

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 1 of 78

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Top-ranked Huskies hand Tigers 42-8 setback](#)
- [7- T.J. Johnson Press Suite dedicated](#)
- [9- Today on GDILIVE.COM \(Volleyball\)](#)
- [10- Today on GDILIVE.COM \(Boys Soccer\)](#)
- [11- Charles Mix County Fatal Crash](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Ballot measure could auto-repeal Medicaid expansion, attorney general says in contrast to lawmakers](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Theme of this year's South Dakota ballot issues: Let's make life tougher](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Ep. 33: Supporters of creating a state trust fund for unclaimed property explain Amendment K for voters](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: With vote-by-mail court fight settled, attention shifts to protections at the polls](#)
- [21- SD SearchLight: Trump administration faces second lawsuit to block ICE agents at polls](#)
- [22- SD SearchLight: Judge says case challenging Trump's anti-weaponization fund 'still alive and kicking'](#)
- [23- SD SearchLight: Trump rapid third-country removal policy blocked at appeals court](#)
- [24- SD SearchLight: Trump likes data centers. Congress seems stuck. The midterms could deliver a verdict.](#)
- [27- Weather Pages](#)
- [31- Daily Devotional](#)
- [32- Subscription Form](#)
- [33- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [34- News from the Associated Press](#)

Community Calendar

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

Groton Daily Independent

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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

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 2 of 78

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.

Warren Buffett Steps Down

Billionaire investor Warren Buffett stepped down as chairman of Berkshire Hathaway yesterday, with his eldest son, Howard Buffett, succeeding him. Shares closed up 0.1% with the news.

The 96-year-old investor will serve as chairman emeritus and a board member of the conglomerate he led for over six decades. Buffett began buying shares of Berkshire Hathaway, then a struggling textile manufacturer, in 1962. He became its chairman and CEO in 1970 and turned it into an investment holding company. In 2024, Berkshire Hathaway became the first US non-tech company valued at more than \$1T. Business partner Greg Abel took over as CEO in January, but Buffett reportedly continued to come into the office daily; it's unclear whether this will change.

Buffett has donated roughly \$66B worth of stock to charity since 2006, and his three children are responsible for distributing the remainder of his roughly \$150B fortune by the end of 2034.

President Donald Trump to ban CNN, Politico, and MS NOW from White House.

Trump said yesterday that the outlets were being banned for reporting what he characterized as fake news. He warned bans on other outlets would follow, but did not specify which or when. Trump has previously attempted to take legal action against the BBC, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal, and banned the Associated Press from the Oval Office, Air Force One, and other events.

Pentagon releases sixth batch of UFO files, details secret military program.

Yesterday's drop comprises 71 files dating from 1952 to 2025 (see here). Several documents examine a secretive military initiative that ran from 2008 to 2012 to anticipate future aerospace threats. The memos explore the possibility of warp drives, wormholes, antigravity, negative mass propulsion, and invisibility cloaking. Another document details unintended injury to humans by anomalous advanced aerospace systems, including hair loss and signs of cancerous cell growth.

Russia begins voting in first wartime parliamentary elections.

Russia yesterday began voting in parliamentary elections that are all but assured to keep the country's ruling United Russia party in power. The election includes residents of four Ukrainian regions that Moscow illegally annexed after the war began, as well as Crimea. The only political entity that opposes the invasion of Ukraine—the Yabloko party—was removed from the ballot last month by Russia's Supreme Court.

Three dead, several wounded in Philippine high school shooting.

A 16-year-old killed two peers, both 14, before taking his own life yesterday; at least eight others were wounded. The shooter was reportedly part of an online "true crimes community," and the gun belonged to his father. This is the third school shooting since June in the Philippines, where such attacks had previously been rare. Experts cite a rise in depression among youth and relaxing gun laws.

Philadelphia police and FBI investigate serial murders at "house of horrors."

Officials this week tied a Philadelphia home to at least seven missing women, five of whom are presumed dead. Police began investigating the home this summer after arresting its owner, 44-year-old Eugene Horsch, on drug, firearm, and forged document charges. The property search uncovered over 1 million digital images, including many of women reported missing for over a decade.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 3 of 78

Tony- and Grammy-winning composer Duncan Sheik dies at age 56.

Sheik died in Manhattan of heart failure leading to cardiac arrest, his representatives said yesterday. The composer is best known for his 1996 debut song, "Barely Breathing". He went on to write the music for the coming-of-age rock musical "Spring Awakening," which premiered on Broadway in 2006. He won the Grammy for best musical theater album and two music-related Tonys.

Scientists discover a new "baby" planet.

Astronomers this week confirmed the existence of a planet 450 light-years from Earth that is less than 1 million years old, the youngest planet on record. The planet, Elias 2-24 b, was discovered in old data archives and is nearly the size of Jupiter, the largest planet in our solar system. The previous youngest known planet was over 5 million years old.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Rita D. in Walnut Creek, California.

"I'm a 68-year-old retired woman and have been traveling through Latin America for a year now. Yesterday I crossed the border from Belize into Guatemala in Central America. I needed to spend one night in Melchor de Mencos at the border before continuing my trip. The closest hotel to the border was the Rio Mopan Lodge; however, it does not accept credit cards, and I had no cash at all. I had just entered the country and needed to find an ATM to withdraw. (There was none nearby, and it was getting dark.) I'd have to cross a long bridge to the next (and only other nearby) hotel, with no guarantees it would accept credit cards. The owners' daughter let me stay the night for free. I asked her for the bank account info to send the money later. She said it was fine; I didn't have to pay. She even helped me carry my bags to where I needed to go. I'm beyond grateful."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 4 of 78

Top-ranked Huskies hand Tigers 42-8 setback

The top-ranked and undefeated Elk Point-Jefferson Huskies showed why they are one of the premier teams in Class 11B Friday night, leaving Doney Field with a 42-8 victory over Groton Area.

Despite the final margin, the Tigers moved the football at times, finishing with 13 first downs and 232 yards of total offense. Groton Area Coach Jordan Carson said his young squad continued to battle throughout the game.

"Our guys never gave up, never quit one time," Carson said. "We talk about that a lot when we've got a young group like this, that it's important that you play every single play. Even when you're down, you want to go and put a point on the scoreboard here and there too."

Groton had the football first at its own 33-yard line and picked up a first down before successfully executing a fake punt that moved the ball to the Elk Point-Jefferson 38. The promising drive ended on the next play when the Huskies intercepted a Tiger pass.

Elk Point-Jefferson took advantage, putting together a drive that ended with Aiden Hammitt scoring on a seven-yard run. Owen Boyle kicked the extra point for a 7-0 lead with 5:29 remaining in the first quarter.

Groton started its next possession at its own 39 and again moved the chains, but another interception gave the Huskies possession at their own 37.

Three first downs later, Hammitt broke loose for a 19-yard touchdown run. Boyle's kick made it 14-0 with 1:58 remaining in the opening quarter.

Carson said both interceptions were examples of the growing pains that can come with a young football team.

"We tried to get into a screen pass and we threw an interception, and then we tried to throw it to an open guy trying to make a play and we threw an interception," Carson said. "Sometimes when you're young you make inexperienced plays because you just don't know any better at that time. But I thought everybody played hard throughout the night, and those guys are a well-coached, well-oiled machine and they're going places."

Groton picked up a pair of first downs on its next possession before eventually punting early in the second quarter.

The Huskies answered with another scoring march. On fourth-and-one, Brody Van Roekel scored from two yards out and Boyle added the PAT to make it 21-0 with 7:54 remaining in the half.

After another Groton punt, Elk Point-Jefferson took possession near midfield. Three first downs set up Van Roekel's nine-yard touchdown run, and Boyle's fourth extra point gave the Huskies a 28-0 advantage with 2:54 remaining before halftime.

The Tigers then put together one of their better drives of the first half. Starting at their own 25, Groton rattled off three consecutive first downs and moved to the Elk Point-Jefferson 30. The drive stalled, however, and the Tigers turned the ball over on downs.

