitude beyond words" to the HHS secretary for "recognizing there are real consequential issues around childhood vaccinations."

Kennedy's appearance Thursday comes as the country faces its worst year for measles since 1991 and has seen seven reported measles-associated deaths in the last two years — more than the combined total of reported deaths over the previous three decades.

Pennsylvania officials have reported four measles-associated deaths this year. None of the four were vaccinated, according to the state health department. When state officials last month announced the first two of those deaths, it ignited a public feud between Gov. Josh Shapiro and Kennedy.

Shapiro blasted Kennedy's appearance on the social media site X Thursday, saying Kennedy "chose to spend his time today addressing the premier vaccine-denial conference in America."

Shapiro said the HHS secretary should have encouraged people to get vaccinated for measles, "yet he couldn't bring himself to do it. Instead, he pushed a narrative that continues to stoke fear and mistrust."

A representative from the White House did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment on Kennedy's appearance at the event.

Following Kennedy onstage Thursday was Andrew Wakefield, an author of a since-discredited study that linked the MMR vaccine to autism, which has fueled the anti-vaccine movement even though it was retracted.

Widespread scientific consensus and decades of studies have firmly concluded there is no link between vaccines and autism.

Shaughnessy Naughton, founder of 314 Action, a group that recruits scientists to run for public office, said Kennedy's decision to give a speech at the conference shows "the lack of seriousness he brings to HHS."

"With a deadly measles outbreak killing people in Pennsylvania, the best thing Kennedy can do for Americans is step aside."

Bail set for ICE officer accused of lying and assault in non-fatal shooting in Minneapolis

By TIM SULLIVAN and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A federal immigration officer charged with shooting a Venezuelan man during the immigration crackdown that roiled Minneapolis early this year made a brief first appearance Thursday before a Minnesota judge, following months of legal and political battles over whether he would be extradited from Texas to face state charges.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer Christian Castro, handcuffed and dressed in an orange jumpsuit, stood quietly in a glass enclosure in a Minneapolis jail courtroom for the hearing. He faces a separate hearing Friday in federal court for charges that he lied to investigators about the January shooting.

Judge Paul Scoggin set bail at \$400,000, or \$200,000 if Castro agreed to a series of conditions, including

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 43 of 66

that he sign a waiver saying he wouldn't fight extradition back to Minnesota if he leaves the state while out on bail.

Castro, 52, signed the waiver during the hearing but was still listed as a county jail prisoner late Thursday afternoon.

He was arrested Wednesday in downtown Minneapolis by officers with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension on state charges of assault and false reporting of a crime stemming from the shooting of Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis.

Castro's attorney, Daniel Gerds, declined to comment after the hearing.

Christian Castro's arrest happened months after Minnesota charged him

In both the federal and state cases against Castro, prosecutors say he shot 24-year-old Sosa-Celis in the leg while firing through the front door of a Minneapolis home. They say Castro later falsely reported that he had been attacked with a broom handle and a snow shovel before firing his gun.

Minnesota prosecutors charged him in May but were thwarted in their efforts to bring him from his home state of Texas, where he had been arrested.

In the end, Castro came to Minnesota on his own to face federal charges in an indictment announced early this month.

"Castro invented a story to justify shooting through a front door into a house with multiple people in it," Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty, the prosecutor handling the state case, told reporters after Thursday's hearing. "His appearance in a Hennepin County courtroom today is a critical step in our efforts to hold him accountable for that shooting."

Friday's hearing, in U.S. District Court in St. Paul, involves the separate federal case in which he is charged with making false statements to investigators regarding the shooting. Castro's defense attorneys in that case have said he plans to plead not guilty.

It's the first Justice Department prosecution of a federal officer for actions taken during this year's massive Operation Metro Surge, which brought thousands of agents to the Twin Cities and led to sweeping protests, arrests and the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens by federal officers.

The Trump administration says only federal authorities have jurisdiction

Minnesota authorities have battled President Donald Trump's administration over who should handle any charges against Castro. The Department of Homeland Security has called Minnesota's prosecution of Castro "unlawful and nothing more than a political stunt," saying only federal authorities have jurisdiction.

Authorities, including Minnesota's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, arrested Castro in Cameron County, Texas, on May 29, after a Minnesota judge issued a nationwide warrant. Under Texas law, Castro could be detained for 90 days, during which Minnesota sought his extradition. But Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott last month refused to sign an extradition warrant.

Castro was then released in Texas and soon after was indicted on the federal charges. He then turned himself in to federal authorities and returned to Minnesota on his own.

Judge orders Kennedy Center to provide 30 days' notice before making any major physical changes

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday ordered the Kennedy Center to provide 30 days' notice before making any major physical changes to the building, including demolishing it as President Donald Trump has threatened.

U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper said his ruling would "avoid any confusion on that score given more recent events," including the building's sudden closure to the public on Wednesday.

Matt Floca, the Kennedy Center's executive director and chief operating officer, said he closed the iconic performing arts center temporarily due to "acute risks to public safety resulting from continued structural deterioration" of the aging building. The building will be closed for at least seven days to "assess existing safety risks in those portions of the main building exhibiting severe structural deterioration," Floca said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 44 of 66

The temporary closure, which occurred without notice, is separate from a vote Tuesday by the Kennedy Center's board to close the center indefinitely for repairs, Flocia and other officials said. The closure was based on an inspection of the roof terrace canopy and a partial ceiling collapse earlier this month, Flocia said. The closure may be extended after evaluation next week, he added.

Trump said the Kennedy Center could be 'ripped down'

Trump, who was named the Kennedy Center's chairman last year by loyalists on the board, said Wednesday that his efforts to restore the aging building deserve recognition, "because frankly, if we don't do that, it's going to close. It'll end up being ripped down. It's in very, very bad shape, very dangerous shape."

The announcement of the closure came in response to a court case filed by a Democratic congresswoman who is a trustee and sought an emergency court hearing to prevent what she called the building's "unlawful closing."

Rep. Joyce Beatty, an Ohio Democrat and an ex officio member of the Kennedy Center board, has led efforts to block Trump's name from being added to the building. Beatty had a verbal confrontation with the Republican president Tuesday during a virtual board meeting.

Beatty's lawyers said in a court filing Thursday that the board members' "rationale that they are only temporarily closing the Kennedy Center is a plain pretext to justify shutting down the Center permanently. The facts before the Court are deeply concerning."

Cooper denied a request by Beatty's legal team to hold a hearing to clarify the board's actions and intent. But he agreed to their request "to make crystal clear" that his order prohibits demolition of the building without 30 days' notice.

The Trump-aligned board, chaired by the president, voted to close the center after Cooper blocked the institution from returning Trump's name to the building.

Congress has allocated \$257 million to cover the repairs, but Trump said they only would happen if the board was permitted to move forward with plans to add his name to the building.

Barbra Streisand calls the dispute 'painful to witness'

On Thursday, Barbra Streisand, a Kennedy Center honoree in 2008, questioned the closing of the center for repairs and called the controversy surrounding its operation "galling and painful to witness."

Of Trump's attempts to add his name to the center, she said in a statement to The Associated Press: "You can easily imagine my indignation at seeing this revered institution become the subject of such a bitter struggle over one man's name and unchecked ego."

The Kennedy Center board voted in August to inscribe Trump's name on the Kennedy Center's facade so it would read "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Restored and Renovated By President Donald J. Trump." If the Trump Kennedy Center Fund reached \$100 million, another inscription would be added reading "Endowed by the Trump Kennedy Center Fund."

The plaza in front of the Kennedy Center would also have been renamed in Trump's honor.

All of those proposals were shot down Tuesday by Cooper, who ruled that nothing could happen "without Congress's blessing."

Cooper ruled in May that the Kennedy Center illegally added Trump's name to the building, ordering it removed. The institution's leaders complied in June but left a tarp and scaffolding in place where Trump's name was once displayed.

Streisand told AP she was deeply honored to be included in the 31st annual class of Kennedy Center Honorees, adding, "for me, and for so many artists, that honor represented something larger than a career recognition. It represented a belief in the importance of art to the life of a democracy."

Lawmaker warns of 'massive backlash' if Trump moves to demolish building

On Capitol Hill, lawmakers from both parties called the dispute an unnecessary distraction and said they hope the building will not be torn down.

"I'd be very, very surprised if that actually happened," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S. D.

Asked if Congress would try to stop it, Thune said, "I hope we won't get to that point."

Democratic Sen. Ruben Gallego of Arizona said Trump was "being selfish and is mad that they're not putting his name on it."

Trump does not seem to realize “how many people love and value both the memories of the Kennedy family as well as obviously of what the Kennedy Center means to this country,” Gallego said. He predicted a “massive backlash” if Trump tries to demolish the building, as he did with the White House East Wing.

Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, called the dispute a “false crisis” and said, “worrying about what (the building) is named is kind of silly.”

A judge rejects Pamela Smart’s latest bid for a new trial in 1990 accomplice to murder case

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — A New Hampshire judge on Thursday dismissed the latest petition for a new trial from Pamela Smart, who is serving life in prison for orchestrating the murder of her husband by her teenage student more than three decades ago.

Smart, 59, was a 22-year-old high school media coordinator when she began an affair with the 15-year-old boy who later fatally shot her husband, Gregory Smart, in Derry in 1990.

The shooter was freed in 2015 after serving a 25-year sentence. Though Smart denied knowledge of the plot at the time, she was convicted in 1991 of being an accomplice to first-degree murder and other crimes and was sentenced to life without parole. Her trial was one of the first in the nation to be broadcast live on television from start to finish.

She didn’t take responsibility for her husband’s death until 2024, saying she spent years deflecting blame “almost as if it was a coping mechanism.”

Smart filed a petition for habeas corpus relief in January seeking to overturn her conviction over what her lawyers claimed were several constitutional violations. After holding a hearing in July, Merrimack County Superior Court Judge James Kennedy on Thursday granted the state’s motion to dismiss the petition, saying her arguments already were or could have been raised during earlier appeals, and even if they hadn’t, lacked merit.

Among other things, Smart’s lawyers argued that prosecutors misled the jury by providing them with inaccurate transcripts of surreptitiously recorded conversations between Smart and her student intern that included words that were not audible on the recordings.

Among the words they claimed weren’t audible but appeared in the transcript was the word “killed” in the sentence “you had your husband killed,” the word “busted” in the sentence “I’m gonna be busted,” and the word “murder” in the sentence “this would have been the perfect murder.”

In the petition, Smart’s lawyers described a forensic study suggesting that providing transcripts to juries along with muffled audio can lead listeners to believe the written text, even when it’s inaccurate.

But Kennedy said the study’s legal relevancy was “dubious” given that it wasn’t published or available to read in full and that even the description given by Smart’s attorneys failed to identify any inaccuracies. The judge also rejected Smart’s arguments that the verdict was tainted by media attention and by faulty jury instructions.

Smart’s trial was a media circus and one of the first high-profile cases in the U.S. about a sexual affair between a school employee and a student. The student, William Flynn, testified that Smart told him she needed her husband killed because she feared she would lose everything if they divorced and that she threatened to break up with Flynn if he didn’t kill her husband.

Flynn and three other teens who participated in the plot cooperated with prosecutors, and all have since been released.

The case inspired Joyce Maynard’s 1992 book “To Die For” and the 1995 film of the same name, starring Nicole Kidman and Joaquin Phoenix.

US approves visas for top Iranian leaders to attend UN high-level meeting even with sides at war

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has approved visas for top Iranian officials, including the president and foreign minister, to attend next week's U.N. General Assembly high-level meeting in New York even as the two countries are locked in a stalemated war.

The State Department said Thursday that it had approved visas for Iran's "core delegation," along with essential staffers to participate in the U.N. meetings. The core delegation includes President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, according to U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to visa privacy laws.

The move is unusual due to the more than six-month-long conflict between Iran and the United States and no sign that agreements to reopen the Strait of Hormuz or return to talks on Iran's nuclear program are close. It also comes as Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen have stepped up attacks on Saudi infrastructure and shipping in the Red Sea, another major maritime route in the region where impediments have helped drive a surge in global oil prices.

In addition, Iran remains the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, according to the United States, which has imposed significant sanctions against the country and launched a new campaign in recent weeks aimed at severing "critical financial lifelines."

As the host country for the United Nations headquarters, the U.S. is generally limited in what it can do to prevent foreign leaders from coming to the General Assembly. However, it has in the past denied visas to — or discouraged applications from — leaders involved in active conflicts with the United States.

For last year's U.N. meetings of world leaders — which took place before the Iran war began on Feb. 28 but after the U.S. and Israel launched air strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities in June 2025 — the State Department also approved a limited number of visas for Iranian diplomats but also imposed rigid restrictions on the delegation's movements.

Those included severe limitations on how far Iranian officials could travel in New York City from their U.N. mission and barred them from shopping at wholesale membership stores, such as Costco and Sam's Club.

The decision on the Iranian visas was announced just a day after the State Department denied visas to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his delegation to come to the General Assembly.

"Consistent with our host country obligations, the core delegation from the Iranian regime will be able to attend UN General Assembly High Level week," the State Department said. "The delegation will be under travel restrictions and will face prohibitions on the purchase of luxury and other goods per our policy. The delegation is smaller than last year."

The department accused the Palestinian Authority — which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank — of trying to "internationalize" the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza by bringing cases to the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court as well as continuing to pay stipends to prisoners jailed in Israel for attacks on Israelis.

The Palestinian Authority condemned the move and called Israel's actions "the real threat to the two-state solution and prospects for peace." It also said it remained committed to long-stalled negotiations but defended its efforts to gain Palestinian recognition through international bodies and courts.

"Punitive measures and restrictions imposed on Palestinian officials do not contribute to advancing peace or combating violence," the authority's foreign ministry said in a statement. "Rather, they weaken the Palestinian partner committed to a political solution and encourage forces working to undermine the two-state solution and impose the reality of occupation, settlement and annexation by force."

The U.S. does not recognize the Palestinian Authority as the government of a full U.N. member state. The U.N. General Assembly, however, along with various U.N. agencies and organizations, does.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 47 of 66

US stocks rally to their best day in 6 weeks after oil prices and bond yields ease

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market rallied to its best day in six weeks Thursday after falling oil prices and easing pressure from the bond market helped Wall Street reverse many of its moves from the prior day.

The S&P 500 jumped 1.1% for just its second rise in the last nine days. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 316 points, or 0.6%, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 1.7%.

Stocks got a boost after the price for a barrel of Brent crude oil slid 1% to settle at \$104.82. That's down from the nearly \$110 it reached earlier in the week on worries that the war with Iran will keep oil bottled up in the Middle East instead of going to customers worldwide.

Brent is of course still much more expensive than the \$72 per barrel that it cost earlier this summer, but Thursday's drop helped pull yields lower in the bond market and removed some pressure on stocks. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.93% from 5.01% late Wednesday.

Higher yields make it more expensive for everyone to borrow money, from the U.S. government to people looking to buy houses to businesses wanting to build data centers. That in turn slows the economy.

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday raised the short-term interest rate that it controls, the federal funds rate, by a quarter of a percentage point for its first hike in more than three years. Officials also signaled they may raise the federal funds rate one more time this year as they try to get the nation's high inflation under control.

The signals sent Wall Street on a roller coaster. Stocks initially remained higher for the day after the Fed made its announcement Wednesday. They then slid sharply before recovering a chunk of the losses before trading ended.

On the upside for markets, the shift to higher interest rates built confidence that the Fed is committed to getting inflation back to its target of 2%. Questions had begun to bubble earlier about whether it would feel pressure from President Donald Trump, who is calling for lower interest rates. And the short-term cost of pain for the economy could be worth it if it gets inflation under control following years of its staying too high.

On the downside for markets, higher rates undercut prices for stocks and other investments. When investors earn more in interest from bonds, which are considered safer investments, they're less willing to pay high prices for other investments. That's beyond the slowing effect that higher rates have on the economy in hopes of removing fuel for inflation.

Some reports on Thursday signaled the U.S. economy may be strong enough to withstand higher interest rates. One said fewer U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits last week. Another said that manufacturing growth in the mid-Atlantic region was stronger than economists expected.

Fed Chairman Kevin Warsh said Wednesday that a strengthening economy is one of the reasons Fed officials moved to raise interest rates after keeping them on hold earlier this year.

He also cited "geopolitics," along with the threat that the increases in prices it's causing could filter out and push up inflation elsewhere. That's likely a nod to the war with Iran and its effect on oil prices.

On Wall Street, stocks in the artificial-intelligence industry continued to rebound following their worldwide slide on Monday. Nvidia climbed 2.5%, and Advanced Micro Devices rose 6.4%.

That was even though OpenAI disclosed six more reports of "unexpected or concerning" behavior in AI models. Leaders of the AI industry over the weekend called for a slowdown in development to address safety issues for humanity.

Stocks of several homebuilders also rose, even though a report showed the industry broke ground on fewer new homes last month than economists expected. The housing industry has been one of the hardest hit by the climb for the 10-year Treasury's yield, which topped 5% this week for the first time since 2023 and has pulled mortgage rates higher.

Thursday's ease in yields helped D.R. Horton rise 1.5%, while PulteGroup added 1.1%. Rival Lennar

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 48 of 66

erased an early loss and climbed 1.7% after reporting weaker profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 85.95 points to 7,637.76. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 316.14 to 51,778.04, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 439.87 to 26,418.30.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across much of Europe following a weaker finish in Asia.

London's FTSE 100 climbed 1.2% after the Bank of England decided to keep its interest rates on hold.

Man who sprayed Minnesota Rep. Omar with vinegar sentenced to 14 months in prison

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The man who sprayed vinegar at Democratic U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar during a Minneapolis town hall was sentenced Thursday to 14 months in prison after reaching a deal with prosecutors.

The sentencing of 56-year-old Anthony Kazmierczak came nearly eight months after the Jan. 27 assault. At the time, Minneapolis-St. Paul was facing an immigration crackdown that led to angry protests, arrests and the killing of two U.S. citizens by federal officers.

Kazmierczak was also sentenced to three years of supervised release, which includes no contact with Omar. U.S. marshals escorted him from the courtroom after he was sentenced.

"This wasn't a spur of the moment act," U.S. District Judge Joan N. Ericksen said before handing down the sentence, noting that Kazmierczak had secured tickets for the town hall weeks in advance.

"An attack on a public figure is not a political statement. It is misguided, selfish, and inconsistent with any concept of a free or democratic society," Ericksen said. Spraying anything at an elected official "is a terrifying thing, and you knew that when you did it."

Omar's attacker apologizes for what he did

Kazmierczak, who has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, shook visibly at times as he sat at the defense table. He spoke quietly and haltingly, occasionally wiping away tears as he stood before Ericksen.

He spoke about being a good neighbor, and how his troubles with insurance companies as well as prison had exacerbated his ailments. His attorney, John Fossum, argued that Kazmierczak had not been taking his mental health medications before the attack, lowering his inhibitions and contributing to what happened.