Elk Point-Jefferson controlled much of the third quarter with a long opening possession that included five first downs and consumed nearly half the period. Levi Hanson capped the drive with a five-yard touchdown run with 6:17 remaining. Boyle's kick pushed the advantage to 35-0.



Jordan Schwan had a nice catch from Asher Johnson to get a first down for the Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 5 of 78

Groton managed a couple of first downs on its ensuing possession but could not sustain the drive.

Early in the fourth quarter, Nicholas Prouty broke free for a 38-yard Elk Point-Jefferson touchdown. Boyle remained perfect on extra points and the Huskies led 42-0 with 9:45 remaining.

The Tigers answered with their best scoring drive of the night.

Starting at their own 26, Groton collected three first downs before Ryder Schelle scored on a six-yard run with 2:12 remaining. Asher Johnson completed a pass to Schelle for the two-point conversion, putting Groton on the board at 42-8.

Carson said the late drive was indicative of the effort his team showed throughout the night.

"We knew that there were going to be some spots where we were able to get the ball out in space to some of our playmakers, and I thought they did a good job of trying to find the opening and look for the opportunities to get yards where they had them," Carson said. "Sometimes those plays are just too far and few between each other."

Johnson finished 13-of-28 passing for 201 yards. Anthony Tracy was his leading target with eight receptions for 130 yards, while Jordan Schwan caught three passes for 54 yards. Brody Lord added a 16-yard reception and Alex Abeln had one catch for one yard.

The Tigers were held to 31 yards on 18 rushing attempts. Schelle led Groton with 25 yards on three carries, including the six-yard touchdown run. Johnson carried 12 times for four yards, Kyson Kucker had two yards on one carry and Tracy had two carries.

Elk Point-Jefferson did most of its damage on the ground, rushing 43 times for 376 yards and six touchdowns. Van Roekel led the Huskies with 97 yards and two touchdowns on 13 carries, while Hammitt rushed four times for 74 yards and two scores. Cody Robinson added 56 yards on six carries, Nicholas Prouty had 44 yards on two attempts and Luke Swatek added 35 yards on two carries.

Hanson completed five of 11 passes for 49 yards for the Huskies. Hammitt caught four passes for 44 yards and Boyle had one reception for five yards.

Elk Point-Jefferson finished with 21 first downs compared to Groton's 13.

Carson said the Huskies were able to adjust when Groton attempted to take away their running game.

"We came out right away trying to shut down their run game, and they saw what we were doing and they started passing the ball around a little bit," Carson said. "Sometimes they see what you're doing and they're able to counteract it."

Depth was another factor. Elk Point-Jefferson was able to use different personnel on offense and defense, while many Tigers played both ways.

"We're young, and if we try to go too much younger, we're going to start putting freshmen out on the field," Carson said. "When you're going juniors and seniors versus freshmen, it makes for a long night."

Defensively, Johnson led the Tigers with eight tackles. Gunner Hardy and Tracy each recorded seven tackles, while Ryder Schwan and Schelle had five apiece. Hunter Aden recovered a Huskies fumble late in the game.

Groton statistician Tom Woods praised the effort of a Tiger roster heavily populated by underclassmen.

"I'm really proud of the boys," Woods said. "They're working really hard. I know the scoreboard doesn't show it, but we have 22 juniors and sophomores that are just working hard. What impresses me the most is that they listen to the coaches and do their absolute best."

Elk Point-Jefferson improved to 4-0, while Groton Area fell to 2-3.

The Tigers now have a bye before returning to action Oct. 2 at Deuel. Carson said the extra time will be used to concentrate on the basics.

"We always try to get better, no matter if it's a bye week, game week, anything like that," Carson said. "We're going to pad it up a little bit and try to get better, work on our blocking, work on our tackling and just kind of break it back down to the fundamentals, and then we'll see where we're at when we get to Deuel game week."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 6 of 78

Groton Area

First Downs 13
Rushing: 18-31
Rushers:.....
Asher Johnson 12-4
Ryder Schelle..... 3-25
Kyson Kucker..... 1-2
Anthony Tracy 2-0

Passing: 13-28, 201 yards, 2 Int.
Asher Johnson 13-28, 201 yards, 2 Int.

Receivers:

Anthony Tracy 8-130
Jordan Schwan 3-54
Brody Lord 1-16
Alex Abeln 1-1

Fumbles: had 0, lost 0
Penalties: 2-15

Defensive Leaders:

Asher Johnson 8 tackles
Gunner Hardy..... 7 tackles
Anthony Tracy 7 tackles
Ryder Schwan..... 5 tackles
Ryder Schelle..... 5 tackles
Hunter Aden 1 fumble recovery

Record:..... 2-3
Next game: Oct. 2 at Deuel

Scoring:

First Quarter: 5:29: EPJ: Aiden Hammitt, 7 yard run. PAT: Owen Boyle kick..... 0-7
First Quarter: 1:58: EPJ: Aiden Hammitt, 19 yard run. PAT: Owen Boyle kick..... 0-14
Second Quarter: 7:54: EPJ: Brody Van Roekel, 2 yard run. PAT: Owen Boyle kick..... 0-21
Second Quarter: 2:54: EPJ: Brody Van Roekel, 9 yard run. PAT: Owen Boyle kick..... 0-28
Third Quarter: 6:19: EPJ: Levi Hanson, 5 yard run. PAT: Owen Boyle kick..... 0-35
Fourth Quarter: 9:45: EPJ: Nicholas Prouty 38 yard run. PAT: Owen Boyle kick..... 0-42
Fourth Quarter: 2:12: Groton: Ryder Schelle, 6 yard run. PAT: Asher Johnson to Ryder Schelle..... 8-42

Elk Point-Jefferson

First Downs: 21
Rushing: 43-376, 6 TDs
Rushers:
Brody Van Roekel..... 13-97, 2 TD
Cody Robinson 6-56
Grady Rozell 1-7
Levi Hanson..... 6-22, 1 TD
Trey VanderWeerd..... 5-25
Aiden Hammitt..... 4-74, 2 TD
Nicholas Prouty..... 2-44, 2 TD
Luke Swatek..... 2-35
Noah Tatro 3-3
Caleb Heuertz 1-13

Passing:..... 5-11, 49 yards
Levi Hanson..... 5-11, 49 yards

Receivers:

Aiden Hammitt..... 4-44
Owen Boyle..... 1-5

Fumbles:..... had 1, lost 1
Penalties:..... 1-5

Defensive Leaders:

Cody Robinson 5 tackles
Dawson Fullenkamp 4 tackles
Caleb Heuertz 1 int.
Levi Hanson..... 1 int.

Record:..... 4-0
Next game: host Deuel

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 7 of 78



T.J. Johnson Press Suite dedicated

Friday night at Doney Field was about more than football.

At halftime of the Groton Area and Elk Point-Jefferson football game, the community formally dedicated the Dr. T.J. Johnson Press Suite, honoring a former Groton Tiger whose life and connection to his hometown left a lasting impression on family, friends and the community.

A letter from the Johnson family was read during the dedication:

"Tonight I'll read a letter written by the TJ Johnson family. Thank you to everyone for being here tonight at the Groton Area High School football game as we dedicate the press suite and sign in Dr. TJ Johnson's honor. TJ's roots run deep in Groton. He was a proud member of the Groton Area High school class of 2001 and a true multi sport athlete participating in football, basketball, track and baseball. He held the school record in the 200 meter dash for many years, but football was his true it was on this very field that he made so many memories, built lifelong friendships and developed the character that would guide him through life. After graduation from Groton, TJ went on to play football for Northern State University where he eventually became a team captain for the Wolves. Even as life took him beyond Groton, he always knew he wanted to return to raise his family here. He loved his community and as an avid hunter and fisherman, he often said there was no better place to enjoy these passions than Golden Area. TJ would be truly humbled by this honor and is surely smiling down on us tonight. On behalf of Dr. T.J. Johnson's family, his wife Samantha, his two sons Titan and Gage, his parents Jay and Linda, his brother and sister in law JR and Paula, and their two boys Ryder and Asher, we want to sincerely thank everyone who made this dedication, press box and sign possible. It is such a great honor. Once a Tiger, always a tiger. Go Tigers."