"I've spent enough time in jail thinking," Kazmierczak said, his voice barely audible. "I really apologize to her for having put her through that," he said, referring to Omar.

In an earlier hearing, Kazmierczak was unable to explain his actions, saying only "it's fuzzy" when Ericksen asked what he remembered.

"I'm sorry if I scared you," he wrote to Omar after the attack.

Prosecutors cite evidence of advance planning

During the town hall, witnesses saw Kazmierczak jump up from the audience, spraying liquid from a syringe at Omar and saying she was "splitting Minnesota apart." Omar's security officers tackled Kazmierczak and turned him over to police, who arrested him.

Omar was not injured and continued with the town hall after the arrest.

Authorities later determined he had sprayed her with a mixture of water and apple cider vinegar. He pleaded guilty to assaulting a U.S. officer.

The government sentencing memorandum, submitted to the court by prosecutors, said he had texted at least three people indicating he planned to do something at the meeting involving Omar "but would not answer their questions about his intent."

He also sent messages to a neighbor to arrange for dog care and asking for bail bond company contact information.

The sentencing memo said Kazmierczak had long struggled with alcohol abuse, had "a history of mental and emotional health concerns" and a string of health issues tied to his 2022 Parkinson's disease diagnosis.

Omar, a refugee from Somalia, has long been a target of President Donald Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric. In 2019, after Omar's election to Congress, Trump said she should "go back" to her country of birth.

He has described her as "garbage" and said she should be investigated.

In social media posts, Kazmierczak had criticized former President Joe Biden and referred to Democrats as "angry and liars." He wrote that Trump wants the U.S. to be "stronger and more prosperous."

His attack came as the Minneapolis area was on edge due to the crackdown, with protesters often facing off against convoys of immigration officers and conservatives criticizing protesters.

Man accused of ties to bin Laden and tortured after 9/11 has 20-year Guantanamo detention reviewed

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

FORT MEADE, Md. (AP) — A man initially accused of being a high-profile al-Qaida figure and who was tortured in CIA custody appeared Thursday at a hearing to review his detention at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he has been held for 20 years without charges.

A U.S. government official said Abu Zubaydah, who wore a neatly trimmed beard and glasses, had "probably" served as one of Osama bin Laden's most trusted facilitators. The roughly 20-minute hearing offered rare visibility into the secretive military court proceedings of a suspect who had been tortured at CIA black sites during the U.S. war on terrorism and whose case still has not been resolved 25 years after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Zubaydah's unidentified government-assigned representative and his private attorney, Annika Conrad, both acknowledged he had known bin Laden, the 9/11 mastermind. But they said Zubaydah was never a member of the militant group that bin Laden founded.

Conrad argued that Zubaydah poses no security threat to the United States and that it can no longer justify his detention. She said Zubaydah should be approved for transfer out of Guantanamo, which would kick off a multiyear process that includes finding a country to accept him.

Lawyer describes lasting injuries from torture and says Zubaydah could be monitored if released

Conrad said Zubaydah is prepared to accept a range of security measures, including continuous monitoring. Conrad said he has the financial and personal support of his family, has rejected any extremist views "and simply wants to live a life of peace."

She also argued that a chief military prosecutor for U.S. Military Commissions, which oversees the 15 men still held at Guantanamo Bay, has said that it is unlikely that Zubaydah will be charged. The Office of Military Commissions declined to comment.

Zubaydah's attorney said the most the government can offer is a "probable association" to bin Laden after more than two decades and noted that Zubaydah declined a direct request from bin Laden to work for al-Qaida.

Conrad also cited the torture that Zubaydah experienced, describing him as "a greatly injured man" who lost his left eye and his ability to write in English and "frequently struggles to recall words."

Zubaydah's detention is being reviewed by a U.S. government panel of senior defense, intelligence and homeland security officials. The Periodic Review Board was created under the Obama administration to evaluate prisoners and determine if they could be released without posing a threat to national security.

The review panel did not immediately decide on the case

The review panel issued no immediate ruling Thursday. A live video feed of the unclassified portion of his hearing at Guantanamo was made available to reporters at Fort Meade, an Army base in Maryland.

Detainees are not permitted to speak at their review hearings, and Zubaydah sat in silence next to his attorney and the government representative. Dressed in a gray suit jacket and patterned gray tie, he often pressed his left index finger to his left temple or fidgeted with something in his hands. A worn-looking book sat in front of him.

Zubaydah's lawyers, Conrad and Ahmed Almudallal, said in a statement before the hearing that he may never face charges.

"For the first time in over two decades, the military's Chief Prosecutor believes it is unlikely our client will ever be charged," the attorneys said. "This is a major change in circumstances that warrants he be

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 50 of 66

cleared for transfer.”

Almudallal and Conrad said Zubaydah has “no intent to engage in violence against the United States in the future.”

“Now, at 55 years old, he’s eager to re-connect with his family and live out the rest of his days as a free person,” they said. “Twenty-four years in prison plus being ‘patient zero’ in the US government’s torture program has been punishment enough.”

He was first in the CIA’s ‘enhanced interrogation’ program after 9/11

Zubaydah was thought to be a high-ranking member of al-Qaida when he was captured in Pakistan in 2002. A Palestinian born in Saudi Arabia, Zubaydah was tortured abroad before being transferred to Guantanamo in 2006.

The U.S. later dropped the claim that Zubaydah was one of the most senior figures in al-Qaida, although it has continued to regard him as a security risk. Zubaydah’s lawyers have repeatedly said over the years that he was not an al-Qaida member and point to waterboarding and other harsh treatment he experienced in the early 2000s.

Zubaydah was the first person in the CIA’s detention and interrogation program following 9/11 and subjected to what is now widely viewed as torture. He was held at CIA black sites in Poland and Lithuania, according to the European Court of Human Rights.

Zubaydah was waterboarded more than 80 times in a month at one point and confined over 11 days in a coffin-size box, among a raft of other mistreatment, a Senate report found.

In 2022, the Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit by Zubaydah, who was seeking testimony from two former CIA contractors as part of an investigation into his treatment when he was held in Poland. The court rejected his case because the government said it would expose state secrets, despite much of the information having been widely reported.

In January, a lawyer for Zubaydah said the British government had agreed to pay a “substantial sum” to settle a lawsuit that said U.K. intelligence agencies were complicit in his torture. Attorney Helen Duffy said the confidential settlement was symbolically and practically significant for the “intolerable suffering” that Zubaydah endured.

A British parliamentary committee found in 2018 that U.K. security and intelligence services were aware Zubaydah was being tortured but continued to provide questions for the CIA to ask him without seeking assurances of his condition.

Body found in Grand Canyon was missing hiker, wife says, bringing flood death toll to 3

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Ariz. (AP) — Human remains found in the Grand Canyon this week were those of the last remaining person missing after the deadly flash flooding in late August, the victim’s wife said Thursday.

The discovery of Timothy Allen Smith brought the death toll to three from flooding that devastated the Phantom Ranch area at the canyon bottom and damaged the water pipeline serving the South Rim.

Smith, 53, was a pilot from western Wyoming’s Star Valley. His remains were found Monday near Crystal Rapids on the Colorado River that runs through the canyon.

The remains of Smith’s two backcountry companions, Brent Rosenkranz, 42, and John Giusti, 46, both of Granbury, Texas, were found earlier.

Smith grew up in Granbury and lived with his wife in Star Valley Ranch, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) southwest of Jackson.

He, Rosenkranz and Giusti were on a multiday hiking, fishing and camping trip when flooding swept through the Grand Canyon.

During the two-day deluge, searchers used night vision and other equipment to find people in need of rescue. They relied on the Grand Canyon National Park’s permit system and checked vehicle license plates to track those still missing. More than 80 people were rescued.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 51 of 66

Soon, only Smith was missing. In a Facebook video at the time, his wife, Carrie, and their children thanked people for their support and prayers.

On Tuesday morning, Carrie Smith posted on Facebook that the family was aware a body had been found a day earlier and asked others to pray with them.

Smith confirmed in a Facebook post on Thursday that the remains had been identified as her husband's.

"My family has done a lot of waiting over the last three weeks ... waiting and hoping Tim (Daddy) would come home, waiting and wondering if the remains found were Tim (Daddy)," she wrote. "We no longer have to wait, Tim was found two days ago by the Rangers at Grand Canyon National Park. Not in the way we had hoped, but we know that he was doing something he loved with John and Brent."

She added, "We know that these three men loved the Lord and were a shining light for Him. The impact their lives had on others is still being shown to our families daily."

The Coconino County medical examiner confirmed Smith's identity, the National Park Service said in a statement Thursday that thanked the searchers and extended condolences to relatives and friends of the three men.

The flooding began Aug. 29 during the summer monsoon, or rainy, season when clear skies can quickly give way to thunderstorms and heavy rain. A desert landscape can funnel water from a deluge into sudden torrents that rage down previously dry gullies and canyons.

The rain fell on part of a North Rim burn area left after a lightning-caused wildfire in July 2025. The fire destroyed the historic Grand Canyon Lodge, cabins and other structures.

Burn areas can worsen flash flooding because there's less vegetation to absorb runoff.

The flooding damaged a pipeline that supplies water to millions of tourists and residents. Insufficient water caused all overnight lodging to be halted until the pipeline could be restored. National Park Service officials said recently that they expected to restore a reliable water supply in the canyon in weeks — not months — after determining most of a near-complete pipeline project was not damaged during the flash flood.

Many hiking trails and lodging areas remain closed, and water has been shut off in the inner canyon, prompting advisories that hikers bring their own water or water filtration devices.

Another flash flood hit the canyon along Bright Angel Creek and the Colorado River during a storm Wednesday, park officials said. No injuries were reported. Authorities said efforts to minimize personnel in the canyon before the storm, as well as flash flood warnings, enabled crews to reach safety. Damage assessments were underway.

Trump withdraws Lance Schroyer, a former Oklahoma state trooper, as his nominee to lead ICE

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House said Thursday that it was withdrawing its nomination of Lance Schroyer, a former Oklahoma state trooper, to lead U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ensuring that an agency at the forefront of President Donald Trump's domestic agenda will remain without a Senate-confirmed leader for at least a while longer.

Schroyer, who has little experience in immigration, is close to Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, a former U.S. senator from Oklahoma.

The White House offered no comment in a brief statement.

The latest setback comes as the agency remains under withering scrutiny over its handling of enforcement operations. Critics have questioned how ICE has recruited and trained officers as it raced to hire thousands to carry out Trump's promise of mass deportations. Officers have shot and killed multiple people, including two American citizens in Minneapolis earlier this year.

Sen. Rand Paul, the chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, had refused to hold a hearing on the nominee until DHS provided him with information he had been seeking about civilian deaths during ICE enforcement operations.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 52 of 66

"I don't have a concern with who the nominee was. I had asked them to give me an update on the internal investigation into civilian deaths," Paul, R-Ky., told The Associated Press.

"And I'm still waiting."

When Mullin took over DHS in March, he pledged a lower-profile approach to immigration enforcement, pulling back on the aggressive, tumultuous crackdown on the streets of large cities that sparked widespread public condemnation.

Arrests have continued to accelerate, reaching nearly 51,000 in August, the highest single monthly arrest total during the second Trump administration.

Paul said he intended to hold a hearing on Schroyer's nomination but it never came to that. He only heard about the nomination being withdrawn when the White House made it public Thursday.

ICE has not had a Senate-confirmed leader since the Obama administration. David Venturella, a former executive at a private prison operator, returned to the agency as acting director earlier this year after Todd Lyons resigned.

When Trump nominated Schroyer in June, Trump said on his Truth Social platform that his pick was "a PATRIOT with real operational experience" and a "proven leader with DECADES of experience locking up the worst of the worst."

The administration did not indicate when it might announce another pick for the position.

Many Venezuelan immigrants shun Florida and turn to smaller cities in Utah, elsewhere

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

MIDVALE, Utah (AP) — Snow-covered mountains ringing a valley of wide, free-flowing roads remind Venezuelan transplants that the growing suburbs south of Salt Lake City offer what Miami can't.

One million Venezuelans were released into the United States after crossing the Mexican border during a record immigration surge, and many shunned Miami and other longtime immigrant footholds for smaller places with less established communities — a pattern found in an exclusive Associated Press analysis of federal data from fall 2018 to summer 2025.

These cities and towns promised better jobs, cheaper homes, less traffic and higher quality of life, outweighing Florida's allure of tropical weather and ease of getting by on Spanish alone.

Enrique Vera, 32, crossed the border in Yuma, Arizona, in 2021 and went to Miami to settle with his mother, who'd been there six years. But he found Florida untenable, he told AP — "the work, the conditions, the low pay."

After less than two weeks there, Vera and his mother accepted a cousin's invitation to Utah. In the southern suburbs, with massive new housing tracts and pristine shopping centers, Vera found factory work but soon quit to turn a hobby baking for co-workers into his own business. Today he employs 15 people — many, like him, asylum seekers — at a warehouse and two bakeries.

Utah — known as a relatively immigrant-friendly state despite deep Republican roots and support for President Donald Trump — became a top destination for Venezuelans crossing the border, along with parts of the Chicago, Denver, Atlanta, Dallas and Houston metro areas, AP's data show. Venezuelans also went to smaller cities including Madison, Wisconsin; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Savannah, Georgia.

It's a pattern playing out across the U.S.: Some Cubans eschewed Florida and went to Louisville, Kentucky, and Odessa, Texas; Colombians chose the Boston and Denver areas; and Paterson, New Jersey, was the top pick among Peruvians.

These communities have both benefited from the influx of people and struggled to integrate their new arrivals.

Venezuelans stand out for their sheer numbers. About 8 million people, or one-fourth of the country's population, have fled since 2014, many to the United States. About 30,000 of the 1 million released into the U.S. in AP's data said they were going directly to Utah.

For Venezuelans in Utah, Trump's deportation drive has instilled widespread fear

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 53 of 66

Despite the growing population here, there are few Venezuelan flags, bumper stickers or displays of patriotism on the bustling commercial strips of Midvale, an older suburb of about 40,000 people at the interchange of two highways. Signs are generally in English. The Venezuelan population has mixed in with the largely white population as new houses, malls, office parks and warehouses have gobbled up barren hillsides to meet demand for cheaper land.

Trump's immigration crackdown instilled fear and made Venezuelans less visible since 2023, when arrivals peaked in Utah and in the United States as a whole. Everyone here seems to know someone who returned to Venezuela voluntarily because they feared being detained and deported or because they lost their work authorization.

In May 2025, Alberto Salcedo opened the parking lot of his Centro de Apoyo Familiar Church to Venezuelan food trucks. The asylum-seeking evangelical pastor dreamed of creating a vibrant gathering spot for Venezuelan immigrants. Nearly 20 vendors and 5,000 visitors came each week, he said, with trucks serving empanadas, arepas, even burgers and sushi. But that dropped down to maybe five vendors and a few hundred people. The fear of deportation is real, he said.

Restaurant owner Fidel Arrieta said it's affected his business, too. He opened Arempa's, his first restaurant in downtown Salt Lake City in 2019, drawing non-Latino customers and Venezuelan immigrants alike. Arempa's — where the walls are filled with photos of Venezuelan waterfalls, an image of Mona Lisa eating an arepa and Miss Venezuela portraits — grew to five restaurants. But three closed in the last year as business slowed.

Arrieta's wife — co-owner Sandy Arrieta — wanted to stay open. But he believes nothing will turn around while Trump's in office.

"Until the government changes, the problems will not end," said Fidel, 65, who immigrated in 1994.

For proof of the growing Venezuelan population, look no further than Utah's churches

In 2001, Gregorio Rausseo immigrated to Utah, knowing no one. Fast-forward more than two decades, to 2023: Rausseo had just started as pastor at Saint Therese of the Child Jesus Church and was ready for the annual celebration of the patron saint of Zulia, an oil-rich Venezuelan state that includes Maracaibo, the country's second-largest city. He was shocked to see more than 1,000 parishioners snake into the lobby and parking lot.

"I asked the deacon, 'All of them are Venezuelan?' He said ... 'They are all Maracuchos,'" a term for someone from Maracaibo.

Today, Rausseo estimates about 40% of his church's more than 700 families are Venezuelan immigrants.

Carlos Trujillo, a 42-year-old lawyer who handles immigration cases, puts Venezuelan immigrants in three categories: those who came for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; those who came to join family or friends; and those who came knowing no one. He has repeatedly heard variations of, "This is a place where I can bring my family and have a start."

Trujillo — who immigrated in 2001, as an 18-year-old whose parents decided he would do better living with family closer to the Mormon church headquarters — said his firm has about 1,700 immigration cases, with staff fielding calls in a large room resembling a call center.

Many of the Venezuelans here came after COVID hit, flying to the Mexican border before January 2022, when Mexico tightened travel restrictions for Venezuelans. That prompted hundreds of thousands to walk through the Darien Gap, a jungle in Panama and Colombia, on a grueling journey through at least eight countries.

Ashly Estupinan, 18, walked the jungle with her grandmother. In Mexico, they used the appointment app CBP One to enter the U.S. in San Diego. Trump ended CBP One on his first day in office, two years after his predecessor, Joe Biden, started it and let more than 900,000 people come legally with two-year permits.

Estupinan, who graduated high school this spring, and her grandmother chose Utah because her uncle was there. "It's very tranquil, very pretty, the people are very friendly," she said.

Word of mouth and family advice brought many to Utah

Juan Gonzalez, 41, a cook at Arempa's, walked the jungle for four days with his brother — passing

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 54 of 66

corpses, he said — before eventually crossing the U.S. border in Texas. He went to Utah on the advice of a distant cousin.

"He had gone to other states, and Utah struck him as the best one," Gonzalez said, noting he's drawn to the state's "strong economy."

Many Venezuelan immigrants here work in food service — at restaurants or selling meals from their homes. Some proudly noted that a local Walmart now stocks special flour for arepas.

Others cycle through low-wage jobs: construction, nail salons, warehouse and factory work.

Gonzalo Rodriguez, 39, worked as a laborer, carpenter and office manager before rising to general manager of Fillerup Employment Services, a construction company. He said it had about 25 Venezuelans in its workforce of about 300 when he arrived in 2020. By 2022, that grew to 165.

At one point, Rodriguez said, Venezuelans camped in tents on the sidewalk at the company's office park in suburban Sandy, waiting for work and accepting food while migrant shelters were full.

Julio Gonzalez, 33, climbed company ranks from laborer to human resources manager after crossing the border in 2021 with his wife and son, then 9, in Del Rio, Texas. A friend in Utah told him it was a good place to live. Many here agree, saying they've felt no pervasive racism in Utah.

It was a welcome change for Gonzalez, who said he lived in Panama for six years under anti-Venezuelan xenophobia that prompted his move to the United States.

Hector Escalona, 42, also started in construction at Fillerup, then opened a barber shop in 2022. He now has 27 barber chairs at three shops, and many employees are Venezuelan. He said he's expanding his business even with uncertainty about his asylum case.