Groton statistician Tom Woods also reflected on Johnson and what the new facility represents to the community.

Woods said the former press box had served its purpose for many years, but the new facility has trans-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 8 of 78

formed the appearance of Doney Field.

"This is just so beautiful," Woods said. "With the GT, Home of the Tigers, bright — I drove by early in the morning, late at night, and it shines so bright. And then Dr. T.J. Johnson Press Suite on Doney Field."

For Woods, the names associated with the facility connect different generations of Groton football history.

Doney Field honors Perry W. Doney, whose teams helped establish Groton's early football success. Woods said Doney coached in Groton for five years, won approximately 75 percent of his games and guided the Tigers to back-to-back Northeast Conference championships.

Now Johnson's name has been permanently added to the facility.

Johnson graduated from Groton Area High School in 2001 and went on to play football at Northern State University. Woods said he has kept mementos from Johnson's playing career, including a signed jersey and helmet, and has always enjoyed telling his story.

Woods also credited Trey Fliehs, one of Johnson's close friends, with helping turn the idea for the press suite into reality.

"Trey Fliehs, everything happened because of him," Woods said. "They were best friends. They were wonderful friends. He talked to people, and this entire press box is all built on donations, all built in the memory of T.J. Johnson."

Woods spent part of the day before the dedication looking back through Johnson's high school football statistics.

During his senior season, Johnson recorded 54 tackles. Offensively, he carried the ball 50 times for 237 yards and caught 36 passes for 399 yards. He scored six touchdowns, returned 12 kickoffs for 177 yards and had 10 punt returns for another 149 yards.

But Woods said Johnson's impact could never adequately be measured by numbers.

"There's a song that I just really love," Woods said. "It talks about, 'I found out the measure of a man is not how tall we stand or how wealthy or intelligent we are.'"

For Woods, Johnson's measure was found in the way he treated his family, friends, patients and community.

"T.J. Johnson loved his family," Woods said. "He loved the clients that he worked with as a chiropractor. He loved his patients."

Johnson was 38 when he died, leaving behind his wife, Samantha, and sons Titan and Gage, along with his parents, Jay and Linda Johnson, brother and sister-in-law J.R. and Paula Johnson, nephews Ryder and Asher and a large circle of family and friends.

"I'm thankful for the 38 years, two months and a couple of days that T.J. lived his life," Woods said, "because nothing was more important to him than family and friends and his community and the people that he served as a chiropractor and in the community."

Woods said Johnson quietly supported causes and people in ways that many community members may never know.

"He gave so much for various causes that nobody will ever know," Woods said.

The dedication also carried a special connection onto the football field Friday night. Johnson's nephew, Asher Johnson, was among the Tigers playing beneath the new press suite bearing his uncle's name.



The T.J. Johnson family gathered at midfield during the dedication of the T.J. Johnson Press Suite held at halftime of the football game. (Photo by Tina Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 9 of 78

Woods noted at halftime that Asher was Groton's leading tackler at that point in the game.

Woods said he believes Johnson himself would have shied away from all the attention.

"T.J. would not want to make this about himself," Woods said.

Instead, the Dr. T.J. Johnson Press Suite now stands as both a working part of Doney Field and a permanent reminder of a Groton Tiger whose life extended far beyond the statistics he accumulated on the football field.

"In all the brokenness in this world, folks, we've got to focus on the things that bring us goodness and joy," Woods said. "I'm thankful to live in a community that loves each other. Do we have brokenness? Do we have things when we argue and when we fight? Absolutely. That's the human condition. But life is going to be better if we pull together."



Volleyball Groton Area at the Hamlin Tournament Sat., Sept. 19, 2026



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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Sisseton at 9 a.m.
Dell Rapids at 11:30 a.m.
Placement Match

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Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 10 of 78



Boys Soccer
Freeman/Marion/Parker/
Viborg-Hurley, at Groton
Sat., Sept. 19, Noon



Groton
Area
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John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Cafe, Rix Farms / R&M Farms,
S & S Lumber, The Meat House of Andover.

Charles Mix County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle vs. tractor fatal crash

Where: SD 46 at mile marker 298, 9 miles east of Wagner, South Dakota

When: 6:40 a.m., Thursday, September 17, 2026

Driver 1: 58-year-old male from Scotland, South Dakota, no injuries

Vehicle 1: 2010 John Deere 7410 farm tractor

Seat Belt Used: No

Driver 2: 83-year-old male from Maskell, Nebraska, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 2015 Chevrolet Silverado K1500

Seat Belt Used: Yes

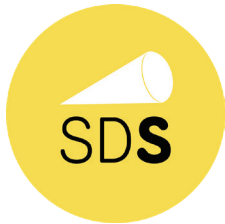
Charles Mix County, S.D.- A Nebraska man died Thursday in a single vehicle vs tractor crash near Wagner, South Dakota.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2010 John Deere farm tractor was traveling westbound on SD 46 near mile marker 298 while pulling a loaded grain drill. As he was crossing the bridge at the Charles Mix and Bon Homme County line, the driver of a 2015 Chevrolet Silverado crested the hill traveling eastbound at the same location. The driver of the John Deere attempted to move the tractor off the roadway into the north ditch. The Chevrolet struck the tractor. The driver of the Chevrolet sustained fatal injuries. The driver of the John Deere was not injured.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Ballot measure could auto-repeal Medicaid expansion, attorney general says in contrast to lawmakers

Legislators say amendment would let them consider ending expanded coverage, but ballot language describes federal-funding trigger as automatic

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

South Dakota Republican lawmakers who placed a state constitutional amendment on the Nov. 3 ballot have repeatedly said it would not automatically end expanded Medicaid eligibility.

It would merely give them authority, they've said, to consider ending the expansion if federal funding for it falls below 90%.

But the state's Republican attorney general, Marty Jackley, said the amendment would automatically repeal Medicaid expansion if federal funding falls below that level. It's his responsibility to write the ballot language, and the title he wrote says the amendment "repeals expanded Medicaid coverage" if federal funding drops below 90%, while the explanation he wrote says if that scenario occurs, the amendment "ends the expanded Medicaid coverage."

The conflicting interpretations of Amendment I have set up a confusing situation for voters, who can begin advance voting today.

Medicaid is a federal-state health insurance program for people with low incomes. In 2022, South Dakota voters approved a citizen-initiated state constitutional amendment expanding Medicaid eligibility beyond coverage groups such as children, elderly people and disabled people to adults with incomes up to 138% of the poverty level. The expansion capitalized on a federal law passed during the President Barack Obama administration that covers 90% of states' expansion costs.

Because the expansion is part of the state constitution, it can only be altered by voters.

Sponsoring lawmaker calls ballot language 'inaccurate'

During the 2025 legislative session, the Republican-dominated South Dakota Legislature voted to send Amendment I to the ballot. Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Fort Pierre, who sponsored the legislation, said it "changes it from our hands being tied" if the federal government reduces its funding share for Medicaid expansion.

Lawmakers have estimated that if the federal government reduces its support to 70%, the state would be on the hook for about \$72 million to sustain the expansion. That could mean cuts to other parts of the state budget to cover those costs, Mortenson said.

Mortenson described the ballot title and explanation as "100% inaccurate."

"The title and the explanation both overstate what this does," Mortenson said. "It would absolutely not immediately remove Medicaid coverage for the expansion population."

The explanation should tell voters that the amendment would merely remove the requirement for expanded Medicaid coverage if federal funding falls below 90%, Mortenson said, while allowing lawmakers to then consider repealing, altering or maintaining Medicaid expansion.

Republican Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen was a legislator in early 2025 and was an original sponsor of the legislation that sent Amendment I to the ballot. He also disagrees with the ballot title and explanation.

"I would be a little concerned that it implies that this is automatic, and it is not," Venhuizen said.

Attorney General Jackley published the final ballot language in May, after his office received no comments on an earlier published draft. He said the ballot language is accurate.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 13 of 78

"When you look at what the legislative proposal was that the title is based upon and the language is, it's very straightforward of how this would occur," Jackley said. "And again, the Legislature made that decision."

Mortenson said he hadn't read the attorney general's ballot title or explanation until recently, when Searchlight asked him about it.

"This is certainly not how I would have described this matter, and it seems to ignore the distinction between mandatory provisions of the constitution and permissive," Mortenson said. "At this point I think it's more about trying to educate voters about the practical impact, and I've got a fair amount of faith in the voters of the state of South Dakota."

Pro-expansion voices respond

Deb Fischer-Clemens is a nurse, Democratic former state lawmaker and previously served as senior vice president of Avera's Center for Public Policy. She's currently president of the South Dakota Nurses Association.

She wants people to vote no on the ballot question. As of last month, the state Department of Social Services reported more than 31,000 South Dakotans were enrolled in expanded Medicaid, out of a total statewide Medicaid enrollment of about 143,000 people.

Fischer-Clemens worries people in the expansion group could be left without healthcare coverage if voters approve the constitutional amendment and federal funding for the expansion declines.

"Preventative care would go away for those folks, emergency room costs would go up for when they get sick," she said. "They just wouldn't have the same opportunities that people with insurance have. And it's unfair."

Fischer-Clemens interprets the amendment as immediately ending the Medicaid expansion if federal funding falls even a fraction of a percent, "and people would just be without," she said.

2026 VOTER GUIDE

The candidates, the ballot measures, and the tools you need to cast your vote.

SOUTH DAKOTA VOTES: 2026

If the amendment passes and Mortenson's permissive interpretation of the language prevails, Fischer-Clemens said, the outcome is predictable. Many Republican lawmakers resisted Medicaid expansion, and it was only approved when citizens initiated a successful ballot question.

"These guys were not supportive of Medicaid expansion," Fischer-Clemens said.

The expansion provides healthcare coverage for individuals who make less than about \$22,000 a year, or families of four with an annual household income less than about \$40,000, said Tim Rave, a Republican former legislator who's now president and CEO of the South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations.

"It's also important to remember that those people are getting taken care of regardless of their ability to pay at South Dakota hospitals," Rave said. "But that also means the hospitals likely aren't getting any reimbursement previous to Medicaid expansion for those services that are provided."

Rave said about \$400 million from the Medicaid expansion is paid annually to hospitals, clinics and other providers, which otherwise would have been unreimbursed care.

Rave said the amendment reads as automatic rather than permissive to him.

"I read the plain English of the bill. It says it will end if the federal match changes, period," Rave said. "Anyone's yet to convince me that, automatically, it stays in state statute."

This year's ballot question follows a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 2024, which gave the Legislature authority to establish work requirements for expanded Medicaid participation, pending federal approval. Federal work requirements approved last year could cause 1,213 South Dakotans to be disenrolled from expanded Medicaid after they take effect next year, according to an estimate by the state Department of Social Services.

Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 14 of 78

COMMENTARY

Theme of this year's South Dakota ballot issues:

Let's make life tougher

All four of this year's amendments have been offered by the Legislature rather than citizens

by Dana Hess

As they cast their ballots now through Election Day on Nov. 3, voters will decide on four constitutional amendments, all courtesy of the South Dakota Legislature. Three of the amendments reflect their origins in a Legislature that's top-heavy with Republicans. Those three deal with popular Republican topics: tinkering with voting rights, looking to squeeze out expanded Medicaid and making it tougher for citizens to have their say in changes to the state constitution.

Here's a look at the four amendments:

Amendment K: Everyone must love it

Each election year, the South Dakota Secretary of State's Office produces a Ballot Question Pamphlet that includes an explanation from the attorney general as well as "pro" and "con" arguments about the measure. Amendment K would create a trust fund for unclaimed property. It sailed through the House and Senate in 2025 without a negative vote. Maybe that's why the Secretary of State's Office couldn't find anyone to write a "con" statement about the amendment.

In an age when no one seems squeamish about sharing their opinions, you'd think that there would be someone, somewhere who thinks that the trust fund is a bad idea. Secretary of State Monae Johnson could have turned to one of the proponents of Amendment I, which seeks a method for repealing expanded Medicaid coverage. One of them could tell her that the state's financial arrangements should never be enshrined in the constitution, because that's what they've said about expanded Medicaid.

Amendment I: Taking another swipe at expanded Medicaid

After successfully authorizing a work requirement for expanded Medicaid in the last election, proponents of Amendment I are seeking to blame the federal government for their need to put in place a mechanism to roll back the program.

The federal government pays for 90% of the insurance coverage. Amendment I says that the state constitutional requirement to offer coverage would end if the feds drop their share below 90%. As an example, they say that for every 10% drop in federal assistance, South Dakota will have to pay an additional \$36 million per year. Their theory is that things are so bad in Washington, D.C., that it's likely the federal government will need to cut its share of Medicaid financing.

That sounds like a scare tactic all dressed up as sound financial management.

Amendment J: For those times when a federal law just isn't enough

Amendment J seeks to make it clear that noncitizens aren't allowed to vote in South Dakota elections. The fact that there's already a law banning noncitizens from voting doesn't seem to matter to the amendment's backers.

While Amendment J seems like a well-intentioned, if redundant, way of making the state's voting laws clearer, there is a downside. The author of the amendment's con argument offers the reminder that it's now the law of the land in South Dakota that any registered voter may challenge another voter's registration by claiming that they're not a citizen.

Passage of Amendment J would add one more obstacle to citizens facing the challenge of proving their citizenship within the confines of Election Day or being barred from voting.

What the amendment's backers would have you believe is that it's a way to protect election integrity. In reality, the amendment takes a backhanded swipe at naturalized citizens and people of color — many of whom have been known to vote for Democrats.

Amendment L: Welcome to minority rule

Currently, for an initiated amendment to be enacted, it needs approval by a simple majority of voters.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 15 of 78

Amendment L would change that threshold, requiring 60% of voters to approve of an amendment in order for it to be added to the state constitution.

Backers of the amendment say changing the constitution should be held to a higher standard. Apparently they are unaware of the irony that, if approved, it would only take a simple majority of voters to require that all future amendments meet the 60% threshold.

Similar attempts to raise the voting threshold in 2018 and 2022 failed. Voters saw those for what they were — more attempts by the Legislature to keep citizens from messing with the constitution.

Activists have chosen constitutional amendments as their best vehicle for getting issues before the voters, because they still remember what the Legislature did to Initiated Measure 22 in 2017. Approved with 51% of the vote, IM 22 was a flawed, likely unconstitutional, attempt at policing corruption in government. Rather than wait for the court system to work its magic, legislators scrambled to dismantle IM 22 with the speed and efficiency of a NASCAR pit crew.

True, the measure was flawed. However, the ease with which lawmakers disregarded the will of voters still stings. Ballot measure organizers see initiating change via a constitutional amendment as the safest path because the Legislature won't be able to touch it for two years and must attempt to make any changes at the ballot box.

All four of this year's amendments have been offered by the Legislature rather than citizens. That's a testament to all the restrictions the Legislature has put on petition drives. Those restrictions include petition deadlines, circulation requirements and allowing signatures to be taken off petitions.

Lawmakers continue to enjoy an easier path to getting amendments on the ballot, having to just convince a simple majority (ahem) of their colleagues that it's a good idea. This is a means of working the system, using their role as legislators to get their issues before voters without going through all the mess and fuss of having to collect petition signatures.