Others have had less financial success.

Adaya Amaya, 47, ran a catering business from her home and now operates a food truck but barely gets by. She crossed the border in 2021 with her daughter, now 9, and father, now 74. They relied at times on a food bank. She knows other Venezuelans who've slept in their cars.

Her father gave up his asylum claim in June to return to Maracaibo because he didn't want to burden her. Some wonder: Is goodwill toward immigrants cooling in Utah?

In the 2024 election, Trump — and his immigration enforcement campaign messages — won Utah by 22 points. The same year, Carlos Moreno, who won asylum after fleeing Venezuela in 2009, was elected to the Salt Lake County Council.

The state's immigrant-friendly reputation is tied to the Utah Compact, a 2010 document signed by hundreds of local governments, businesses and civic leaders that endorses "common-sense immigration reforms that will strengthen our economy, as well as attract talent and business to our state."

But Trujillo, the immigration attorney, said goodwill cooled during the Biden-era immigration surge and some elected leaders who were allies became more guarded in public comments.

Gov. Spencer Cox called the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua gang "a growing threat in Utah" in 2024, but few major crimes in the state have been linked to the group.

Venezuelan immigrants repeatedly told AP that a small minority of their own are their worst enemies — not just those who commit crimes but those who drink in public, play loud music and repair cars in the street. They say that while some of that behavior may be accepted in Venezuela, they must adopt local norms.

"It makes me angry," said Joiren Rangel, who arrived in 2018 and worked at an Amazon warehouse before opening two Venezuelan restaurants, one of which closed last year. "We saw that we were in a different country and had to abide by the rules. In Venezuela, I would drive with my daughter seated on my lap. I would never do that here."

Many here are still waiting on their asylum cases

Some asylum seekers were told to wait 10 years for an initial appointment in 2023, but the government has moved aggressively to winnow the backlog. Still, about 500,000 Venezuelans have pending cases in immigration court, more than any other nationality.

Loreana Pachano, who spent much of her childhood in Miami, has been waiting 10 years for an asylum interview. She was increasingly impatient but now wonders whether she might do better if her case re-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 55 of 66

mains open until after Trump leaves office.

She and her husband settled in Florida but tired of long commutes and anti-Venezuelan sentiment. They moved to Utah after a friend told her that construction wages were significantly higher. "If we had to start from scratch, how about we start from scratch somewhere else?" she remembers thinking.

Now a real estate agent, she sells houses to asylum seekers who crossed the border and has seen the impact of Trump's policies — for example, a bank closing on a house that a Venezuelan client gave up because she lost work authorization when Trump ended Temporary Protected Status for more than 600,000 Venezuelans.

"It feels like we're building on quicksand. We're trying to build a future here for ourselves, for our kids," said Pachano, who flips homes and owns trucking and construction businesses with her husband while raising their 3- and 7-year-old daughters.

"Are we going to be here by the time we reach retirement age? We don't know. You don't know when the rug is going to be pulled right under your feet."

Former US Sen. Jon Kyl of Arizona, a 'workhorse' who shaped water policy, dies at 84

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Former U.S. Sen. Jon Kyl, a longtime Republican lawmaker from Arizona who shaped landmark water policies in the U.S. West and guided the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, has died. He was 84.

Kyl died Wednesday night from a neurological disorder, said Gordon James, a communications professional who is a longtime friend of the Kyl family. Kyl had withdrawn from public life in December 2025 after announcing he had been diagnosed with dementia.

Kyl spent almost three decades in Congress, serving in both chambers, and watched his party undergo a drastic transformation, with his career spanning Ronald Reagan's presidency to President Donald Trump's first term.

"Arizonans are mourning the loss of former U.S. Senator Jon Kyl," Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs said in a post. "Throughout his decades of public service in the House and Senate, he was a dedicated statesman who always cared deeply for our state."

Former Republican Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, who considered Kyl a mentor, described the former senator in a February 2025 interview with The Associated Press as a true statesman and a "workhorse" among Washington, D.C.'s "showhorses."

"If you saw him on the plane, he was sitting in the aisle, in coach, and he was reading," Ducey said. "And he was reading potential bills or Senate business."

Kyl returns briefly to Senate to fill McCain seat

Kyl rose to a leadership position during his last full term in the Senate, when his Republican colleagues selected him as minority whip. After retiring from politics in 2013 and becoming a lobbyist, Kyl returned to Congress briefly in 2018, when Ducey appointed him to fill the vacancy left by the late U.S. Sen. John McCain.

His appointment drew high praise from Trump, who said he was looking forward to working with "the extraordinary senator." Kyl stayed for less than four months before rejoining lobbying firm Covington and Burling.

"At the federal level, and I regret to say that this is the case, but probably a lot of my better achievements were in preventing bad things from happening (rather) than forcing good things to happen," Kyl said in a 2012 conversation with former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

Lawyer with expertise in water gets elected

Kyl was born in Oakland, Nebraska, on April 25, 1942, and grew up in a rural farming district in Iowa that his father represented in the U.S. House. At 18, he headed southwest to attend the University of Arizona, where he met his wife, Caryll, and earned a law degree.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 56 of 66

Before being elected for the first of his four terms in the House in 1987, Kyl was a key participant in shaping Arizona's 1980 groundwater code as a lawyer representing a large water utility. The first-of-its-kind code created a regulatory framework for managing groundwater in the drought-stricken state, largely centering on the state's population centers, including Phoenix and Tucson.

In 2004, Kyl authored legislation that provided one of the largest tribal water rights settlements, which, after a decades-long battle, gave the Gila River Indian Community enough water to fill nearly 313,500 Olympic-sized swimming pools annually. Republican U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who later served as majority leader, called Kyl's work ethic "legendary" in a 2012 floor speech and said Kyl had labored mostly behind the scenes for 15 years to advance the settlement.

Former Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake said he had long admired Kyl and appreciated the advice he offered when Flake started his political career. "The government needs people who are willing to serve a cause greater than their own self-interest, and that personified Jon," Flake said. "He was a true public servant."

Arizona State University's Kyl Center for Water Policy takes its name from him. Its director, Sarah Porter, said Kyl was generous with his time and an effective member of the state's congressional delegation who took a practical approach to water policy. "He's always sort of cared about the public good and been able to think about, 'What will this mean for the generations to come?'" Porter said, adding that Kyl remained "quite a dynamo" until recent years, as his wife battled health problems.

'Giant' in the Senate kept Republican caucus together

Ducey said Kyl was a "giant" in the Senate, further describing him as serious, engaging, forthright and thoughtful. His biggest impacts, Ducey said, came from the way he kept the Republican caucus together in opposition to Obamacare and his staunch support of Israel.

Kyl also backed legislation to authorize construction of a fence stretching hundreds of miles along the U.S.-Mexico border. He later joined with Democrats to support a bill that would provide a path to citizenship and temporary guest-worker status for those in the U.S. without authorization. The proposal ultimately failed.

As a lobbyist, Kyl helped guide the confirmation of Trump-picked U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. When Kyl returned to the halls of Congress in 2018, he was known as Kavanaugh's chief Sherpa — an informal but widely known term for a nominee's guide to the political tundra in the Senate.

In a statement disclosing his dementia diagnosis, Kyl harkened back to the words of Reagan, when the former president revealed his own Alzheimer's diagnosis and said he was starting a journey that would lead him to the end of his life.

Kyl said he shared Reagan's confidence for Arizona and the nation's future, and that despite his diagnosis, he was a "very fortunate man."

Russian missile and drone attacks injure at least 19, including children, in Ukraine

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian missiles and drones injured at least 19 people overnight in Ukraine's capital and the surrounding region, authorities said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Thursday that Ukrainian forces had also carried out overnight strikes against targets in Russia, including an oil refinery in Yaroslavl and a military airfield in the Rostov region.

Kyiv's military administration said the overnight attacks struck more than 10 locations in the capital, while 33 sites were damaged in the wider region. A 10-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy were among the injured, the administration said in a statement on Telegram.

Zelenskyy may meet Trump on sidelines of UN General Assembly

Peace efforts to end Russia's 4 1/2-year full-scale invasion have stalled, with the issue of territorial concessions in eastern Ukraine among the central sticking points. Successive rounds of U.S.-brokered talks have failed to produce a breakthrough. Ukraine is also seeking security guarantees from partners for a deal.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 57 of 66

U.S. President Donald Trump claimed in a social media post on Monday that Russia and Ukraine had mutually agreed to cease attacking each other's energy facilities. Such strikes have led to significant supply issues in both countries.

In an interview with CBS News on Tuesday, Zelenskyy pushed back on Trump's claim, saying that while an energy truce was discussed during a recent meeting in Kyiv with Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, he would agree only if Russia ceases its attacks on Ukrainian energy sites.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Kyiv is ready to agree to a truce covering attacks on energy infrastructure and the Black Sea. But speaking on Thursday at a joint press briefing with his Slovenian counterpart, Tone Kajzer, Sybiha said he has yet to see any indication that Moscow is prepared to do the same.

He welcomed U.S. efforts to broker such an agreement and said active U.S. involvement could make a truce possible. Sybiha also said Ukraine was preparing for a meeting between Zelenskyy and Trump on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly this month.

"I believe that achieving a truce could be one of the key outcomes of this meeting. It could be a truce covering both the energy sector and the Black Sea — specifically in that combination," he said.

Drone near Ukraine's border with Poland

A drone hit a petrol station near Ukraine's border with Poland on Thursday, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said at a press conference in Warsaw.

A spokesperson for the Polish military told TVN24 that Polish air defences were activated on Thursday after a jet-powered drone approached Polish airspace.