Study your own copy of the 2026 Ballot Question Pamphlet to help you decide how to vote. From here it sure looks like these amendments reflect Republican-centric issues. Their passage would make life tougher by implementing unnecessary restrictions on voting, adding mystery to the prospect of getting Medicaid coverage and allowing a 41% minority to decide if the constitution will be changed.

Not only that, but thanks to the lackluster effort of the secretary of state's office, there's no one out there to tell us if the unclaimed property trust fund is a bad idea.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Ep. 33: Supporters of creating a state trust fund for unclaimed property explain Amendment K for voters

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

On November third, South Dakota voters will decide on four amendments to the state constitution. We'll be bringing you an explanation of each of those questions through Searchlight Report and on our website at southdakotasearchlight dot com.

One question on the ballot asks South Dakota voters for permission to create a trust fund for unclaimed property, which the state Investment Council would manage.

Unclaimed property consists of abandoned personal assets, such as money in old checking and savings accounts that people leave behind when they move. People can claim their property at any time, but many never do. Until recently, the state put unclaimed money into the state budget. Some years, that's been hundreds of millions of dollars.

Last year, lawmakers approved a new law that gradually transitions all unclaimed property money into a cash-flow fund that generates a small amount of interest for the budget. Lawmakers need voter approval to put the money in a trust fund that the state's Investment Council could manage to generate higher

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 16 of 78

returns. Only the interest would be used to fund the state budget, leaving the principal available to pay claims if the rightful owners emerge.

Later, you'll hear from Republican state Senator Taffy Howard of Rapid City. She sponsored the new law and the resolution that sent Amendment K to the ballot. But first, state Treasurer Josh Haeder joined me to talk more about what the trust fund could look like.

O'BRIEN: Can you explain, for folks that don't know, what is unclaimed property, and can you give me some examples of it?

HAEDER: So unclaimed property can be anything really. And so the most common example I use, let's use you for an example. We'll talk about checking and savings accounts. So let's say you live in Sioux Falls and you decide you want to move to Oklahoma. You're down in Oklahoma for a couple of years, then you come back to South Dakota and you live in Rapid City. But along the way, you forgot to change your address at the financial institution where your checking and savings account is.

So, what the state law says is after a three-year time period, if a holder, so in this case, like a financial institution can't locate you by your mailing address, it then becomes abandoned property and gets turned over to the state of South Dakota, where it ultimately becomes our responsibility to then find the rightful owner. So again, I say checking and savings accounts are the most common types of things that we get. And that's why you see us doing all sorts of advertising, trying to find those rightful owners, have them check our website, which is cash.sd.gov.

But we get all sorts of other things too. You know, one of the things I like to talk about is we get safety deposit boxes. And a lot of times in there, you don't get anything that's of monetary value, but things that you can't even think of. You know, we've had women's ashes come to us once before. We've had gold teeth. And then we get some really cool things like World War II letters that don't have monetary value, for example, but they have high intrinsic value. So, we work just as hard on some of those things to try to find the rightful owners because they mean something to the family. But literally anything under the sun can be unclaimed property. You can look at stocks, bonds, dividends, securities, unredeemed gift cards are a big one that we get as well. So, quite a bit of stuff.

O'BRIEN: And it's your responsibility to find that owner, but what do you do if you can't find that owner? What does that process look like then for handling that unclaimed property?

HAEDER: Sounds like you're setting this up to talk about a trust fund is what it sounds like to me. So again, it's our responsibility to find the rightful owner, and there's no time frame on that because it can take a period of time. Again, you have to remember, we're getting information that is not the most current from the financial institution because they can't find the rightful owner as well, right?

So, what we do now is we set the unreturned funds where we can't find the proper owner into a trust fund. And I know you'll have some questions on that, so we'll get to it. But again, we're always advertising every year, we go to events like fairs and home shows, so we can show people that there might be money that belongs to them. And the important thing to remember is that it's claimable forever. So just because we get it in a given year, doesn't mean we have to return it in a given year.

We could return it 20 years from now, because our responsibility, the mandate, is that we only hold these dollars until we find the rightful owners. We are just a safekeeper of the unclaimed property until we find those rightful owners. And again, the reason I say it's claimable in perpetuity, meaning forever, is we recognize that it belongs to somebody else and it's not something that belongs to the state of South Dakota. So if we don't find it in a given year, we keep looking.

O'BRIEN: And so, explain for me what this trust fund would look like, what it would do, and why there's this push to create this trust fund now.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 17 of 78

HAEDER: So, a couple of things when you look at the trust fund that it does, is number one, we actually passed a temporary trust fund two years ago, and I'll get into that here in just a second. But what it really does is, it protects the unreturned, unclaimed property dollars from simply being spent in the regular budgeting process, which was happening, OK? The second thing that it does, like all of the other trust funds, is it earns interest. So if you look at it like the cement trust fund or any of the others, that interest is then turned into a permanent revenue source where it goes to the general fund, just the interest, not the principal. So you're always protecting those dollars.

So if you would go back two to three years ago, and somebody would say, well, how much unclaimed property is claimable? Now, this is my favorite thing to do. You're the reporter, but I'm gonna ask you a question before we go forward. If you know it, that's fine. How much unclaimed property in South Dakota is claimable today? Do you have any idea?

O'BRIEN: I couldn't tell you off the top of my head.

HAEDER: See, this is why you have the treasurer, I can ask and we go back and forth. So, the total dollar amount that is claimable right now is \$1 billion. It's actually a little higher than that. So we get a massive amount of unclaimed property in the state of South Dakota. Now, not all of it belongs to South Dakotans, but some of it does, and that's where we focus our advertising. So it's a fascinating process. And again, what was happening was when we weren't able to return it in a year, and I'll give you this example: So, let's say in a given year \$300 million comes in and we return \$50 million and then our office expenses are paid out of that. What do you think happens to the rest? It was just spent. It was gone. So when somebody would say, well, boy, a billion dollars is claimable, how much interest are we earning on that? The answer was \$0. It was all spent through the budgeting process.

So, what was happening, by law, is we were just hoping and praying, so to speak, that enough money would come in every year to cover all of the claims that would come in. Well, that's not good financial management. And that's where we went to the Legislature and said, "Hey, the better idea here is to work as hard as we can to return money, do all of the advertising, doing all of the things that we can, but instead of you guys just spending it all and hoping nobody else comes to claim in a given year, we can set it aside in a trust fund where the principal is protected."

So, when the rightful owner does come forward, because remember, that takes some time, it's always available. And so, you can't go backwards and say we need to fix this, you know, 20 years ago, you can only do it going forward. So, that's what we did with that temporary trust fund. Now, the thing you have to remember with a temporary trust fund is it's like a savings account, OK? So whatever money we put in there now, which is about 200 million dollars, it earns 2 to 3%. It's not very high.

The reason Amendment K matters is for it to get turned over to the South Dakota Investment Council. Like the other trust funds, it has to be approved by the voters of South Dakota. So, that is why after we approved the temporary one, there was SJR 505, which put it on the ballot for the voters to approve it to make it permanent. So, the Legislature can never change it, and then it can earn an interest rate of about 8 or 9%. So that's just more interest money that's going to come to the state as well.

O'BRIEN: You've described this in the pro statement that you submitted to the Secretary of State's Office, this is a win-win for South Dakotans, I guess. Could you expand on that a little bit more? What does that mean?

HAEDER: I would love to. It's absolutely a win-win, and here's why it's a win-win. When you go back two years ago, when we passed the bill for the temporary trust fund, it passed without a single no vote. The governor signed it right away and they get a lot of the credit. We helped write the bill. We worked with Senator Taffy Howard, but we brought all the stakeholders together. There were people that somewhat disagreed because the state was reliant on those dollars, and that's why we brought all the stakeholders in to say there is a better path forward. And so, bringing everybody to the table makes me comfortable,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 18 of 78

and it should make the voters comfortable that every single one of their representatives and senators, Republicans, Democrats, signed the dotted line and said this is a better path forward for the state of South Dakota. And what they also said is we need your approval, voters, to make this permanent so we can protect those dollars forever until the rightful owner comes forward and we can earn a maximum amount of interest that can be used for the betterment of the state of South Dakota through the interest dollars that go to the general fund.