The drone exploded about 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) from the Polish border, the spokesman said.

On Sunday, two Russian drones struck near border crossings on the Polish-Ukrainian frontier. One of them hit a railway line shortly after a train carrying European dignitaries had passed through.

Russian drone kills captain of civilian vessel in Black Sea

A Russian drone struck a civilian vessel flying the flag of Tanzania in the Black Sea on Thursday, killing the ship's captain and injuring three crew members, according to Oleh Kiper, the regional head in Odesa.

The vessel's superstructure and deck were damaged in the morning attack, Kiper said on Telegram. He accused Russia of deliberately targeting Ukrainian ports and civilian merchant vessels.

Ukraine's air force said it destroyed or suppressed 131 Russian aerial targets during the overnight attack in the Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia and Odesa regions. The attack involved ballistic and cruise missiles as well as drones and decoys.

In Odesa, seven people were injured, including two children, according to Ukraine's State Emergency Service. Apartments on the 14th through 16th floors of a residential building were damaged. A private residential building in Odesa was also destroyed and others damaged.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine's operation against the Yaroslavl Oil Refinery was conducted jointly by the country's Security Service, special operations forces, military intelligence and the Foreign Intelligence Service.

He wrote on Telegram that the security service had also struck a military airfield in Rostov, damaging an An-12 aircraft, two An-26s and three helicopters.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the military hit metallurgical and electronics plants, factories of the military-industrial complex and energy and transport facilities. It said that three bulk carriers and a ferry carrying supplies for the Ukrainian military were hit in the port of Chornomorsk.

The two sides exchange remains

On Thursday, Ukraine received the bodies of 252 soldiers as part of ongoing exchanges with Russia, the government agency handling prisoners of war said on Telegram.

Russia said the remains belong to Ukrainian citizens, including military personnel, the agency said, adding that they will be identified.

Ukrainian officials welcome sanctions vote

Ukrainian officials welcomed the vote in the U.S. House of Representatives on a package of sanctions targeting Russian officials and key sectors of the economy, saying the measures could increase pressure on Moscow and limit the resources available to finance its war effort.

The legislation was one of the last major initiatives championed by the late Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham.

"It is precisely Sen. Graham's bill, along with other strong sanctions measures taken by our partners against the source of this war, Russia, that represents an extremely powerful tool that can stop this terrorist war and force Russia to seek peace," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.

Many Venezuelan immigrants shun Florida and turn to smaller cities in Utah, elsewhere

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

MIDVALE, Utah (AP) — Snow-covered mountains ringing a valley of wide, free-flowing roads remind Venezuelan transplants that the growing suburbs south of Salt Lake City offer what Miami can't.

One million Venezuelans were released into the United States after crossing the Mexican border during a record immigration surge, and many shunned Miami and other longtime immigrant footholds for smaller places with less established communities — a pattern found in an exclusive Associated Press analysis of federal data from fall 2018 to summer 2025.

These cities and towns promised better jobs, cheaper homes, less traffic and higher quality of life, outweighing Florida's allure of tropical weather and ease of getting by on Spanish alone.

Enrique Vera, 32, crossed the border in Yuma, Arizona, in 2021 and went to Miami to settle with his mother, who'd been there six years. But he found Florida untenable, he told AP: "the work, the conditions, the low pay."

After less than two weeks there, Vera and his mother accepted a cousin's invitation to Utah. In the southern suburbs, with massive new housing tracts and pristine shopping centers, Vera found factory work but soon quit to turn a hobby baking for co-workers into his own business. Today he employs 15 people — many, like him, asylum seekers — at a warehouse and two bakeries.

Utah — known as a relatively immigrant-friendly state despite deep Republican roots and support for President Donald Trump — became a top destination for Venezuelans crossing the border, along with parts of the Chicago, Denver, Atlanta, Dallas and Houston metro areas, AP's data show. Venezuelans also went to smaller cities including Madison, Wisconsin; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Savannah, Georgia.

It's a pattern playing out across the U.S.: Some Cubans eschewed Florida and went to Louisville, Kentucky, and Odessa, Texas; Colombians chose the Boston and Denver areas; and Paterson, New Jersey, was the top pick among Peruvians.

Venezuelans stand out for their sheer numbers. About 8 million people, or one-fourth of the country's population, have fled since 2014, many to the United States. About 30,000 of the 1 million released into the U.S. in AP's data said they were going directly to Utah.

For Venezuelans in Utah, Trump's deportation drive has instilled widespread fear

Despite the growing population here, there are few Venezuelan flags, bumper stickers or displays of patriotism on the bustling commercial strips of Midvale, an older suburb of about 40,000 people at the interchange of two highways.

President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown instilled fear and made Venezuelans less visible since 2023, when arrivals peaked in Utah and in the United States as a whole. Everyone here seems to know someone who returned to Venezuela voluntarily because they feared being detained and deported or because they lost their work authorization.

In May 2025, Alberto Salcedo opened the parking lot of his Centro de Apoyo Familiar Church to Venezuelan food trucks. The asylum-seeking evangelical pastor dreamed of creating a vibrant gathering spot for Venezuelan immigrants. Nearly 20 vendors and 5,000 visitors came each week, he said, with trucks serving empanadas, arepas, even burgers and sushi. But that dropped down to maybe five vendors and a few hundred people. The fear of deportation is real, he said.

Word of mouth and family advice brought many to Utah

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 59 of 66

categories: those who came for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; those who came to join family or friends; and those who came knowing no one. He has repeatedly heard variations of, "This is a place where I can bring my family and have a start."

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Others cycle through low-wage jobs: construction, nail salons, warehouse and factory work.

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Some wonder: Is goodwill toward immigrants cooling in Utah?

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Some asylum seekers were told to wait 10 years for an initial appointment in 2023, but the government has moved aggressively to winnow the backlog. Still, about 500,000 Venezuelans have pending cases in immigration court, more than any other nationality.

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"Are we going to be here by the time we reach retirement age? We don't know. You don't know when the rug is going to be pulled right under your feet."

A global AI safety strategy depends on US-China cooperation. They each see the other as the problem

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — As concern rises over the risks of artificial intelligence, hopes for any kind of global approach depend on cooperation between the U.S. and China — superpowers that seem only to be more skeptical of each other's AI strategy.

AI governance is expected to be on the agenda in a meeting planned for next week in Washington between President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping. The topic has gained urgency in both countries, with American tech leaders saying that averting worst-case scenarios for rogue AI depends on a degree of cooperation with China.

But both countries are vying for a decisive advantage on AI, with Trump warning that any efforts to regulate the technology would help China. That sets up a meeting in which any agreements might be superficial but a possible start to something larger.

"A formal agreement or consensus may be near impossible, but they do not need to go that far," said Samm Sacks, a senior fellow at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies' Institute for America, China, and the Future of Global Affairs. "Trump and Xi just need to create political space by

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 60 of 66

acknowledging AI poses risks to both countries.”

China and the US are increasingly at odds on AI

Trump has pushed back on calls to strengthen regulation of the technology, claiming that doing so could cause China to eclipse America on AI. He has repeatedly declared that the nation that leads on the technology “wins.”

“We are leading China, and all others,” Trump said Monday on social media.

The two countries are moving the technology forward in different ways. U.S. companies are chasing AI frontiers with computing power supported by cutting-edge chips and the country’s rapidly expanding data center infrastructure. China is pursuing wide global adoption of its open-source, more affordable models.

Chinese AI models have made major advances and gained traction with American companies even as U.S.-led restrictions bar China from getting the world’s most advanced AI chips. While most American frontier models are closed-source, with their design elements kept secret, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Tuesday the U.S. needs to develop more open-source models to counter China.

The U.S. has accused China of “aggressive, malicious” efforts to extract capabilities from American AI systems. China has hit back, accusing the U.S. of trying to suppress Chinese companies so it can build a “monopoly of the AI industry.”

David Sacks, a top AI adviser to Trump, said that China has “already rejected” slowing down the pace of developing the most advanced forms of AI. He said on Fox News’ “The Ingraham Angle” that unlike the nuclear tensions with the Soviet Union during the Cold War it would be impossible to verify whether China honored any AI commitments.

“In this case, we don’t have trust and we can’t verify,” Sacks said. “So let’s not be foolish about this and just hand the whole ball game to China.”

Still, those with ties to the Chinese government see coordination on AI as helpful.

At an annual security and defense conference in Beijing, Cui Tiankai, a former Chinese ambassador to the U.S., said Tuesday that AI is an area where “we should go ahead and build up” dialogue between Beijing and Washington. “Because there is a need, a growing need, for cooperation,” he told the Xiangshan Forum. “So how can we manage the balance?”

American AI leaders call for keeping China in check — and cooperating with China

Two leading American AI companies, Anthropic and OpenAI, each restrict access in China and have said the U.S. has a national security imperative to protect its lead on AI technology. But they also have called for cooperation with China to manage safety.

In his essay last weekend calling for a slowdown of AI development for safety reasons, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei said the U.S. should slow China’s progress, including keeping up U.S. restrictions on China’s purchases of the world’s most advanced AI chips.

He also added, however, that “global pacing will require cooperation with China, the autocratic country with by far the most advanced AI capabilities.”

His essay quickly drew criticism from Beijing, with China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying on Monday that “fearmongering, confrontation and vicious competition will only disrupt the process of global AI governance which serves no one’s interest.”

China’s state-run Global Times newspaper went further, calling his remarks “packed with containment provisions targeting China and is, in essence, a ‘Cold War playbook’ for the AI sector.”

Trump has consulted with Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, even calling the maker of the world’s most advanced computer chips in the middle of a Monday podcast interview. Nvidia has generally favored some chip exports to China as a way to create an American ecosystem for the technology and a more open relationship on AI given the number of researchers in China.

Both countries have been alarmed by emerging AI capabilities

In both the U.S. and China, AI’s increasingly powerful capabilities have alarmed top officials and policymakers.

The head of China’s Ministry of State Security, its spy agency, warned in an article Sunday that AI poses many threats to the country, from political and ideological security to cyberattacks.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 61 of 66

In the article, Chen Yixin argued that AI could threaten China's political and ideological security if used by those "with ulterior motives," while singling out Anthropic's and OpenAI's powerful AI models. It said they could be used to "weaponize" cybersecurity vulnerabilities and threaten China's critical information infrastructure.

Several other recent AI-related events were also causing concern in China when it comes to AI governance. That includes a U.S. security firm's recent discovery of AI vulnerabilities in WeChat, China's key messaging app that also offers payment services among other functions, said Paul Triolo, a partner at DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group.

While Chinese officials said after Trump's Beijing summit with Xi in mid-May that China and the United States had agreed to pursue dialogue on AI development and governance, little progress has been made.

At the same time, China and the U.S. have been working to form AI alliances with like-minded nations.

In July, China launched the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization, a group with 29 initial founding member countries, including Russia and Pakistan, meant to promote global AI governance. This month, China's Xi has called on BRICS member countries to accelerate the setting up of a global AI governance framework and establish an open-source AI community.

Some political observers saw the China-led organization as a response to the U.S.-led Pax Silica initiative, which launched last year focusing on strengthening collaboration with countries including Japan, the U.K. and Australia on AI supply chains.

Asked about his expectations on AI from the Trump-Xi meeting on AI in an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation," Amodei said "the more long-term thing would be working together to put a speed limit on the rate of AI progress." But he said it likely would be very difficult.

In the run-up to the Trump-Xi meeting, a recent social media post by Yuyuantantian, a Chinese state media-linked account, was similarly circumspect.

"Only after the United States first demonstrates that the safety rules are equally effective for its own model companies can substantive discussions between the U.S. and China take place," the post said.

LA news helicopter crashed in birthplace (and, arguably, epicenter) of 'eye-in-the-sky' reporting

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

Los Angeles has been viewed from above by news helicopters for nearly seven decades. When there was a wildfire, a mudslide or O.J. Simpson fleeing the police across its ribbons of highway, an "eye in the sky" tracked it and advised millions how to keep out of harm's way.

On Tuesday, one of those flying newsrooms crashed live on-air and burst into flames, killing three people while reporters were covering the collision of an SUV and a city bus. NBC4 Los Angeles reported that two people aboard the helicopter — Eliana Moreno and pilot George Marciniw — were killed, and fire officials said another person, Edy Gutierrez Mejia, died on the ground. It was a horrifying addition to at least eight fatal crashes involving news helicopters in the U.S. since 2000, in which 16 people have been killed.

Moreno, known widely as "Eli in the Heli," had been an aerial journalist since 2010, mastering a demanding form of reporting that requires editing, shooting video, intimate knowledge of a city — and quick thinking.

"After working 76 hours since Sunday, I'm almost done!" she posted to Instagram on Sept. 29, 2023. "I can't complain though because I have the best job in the world."

It has been about getting there first

Beaming the news from the sky undeniably provides a public service as the descendant of delivery by horseback, teletype and satellite. It's also true that the "Telecopter" was born in Los Angeles as a way to beat the competition to the scene, according to its inventor, John Silva, chief engineer for KTLA-TV when it debuted the machine in 1958. News from the air dazzled audiences — and it meant a new era of big money for local television stations.

In a 2002 interview with the Television Academy Foundation, Silva recalled sitting on the freeway, frustrated over reporting on the reporters — press stories about which journalists got to major news scenes

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 62 of 66

first and were thus “the hero.”

“It came to me all of a sudden. ‘How can we beat the competition?’” Silva recalled. “If we could build a news mobile unit in a helicopter we could get over it all, get there first, avoid the traffic, and get to all the stories before anybody in the competition. It’d be a wonderful thing.”

But not an easy one. The project had to stay top secret. The helo had to be chosen and fitted in the sprawling backyard property of a news executive, out of sight of rivals. Silva had to figure out how to shave the 2,000 pounds (900 kilograms) of camera equipment down to less than 400 pounds (181 kilograms). And critically, how to beam the news from the air to a receiving dish on a mountain and ultimately to millions of Angelenos.

Airborne at one point during testing, Silva reportedly inched out on the helicopter’s right skid — with no safety belt — to investigate the cause of intense vibrations shaking the cockpit, according to a 2009 interview with Smithsonian Magazine.

At 6:30 p.m. on July 24, 1958, KTLA preempted regular programming to broadcast the view from above the City of Angels. The station raked in record amounts of advertising, with Procter & Gamble spending \$250,000 to sponsor “Telecopter” coverage, the magazine reported.

“It broadened what news could do, just like the live camera on the ground,” Stan Chambers, then a KTLA news correspondent, told the same foundation. Until then, he said, “television news was not that important to a lot of decision-makers. Then the helicopter really captivated everybody.”

Silva won two Emmy awards for his invention.

It offered dazzling coverage, but tragedy, too

News from the air punctuated a giddy era of television journalism that was increasingly striving for live, real-time reports. Americans were riveted to reports on the L.A. riots in 1992 and the two-hour police chase of O.J. Simpson’s white Ford Bronco two years later. Together, the two events did much to confirm the allure of live crisis coverage from the air.

In 1977, a KNBC news helicopter crashed when it ran out of fuel while returning to the station after covering a wildfire in Santa Barbara, killing the pilot and camera operator. Nine years later, a helicopter flying a radio traffic reporter over New York City for a live rush-hour broadcast plunged into the Hudson River, killing her and critically injuring the pilot. The reporter, WNBC Radio’s Jane Dornacker, could be heard screaming, “Hit the water!” as the helicopter went down.

And in 2007, two news helicopters covering a police chase on live television collided and crashed, killing all four people on board in a plunge that viewers saw as a jumble of spinning, broken images. The NTSB said that crash happened because two of the pilots who were pulling double duty as reporters were distracted by the chase on the ground.

Tammy Rose, a longtime journalist for more than 20 years, was at KPNX in Phoenix in 2007 when the two television helicopters collided and has survived some harrowing incidents. But, she told The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday, journalists and pilots follow strict protocols to manage the risks.

In Phoenix after the crash, all five news stations agreed to share the same news helicopter. And the company she works for in Houston, Helicopters Inc., wants its pilots to stay above 500 feet so they will have some altitude to work with in case of a problem like an engine failure.

“A news helicopter is more than a flying camera,” said Rose, who reports now for ABC-13 in Houston and says her passion keeps her flying. “As a reporter aboard the aircraft, I could see the larger scene, communicate with the newsroom, gather information and report live while events were unfolding.”

‘The eyes and ears in the sky’ for two newsrooms

NBC4 reported Wednesday that Moreno and Marciniw were known as “the eyes and ears in the sky” for two newsrooms — NBCLA and Telemundo 52 — and logged hundreds of hours together since they began working together in 2023. Marciniw is believed to have had more than 30 years of flight experience and was respected in the industry, NBC4 reported.

Esteban Jimenez, a fellow helicopter pilot, told the channel that he had known Marciniw since the 1990s and that the two had talked recently about retirement.

Moreno stood in awe of the breadth of subjects the team could report — and she seemed to do every-

thing except fly the helicopter. "I'm not just a photographer or reporter or editor, I'm actually doing all three things at the same time," she told her alma mater, Chapman University.

In a social media posting from Whiteman Airport on July 31, she said any kind of spot news was fair game, but the brush fires that plague Southern California were critical. "It's really one of the best stories to cover from the helicopter, because the helicopter is able to show here's where the fire started, here's where it's going, these are the homes that are threatened."

"It just goes to show the power that we have from being the eye in the sky."

The fight over congressional maps put nearly 35 million people into new House districts, report says

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The unprecedented spate of mid-decade redistricting for the U.S. House has changed the congressional districts for one-tenth of Americans and significantly altered the makeup of at least one-fifth of districts, according to a new study.

A report by Protect Democracy found that 34.8 million people — about one in 10 Americans — now live in a different district than they did during the 2024 election cycle. And about one-fifth of all Americans now live in a district where more than a quarter of voters are new to the district compared with the last election cycle.

The findings display the stark overhaul that partisan redistricting fights kicked off by President Donald Trump last year have caused for Americans across the country. The new congressional maps are increasingly drawn in ways that favor partisan politics over factors like geography and shared communities. That raises concerns among scholars about how the country's hyperpolarized politics are affecting American democracy.

"If this trend continues, it really brings into question whether or not elected officials are really representing their constituents anymore, or if the voters are being randomly picked by mapmakers to squeeze out partisan advantage," said Ben Raderstorf, a policy advocate at Protect Democracy and one of the paper's co-authors.

The bare-knuckled partisan redistricting battle for the House began when Trump urged the Republican-controlled legislature in Texas, the second most populous state, to redraw its congressional map to help the party. The highly unusual plan prompted an immediate response from California, the most populous state, which held a successful referendum to tilt its map toward Democrats.

Other states followed, and Republicans are positioned to potentially gain nine seats because of redistricting.