O'BRIEN: Republican Rapid City Senator Taffy Howard was behind the push in the Legislature to bring the question to voters. She joined the podcast to talk about her concerns with the state's previous use of unclaimed property revenue.

You'll hear her talk about a law that passed last year, which created the unclaimed property trust fund and, over time, decreases the amount of money that the state can use in its budget from unclaimed property.

HOWARD: So unclaimed property is when someone passes away, you know, checkbooks, savings accounts, mutual funds, anything that can be monetized, that there is no heir that has come forward to claim that because we have certain banks headquartered in our state, that money reverts to the state, if that makes sense.

O'BRIEN: How does the state deal with that unclaimed property then? What do we do with that?

HOWARD: Well, up until this trust fund was created, we had just been spending the money as it came in, even though we are perpetually liable to pay out those funds if an heir were to ever come forward. So, it is technically an unfunded liability on our books, you know, when you're talking about auditing and looking at the books from a financial aspect, it is an unfunded liability on our books.

And at first, we weren't dealing with a ton of money coming in every year, you know, it probably started out 40, 60 million a year, but the last few years, it started getting into the hundreds of millions. So then, you know, it was a seven-year process trying to get this trust fund created, and I think a lot of the opposition at first was because there wasn't a whole lot coming in every year, so some people felt, you know, better about spending that because it wasn't a huge liability at that time. But once we started getting into the hundreds of millions, and now we're up to an over \$1.2 billion unfunded liability on our books, so at that point, it's like, OK, you know, pretty much, I can't remember if it passed unanimously, but everyone agreed this is definitely something we need to do, to take care of that liability.

O'BRIEN: And so, if passed, this will create that fund for unclaimed property to go into?

HOWARD: Well no, so we had a statute and this proposed constitutional amendment. So the statute created the fund. So the fund is already created and we've started down that process. However, we need it created in the constitution, just like our other trust funds are, which allows our investment council to invest the funds in higher yielding securities.

So right now, if we don't pass this, it's just sitting in the cash flow fund. So it's not earning hardly any interest. And that's what we wanted to earn interest because that's what will benefit future generations of South Dakotans. You know, this is, we're thinking long term. The interest off of this trust fund will be used just like the trust fund that we have for education will be used to benefit future generations.

So we need it in the constitution to allow our investment council to do that. Typically, the trust funds earn 1.5 to 2% more than it would earn sitting in the cash flow fund.

O'BRIEN: Is there anything else on that one that you want voters to know or anything that I didn't note on that at all?

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 19 of 78

HOWARD: I don't think so. I mean, it's very uncontroversial. Hopefully this will pass unanimously. We want to treat this trust fund like we're treating every other trust fund, which, you know, and every other one is in our constitution. So this, this is for the good of our citizens. It's a great, great thing that we did by creating this. So I hope everyone will support it.

O'BRIEN: Constitutional Amendment K will be on the ballot for voters on November third, and early voting is underway. A "yes" vote will create a trust fund for unclaimed property in the state that the state Investment Council can manage. Interest from the fund will be used to help fund the state budget, under the Legislature's direction. A "no" vote will leave the unclaimed property fund as it is.

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

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

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

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

With vote-by-mail court fight settled, attention shifts to protections at the polls

BY JACOB FISCHLER

Voting rights groups and Democratic officials are looking to defend against what they see as possible election interference from the Trump administration ahead of the upcoming midterm elections, now that they've won a major battle over mail ballots.

Common Cause, a nonpartisan pro-democracy organization, announced a "voter protection" campaign Thursday that would place thousands of volunteers at polling sites in 25 states.

The initiative is designed to counter potential administration moves to intimidate voters, such as ordering troops or law enforcement officers to polling places.

The Democratic Party is also upping its voter protection efforts, launching its own initiative this week to deploy 10,000 volunteers to assist voters at polling locations in all 50 states plus seven U.S. territories.

Both efforts are described as preemptive efforts to head off any possible attempts by President Donald Trump to skew election results. Trump for years has alleged, without evidence, U.S. elections are beset by myriad attempts at fraud.

He has used that pretext in attempts to enact policies to restrict voting, including the order limiting vote-by-mail that the U.S. Supreme Court blocked for this election.

'Breathing down our neck'

Voting rights advocates say they are preparing for more efforts to dissuade voters from casting ballots.

Voters are "facing aggressive and deliberate threats from this administration and anti-voter forces that are tied to this administration," Common Cause CEO Virginia Kase Solomón said. "Whether it be voter intimidation at the polls, the attacks on mail-in voting or attempts to collect your personal data, the barriers that voters are facing right now ... are not only real, they are urgent. And they are intentionally designed to make everyday Americans give up."

The Democratic plan, led by the Association of State Democratic Conferences, a coalition of the 57 state and territorial party leaders, was also in part a reaction to Trump, ASDC Chair Jane Kleeb said in an interview.

"We had to react to the threat that was breathing down our neck," Kleeb, who is also the chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party, said in an interview.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 20 of 78

Trump has broadly accused Democrats of trying to cheat, and has placed particular focus on the possibility of noncitizens voting.

White House spokeswoman Lauren Bis wrote in a Thursday email that the administration would continue to guard against that possibility.

"Despite extreme Democrats and the media claiming it never happens, the evidence of non-citizens registering and voting in our elections continues to pile up," Bis wrote. "Any non-citizens found registering and voting in our elections will be arrested and held accountable. Only Americans should be electing American leaders."

The Justice Department has charged a handful of voter fraud cases of foreign nationals in recent months.

The administration has also argued a software glitch in New Jersey that registered 6,600 noncitizens showed why tighter regulations on voting are needed.

"There continues to be a narrative and a concern that noncitizens are voting," Ari Mittleman, the executive director of the civic education group Keep Our Republic, said, adding that examples like the New Jersey glitch kept the issue "on the minds of many."

Troops at the polls?

Common Cause officials and Kleeb highlighted the possibility of federal troops or law enforcement, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement, at polling places as a strong concern.

"We don't know exactly what Donald Trump is going to do," Kleeb, whose interview was conducted before the Supreme Court's mail voting decision on Sept. 14, said. "But if we take him at his word, he will disrupt the vote-by-mail process, and he will have people outside of polling locations to intimidate voters."

Administration officials have dismissed the idea of sending federal agents to the polls, but have not completely ruled it out.

FBI Director Kash Patel repeatedly dodged the question during a U.S. Senate hearing Wednesday.

At a press conference this month, Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said ICE would not have a sizable presence at election sites, but could deploy as part of the agency's routine duties.

"ICE isn't there to patrol the polling places," Mullin said. "We're there to enforce specific threats. The only reason why we would be at polling places: Because there is a threat to that polling place or we are serving a warrant on someone we are actively tracking down."

And then-White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt called a question about sending ICE agents to the polls "disingenuous" at a February press briefing.

"I can't guarantee that an ICE agent won't be around a polling location in November. I mean, that's frankly a very silly hypothetical question," she said. "But what I can tell you is I haven't heard the president discuss any formal plans to put ICE outside of polling locations."

Disinformation, distrust

Trump's relentless focus on election regulations has contributed to a distrust of elections. Only 34% of adults in a AP-NORC and USAFacts poll this month said they trust government certifications of election results "a great deal" or "quite a bit."

Solomon said on the Thursday press call announcing the voter protection drive that the administration and its allies were seeking to sow distrust in the election.

The program, which the group said was the country's largest nonpartisan election protection effort, hopes to counter that narrative by installing voter advocates at polling stations.

Volunteers will receive about an hour to 90 minutes of training on their state's voting laws and how to help voters. ASDC volunteers will also receive about an hour of training.

"They are trained to check for things like signage, polling place accessibility, long lines," Common Cause Director of Policy Carol Evans said. "They are trained to be a positive and joyful presence at the polls to make the experience better for voters. And importantly, they are our eyes and ears on the ground to alert us to serious issues."