The Protect Democracy report warns that such partisan tactics reduce faith in American elections generally and insulate incumbent lawmakers from public opinion. That can make political organizing more difficult, the report cautioned, potentially worsening the country's already highly polarized politics. Both parties may also enter a "doom loop" where they embrace more aggressive and frequent redistricting efforts to avoid ceding any ground to their rivals.

In some states such as Missouri, the mid-decade redistricting has created confusion for voters about which district they live in and which candidates will appear on their November ballot. After conflicting lower court rulings, the U.S. Supreme Court last week blocked new Missouri districts backed by Trump that had been used in the primary, leaving the state to revert to its previous districts for the general election.

The report concludes with a call for new electoral structures the authors believe would eliminate the potential downsides of partisan redistricting, like proportional representation or a formal truce between the parties to implement nonpartisan districting plans.

Nine states already use nonpartisan commissions to draw congressional district lines but those provisions have limits. California, for instance, suspended its nonpartisan maps with a referendum last year in response to Texas' redistricting measures.

Such remedies would face long odds in Congress and statehouses, but scholars believe there are few

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 64 of 66

other avenues to turn down the temperature in the partisan redistricting fights.

"This is only going to get worse until somebody stops it," Raderstorf said. "The logic of gerrymandering points inevitably towards maximalist partisan advantage on both sides. There is no off-ramp other than reform. It is the only way to break the cycle."

Bank of England holds rates but appears ready to hike soon

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Bank of England kept interest rates on hold Thursday while indicating that it could raise them soon in order to dampen inflationary pressures emanating from the fallout of the Iran war.

The decision was widely anticipated, with six members of the Monetary Policy Committee voting to keep rates unchanged, while three backed a quarter-point increase to 4%.

Though borrowing rates were kept on hold, financial markets think it's more likely than not that the bank will back an increase at one of the next two policy meetings, either in November or December.

"So far higher global energy costs have had a limited effect on price and wage setting in the U.K.," said Bank Governor Andrew Bailey. "But the longer this volatility persists, the bigger the impact it will have on inflation, and the more likely it is we will need to raise Bank Rate to ensure that inflation falls back to our 2% target."

Like other central banks, the inflation outlook will be key. Some have already decided to start raising borrowing costs again, including the U.S. Federal Reserve on Wednesday.

The minutes accompanying the Bank of England's decision showed that inflation is now expected to rise to around 4% in the first quarter of next year from the current 3.1% as households face another increase in their domestic energy bills. That would take inflation further above the bank's target rate of 2%.

Interest rates in the U.K. had been trending downward from a 15-year high of 5.25% until the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran in late February. The Iran war led to sharp increases in oil and gas prices, partly because the crucial Strait of Hormuz has been largely closed to traffic ever since.

The Bank of England's rate-setters meet on Nov. 5 and many economists believe that will be a natural moment for a change of course as they will be armed with the latest quarterly economic forecasts and Bailey will be subsequently holding a press briefing.

"So it is a natural starting point for a hiking cycle," said Felix Feather, economist at asset management firm Aberdeen.

As well as impacting the cost of personal loans and mortgages, the uptick in interest rate expectations is a growing problem for the British government as the servicing of its debt accounts for a higher proportion of its spending.

Before the next meeting, the government will unveil its annual budget, which could have an impact on the inflation outlook and hence interest rate expectations.

A border surge reshaped America. Now, data shows who 4.5 million migrants were and where they went

By WILL JARRETT, AARON KESSLER, HUMERA LODHI and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

An unprecedented surge in border crossings over the past decade reshaped America: Millions of people from more than 150 countries arrived, bringing the U.S. immigrant population to its highest levels ever.

Now, data obtained exclusively by The Associated Press paints a picture of who these migrants are, where they went, and what happened after the border.

Some went to cities that have long been magnets for immigrants — New York, Miami — but increasingly, others found their way to smaller cities with less developed immigrant footholds. Blocks, neighborhoods and entire cities were remade in places like Elkhart, Indiana; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Dodge City, Kansas.

And while the vast majority of migrants traditionally were from Mexico, this surge saw people from an astonishing number and diversity of countries: India, Ecuador, Ghana.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 65 of 66

Via a Freedom of Information Act request, AP obtained federal records on the self-reported destinations of 4.5 million migrants released in the United States after crossing the Mexican border — both legally and illegally — between October 2018 and July 2025.

Migrants must provide U.S. Customs and Border Protection with a street address. AP obtained their destination ZIP codes, citizenship by country, ages, genders, and the dates and border regions where they encountered authorities.

Some probably never arrived at the addresses they gave. Authorities lacked resources to check, though migrants must report truthfully to pursue their cases in court and get work permits. Some have moved elsewhere in the United States or left the country, voluntarily or involuntarily. But many have stayed put.

Data on their initial destinations after the southern border provides both a sweeping and an unusually granular look at how the immigration surge — one that peaked during President Joe Biden's administration and was a major reason voters returned his predecessor, Donald Trump, to the White House — is playing out today.

Here are some key takeaways from the data.

Philadelphia, Cincinnati and other cities drew migrants from several continents

The Border Patrol encountered migrants from 174 countries in one year alone, a sharp departure from earlier periods when they were nearly all Mexican and Central American. The growth of social media and new migration routes was key in bringing people from around the world. Cincinnati, for example, saw a large number of arrivals from West Africa, Uzbekistan and India.

Some cities — ones that for generations have had robust international communities — were further diversified by the range of countries from which people arrived.

New York City's Queens borough registered at least 25 nationalities with significant arrivals, including five countries that each sent more than 7,000 people: Ecuador, China, Colombia, Venezuela and India.

Philadelphia had 11 nationalities with at least 1,000 new arrivals, led by Brazil, Haiti and the Dominican Republic but also including Russia and Venezuela. The city's metro area also saw more than 1,000 migrants from Georgia.

Florida remained No. 1, but many people looked elsewhere

While Florida was the most popular state overall, Latin American immigrants increasingly looked elsewhere for more promising job prospects and better quality of life. Many turned to places with small but established communities of immigrants from their homelands.

For Cubans, nine of the top 10 destination ZIP codes were in Florida, but people of the Caribbean nation also flocked to Louisville, Kentucky; Grand Island, Nebraska; and Odessa, Texas. Colombians went to the Denver suburb of Aurora. Paterson, New Jersey, was the top pick among Peruvians. Some Venezuelans headed to the growing suburbs south of Salt Lake City; others to pockets of Atlanta, Chicago and Denver.

More women and children than men came to the U.S.

Nearly six of every 10 migrants released at the border were women and children, a dramatic shift from a few years earlier when migrants were predominantly men.

The change is visible in many places and across nationalities, but some stand out. Tulsa, Oklahoma, attracted Mexican women and children. Ecuadorian women and children went to Spring Valley, New York. Guatemalan women were drawn to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Those who came from China headed primarily to two places

Chinese migrants, who trekked by hundreds nightly in California's mountainous border with Mexico, largely gravitated to two places: New York City, especially the Queens and Brooklyn boroughs, and a cluster of neighborhoods in the Los Angeles area.

Trump's deportation machine hit some migrant magnets and overlooked others

Immigration arrests have hit some areas that ranked among the most popular destinations for migrants in recent years, including Miami and New York. Others that saw a large migrant influx have gotten less attention from authorities, including California's Silicon Valley; Madison, Wisconsin; and Stamford, Connecticut.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 18, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 104 ~ 66 of 66

Today in History: September 18, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg dies

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Sept. 18, the 261st day of 2026. There are 104 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 18, 2020, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a towering champion of women's rights who became the court's second female justice, died at her home in Washington at age 87 of complications from pancreatic cancer.

Also on this date:

In 1793, President George Washington laid the cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol.

In 1850, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act, which created a force of federal commissioners charged with returning escaped slaves to their owners. The act was repealed in 1864 during the American Civil War.

In 1851, the first edition of The New York Times was published.

In 1944, the British submarine HMS Tradewind sank the Japanese transport ship Junyo Maru in the Indian Ocean, killing more than 5,600, most of them forced laborers and prisoners of war. It was one of World War II's deadliest disasters at sea.

In 1947, the National Security Act, which created a National Military Establishment and the position of Secretary of Defense, went into effect.

In 1961, United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld (dahg HAWM'-ahr-shoold) was killed in a plane crash in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia).

In 1970, rock star Jimi Hendrix died in London at age 27.

In 1975, newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst was captured by the FBI in San Francisco, 19 months after being kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army.

In 2014, voters in Scotland rejected independence, opting to remain part of the United Kingdom in a historic referendum.

In 2023, the U.S. and Iran swapped five prisoners each in a deal in which President Joe Biden agreed to release nearly \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets owed by a third country, South Korea.

Today's Birthdays: Hockey Hall of Fame coach Scotty Bowman is 93. Singer Frankie Avalon is 86. Actor Anna Deavere Smith is 76. Neurosurgeon-author-politician Ben Carson is 75. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Rick Pitino is 74. Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville of Alabama is 72. Hockey Hall of Famer Peter Štátný is 70. Actor Holly Robinson Peete is 62. R&B singer Ricky Bell (Bell Biv DeVoe, New Edition) is 59. Basketball Hall of Famer Toni Kukoč is 58. Actor Aisha Tyler is 56. Actor Jada Pinkett Smith is 55. Actor James Marsden is 53. Rapper Xzibit is 52. Comedian-actor Jason Sudeikis is 51. Former soccer player Ronaldo is 50. Actor/comedian Billy Eichner is 48. Rapper Dizzee Rascal is 42. Country singer Tae Kerr (Maddie and Tae) is 31. Soccer player Christian Pulisic is 28. Singer Alex Warren is 26. Actor Aidan Gallagher is 23. Actor Nina Lu is 23.