In another voter education initiative, Keep Our Republic has launched a series of town hall-style events in the five states in which it operates — Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — to

give election officials a platform to speak to voters and increase trust in the election process, Mittleman said.

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

Trump administration faces second lawsuit to block ICE agents at polls

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — A coalition of civil rights groups and union organizations Friday sued the Trump administration to prevent the deployment of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to polling locations during November's midterm elections.

The suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia is the second this month, following comments from top Trump officials citing a federal policy to allow ICE officers to enter polling locations in certain circumstances to conduct immigration enforcement.

The groups argue the policy violates the federal law that prohibits "armed men" at election sites, and also causes voter intimidation, which is barred under the Voting Rights Act.

Under federal law, "troops" or "armed men" are allowed at polling locations only if "such force be necessary to repel armed enemies of the United States." And the section of the Voting Rights Act the groups cite prohibits "intimidation," "threats," or "coercion" against a person for voting or attempting to vote.

"The result is predictable: voters across the country—particularly Black, Latino, and Asian voters, naturalized citizens, and members of mixed-status families—are afraid to vote, help others vote, and participate in civic life," according to the suit.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin earlier this month noted that agents could conduct immigration enforcement at polling places. And before U.S. senators this week, FBI Director Kash Patel did not rule out sending FBI agents to polling locations, but said officers would "follow the law."

The Department of Justice dismissed the idea that officers would be sent to polling locations.

"The DOJ has never said it would send federal law enforcement to polling locations," a DOJ spokesperson said in a statement to States Newsroom. "Any suggestion otherwise is fearmongering."

In a statement to States Newsroom, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security said those "who are here legally and are not breaking other laws have nothing to fear."

"Allegations that DHS law enforcement engages in 'racial profiling' are disgusting, reckless, and categorically FALSE," the spokesperson said. "What makes someone a target for immigration enforcement is if they are illegally in the U.S.—NOT their skin color, race, or ethnicity."

The DHS spokesperson added that ICE was not planning any operations that targeted polling locations.

NAACP among groups suing

"We reject this administration's attempt to desecrate our polling sites by converting them into militarized zones through the unlawful deployment of ICE or any other federal agent," Kristen Clarke, the NAACP's general counsel, said in a statement.

NAACP is one of nine groups that filed suit. The rest are Mi Familia en Accion, Asian Pacific American Advocates, the National Urban League, Minnesota 8, the Service Employees International Union, the American Federation of Teachers, the International Union of Painters and the United Food and Commercial Workers International.

"Turning the fundamental right of exercising our vote into a high-stakes encounter with the militarized strong arm of the current administration isn't protection and it isn't oversight; it's disenfranchisement, period," Clarke said. "The NAACP calls on the court to reject this blatant attempt by federal officials to obstruct our elections through tactics pulled straight from the Jim Crow playbook."

The nine groups are represented by the Legal Defense Fund, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, the National Immigra-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 22 of 78

tion Law Center, Protect Democracy and the Democracy Defenders Fund.

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

Judge says case challenging Trump's anti-weaponization fund 'still alive and kicking'

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — A federal judge told the Trump administration Friday a case against the Department of Justice's \$1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" fund is "still alive and kicking."

The administration sought to dismiss the case brought against President Donald Trump's negotiated settlement terms to drop his \$10 billion lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service for a years-old grievance over leaked tax returns.

The settlement, brokered by the DOJ and Department of Treasury and met by heated opposition even from Republicans, established a massive taxpayer-funded settlement fund to pay "victims of lawfare." It also included retroactive relief from tax audits and enforcement for Trump, his sons Don Jr. and Eric, and the Trump Organization.

Critics of the fund asserted the likelihood that violent participants who assaulted police during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol could reap a reward from the pot of money.

The administration maintains the fund never became operational and that the case is moot, though it refused to provide a sworn statement requested by the court saying as much. Attorney General Todd Blanche testified at his July 15 confirmation hearing that the fund is "dead" and "never started."

30 days to produce documents

On Friday, Judge Leonie Brinkema at the U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Virginia overruled the government's objection to producing evidence and gave DOJ 30 days to produce documents potentially revealing who structured the deal.

The "real concern," she said is "this concept of taxpayer money being used to promote political viewpoints." "I think the fund now is gone, but is there a functional equivalent?" she asked, noting violators of federal laws that the administration opposes, like protections for abortion clinic clients, could be paid from a DOJ judgment fund.

Plaintiffs, including individuals and interest groups, sued the DOJ, Blanche and Treasury officials, including Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and IRS CEO Frank Bisignano.

Among the numerous plaintiffs are Andrew Floyd, a former assistant U.S. attorney who alleges he was fired for prosecuting Jan. 6 defendants, and the nonprofit National Abortion Federation, which represents abortion providers and advocates for abortion access.

Pooja Boisture, counsel for the plaintiffs, argued Friday the fund is "discriminatory."

"This fund was designed to reward and give credence to election deniers and violators of the FACE Act," she said, referring to the 1994 law that penalizes violence or threats from protesters against those entering to abortion clinics.

In response to a request for comment on Friday's hearing, a DOJ spokesperson said, "The Department is confident that the court lacks jurisdiction over this lawsuit against the (anti-weaponization fund), which never started and isn't moving forward."

Constitutional question

The plaintiffs also allege the tax immunity arrangement for Trump, his sons and private conglomerate amounts to an unfair gain or advantage for the president, therefore violating the Constitution's emoluments clause.

The National Treasury Employees Union is also party to the suit and brought the claim of an emoluments violation, as well as allegations of injury to tax auditors who may have been told to stop any audits of Trump.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 23 of 78

"These members have no good options: If they comply with a request to terminate audits, they violate their oath of office; and if they refuse to comply, they will likely face retaliation for insubordination," the union argued in a court filing.

The plaintiffs allege the president has ongoing audits that will be terminated under the immunity deal.

Lisa Newman, attorney for the legal advocacy group Democracy Forward that is representing the plaintiffs, also told Brinkema, "We do plead that the president was participating in negotiation of the settlement."

Newman referred to public reporting by The New York Times on May 19 that a loss in an IRS audit of Trump's previous tax returns could cost him roughly \$100 million.

Andrew Block, senior counsel for the Justice Department, told Brinkema he's "not aware there are or (are) not" audits of the president's tax returns from that period of time.

"It is speculation to say ... that there was an improper request," he said.

Brinkema shot back that Trump's underlying \$10 billion lawsuit against the IRS is "unique."

"The plaintiff is absolutely controlling the defendants" who are at risk of being fired by the president on "a whim," she said.

Settlement 'castrated' by judge

Brinkema said the Florida federal judge in Trump's IRS case "castrated" the settlement in a July 13 order, adding the president's underlying lawsuit against the nation's tax enforcement agency is "extraordinarily relevant" to the lawsuit before her.

Judge Kathleen Williams for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, where Trump filed his lawsuit, wrote in a 56-page order that "No sitting President has ever sued federal agencies completely subject to his control for monetary benefits, or any benefits that inure to him, his family, and associates."

"The failure of any attorney in this case to address, on this docket, the relationship of this Article II proscription with the benefits conferred by the 'settlement' is a glaring omission that speaks to the control of the Lead Plaintiff," Williams wrote.

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

Trump rapid third-country removal policy blocked at appeals court

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court Friday struck down the Trump administration's policy to quickly send noncitizens to countries they are not from, finding that immigrants must have an opportunity to challenge their removal if they fear for their safety.

The decision largely upheld a Boston federal judge's February ruling that found the Department of Homeland Security's policy unlawful. But the immigration officers can still conduct third-country removals if they follow the proper procedures, such as adequate notice and an opportunity for an immigrant to raise a fear-based claim to that country of removal.

Third-country removals, deportations from the United States to a nation other than an immigrant's home country, occur when the immigrant's home country does not accept the person's repatriation.

Once rare, the procedure has spiked under the second Trump administration that has entered into partnerships with several countries, some with human rights concerns, to take third-country removals from the U.S.

The three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit also raised doubts that a country that accepts a person that is not their own citizen could "credibly provide blanket assurances that all removed noncitizens will not be persecuted or tortured there unless it intends to provide them with some sort of affirmative protection against rogue agents and non-state actors."

The panel also upheld the lower court's finding that the notice to a third country was inadequate – about 24 hours – and that the policy was unlawful.

It gives "no notice at all of an impending third-country removal when the country to which the noncitizen is to be removed has provided credible (in the State Department's judgment) diplomatic assurances that

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 24 of 78

noncitizens removed there from the United States will not be persecuted or tortured," the panel wrote.

The panel included circuit judges Lara E. Montecalvo, Jeffrey R. Howard and Seth R. Aframe. Former President Joe Biden nominated Montecalvo and Aframe. Former President George W. Bush nominated Howard.

The Trump administration in May 2025 made an emergency request to the Supreme Court after U.S. District Judge Brian Murphy blocked the policy. The Supreme Court in June 2025 temporarily allowed for the removals, before sending it back to the lower court.

Murphy again in February issued an order that blocked the policy and required DHS to carry out the statutory obligations of proper notice of removal to a third country and to give a noncitizen enough time to raise any concerns for their safety to their removal to a third country.

The Trump administration later appealed to the First Circuit, and could appeal again to the Supreme Court. DHS did not respond to States Newsroom's request for comment Friday.

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

Trump likes data centers. Congress seems stuck. The midterms could deliver a verdict.

BY DAVID LIGHTMAN

WASHINGTON — The rare 2026 issue that draws huge support from Republicans and Democrats in Congress is the same one that's mobilized many Americans: restrictions on giant data centers.

The House has overwhelmingly passed legislation forcing state regulators to consider requirements that data centers absorb the cost of the electricity they use.

But there's more to be done, say data center critics, and they're finding there is no easy or even obvious answer about what to do next.

Leave it to state and local governments to decide whether and how the centers should function? Should their size be restricted? Should they be banned altogether?

The future of data centers has become a flashpoint in this year's congressional races. It's woven into the debate about affordability, artificial intelligence and corporate influence on government.

"People see big energy cost increases and say data centers must be the reason," said Daniel Birdsong, senior lecturer in political science at the University of Dayton.

Before leaving Washington for an extended recess not due to end until after the election, the House voted Wednesday 417-3 on a bill that requires states to consider having data centers using large amounts of electricity pay the full additional cost of that generation, as well as transmission and distribution upgrades that are needed.

Obstacles to action

The vote was only a prologue for action. There's no clear next chapter, as skepticism is coming from critics at the White House and among progressives.

The biggest obstacle appears to be President Donald Trump.

"The people that say AI is going to destroy the World, and that Data Centers are bad for your neighborhood, are the same people that said, just a short time ago, that the World would be extinguished by 'Climate Change,'" he said on his Truth Social site Monday.

"That HOAX never worked out for them, and now they're on to the next one. These people are Revolutionaries, but Revolutionaries for a Bad and Evil Cause. Soon you'll find out they're working for people that do not have the best interests of the United States in mind!"

Senate leaders have not said how or if they'll take up the House bill, or any other data center legislation. Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., the Senate's second-ranking Democrat, was not optimistic.

"There aren't many alternatives to a president who thinks this is a wonderful asset and communities

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 25 of 78

who think just the opposite," he said.

The lawmakers know this much: Their constituents don't like data centers.

"I've never seen people come together across the political spectrum like I have the last few months on concerns about big tech, concerns around AI, concerns around data center development," said Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H.

A national University of Massachusetts Amherst Poll released this week showed just 11% said they backed the construction of the data centers in their local area. Sixty-five percent were opposed, and about half said they were strongly opposed.

"Opposition to AI data centers has emerged as one of these rare areas of consensus," said poll director Tatishe Nteta.

The political divide

Solutions tend to fall along three very general lines: A complete ban or moratorium; giving state and local governments more tools to regulate the centers; and withdrawing federal support.

Putting pressure on utility companies appears to have the most legislative traction. Rep. Rob Latta, R-Ohio, chairman of the House Energy Subcommittee, found the House-passed legislation would protect consumers from runaway center-inspired utility rates.

The bill, he said, "protects American ratepayers from being forced to cover the cost of energy infrastructure upgrades needed to support data centers."

Rep. Kathy Castor, D-Fla., one of the bill's lead sponsors, saw the measure as help for constituents facing affordability issues. "Data centers cannot come at a cost to neighbors who are already facing high grocery, gas, utility, health care and housing costs," she said.

At the Edison Electric Institute, which represents the nation's investor-owned electric companies, Drew Maloney, president and CEO, said in a statement that he appreciated Congress' work and that EEI's members "will continue working in lockstep to ensure large customers cover the costs of the energy infrastructure they use, and communities have a strong voice from the beginning of the planning process."

But some environmental activists saw big flaws in the bill.

"With only a weak directive to states to voluntarily consider adopting cost protections against the energy costs of data centers for ratepayers, state regulators could ultimately choose to ignore this bill," said Sara Chieffo, senior vice president for government affairs at the League of Conservation Voters.

A report last year from the Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory found that in 2023, data centers used roughly 4.4% of total electricity in this country. It forecast that the figure could double or triple by 2028 to meet the needs of more data, notably from artificial intelligence.

Consumers' costs are generally figured by how much it costs to generate and deliver electricity. State and local regulators usually set those rates.

Looking ahead

While the House bill had strong Democratic support, many in the party wanted to go further.

"It's a step forward," House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-New York, told reporters when asked about the House bill. "But more needs to be done."

That could include some sort of ban, or at least a moratorium, on building more centers, an approach favored by many Democratic progressives.

"Communities should have the right to say 'no' to a data center being shoved down their throats," Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., told colleagues in a floor speech.

In the Senate, some Democrats sent a strong signal that they wanted to do more than the House bill provided.

The bill "does nothing to meaningfully address the rising costs of AI data center development. Instead, it relies on a voluntary framework that does not require AI data centers to pay the full cost of the energy they consume or the strain they place on the grid," said Sen. Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, top Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

"We need legislation that makes AI data centers pay their fair share and actually protects families," he

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 26 of 78

said.

Among this week's efforts was new legislation from a group of House Democrats to end certain currently available federal tax incentives available to data centers.

"Tax cuts need to go to families, not data centers. We absolutely should not cut healthcare and food assistance for children and seniors to pay for tax giveaways to corporations," said Rep. Kristen McDonald Rivet, D-Mich., one of the bill's lead sponsors, at a Capitol Hill press conference.

"Why incentivize this right now?" asked Rep. Don Davis, D-N.C., another top sponsor.

Political fallout

Find a close House or Senate race and chances are good there's a brawl between candidates over who can best deal with the data center issue.

In Ohio, Sen. Jon Husted, a Republican, is in a close battle with former Sen. Sherrod Brown, a Democrat.

Husted is the lead sponsor of the Senate ratepayer protection bill. Husted tried to get the Senate to consider the measure Thursday but it was blocked by Heinrich.

Asked why he doesn't support a ban, Husted said, "Whether you want a data center should be a local decision. What we should do is protect the ratepayers from bearing the burden of the cost of building the electricity those data centers use."

Husted is in a difficult position, Birdsong said, because his call for limits on data centers "puts him at odds with Trump."

Close House races have similar fights. In Michigan, Rep. Tom Barrett, a Republican, is campaigning as the voice of the consumer.

One way to deal with data centers, he said, is by "stopping federal overreach and preventing the secrecy pledges that have plagued Michigan and undermined the power of local residents."

The House, though, left Washington and won't be back voting until a lame-duck session starting Nov. 8, sparking outrage from Democrats.

"That means ZERO votes on lowering costs, ending corruption, addressing AI, or responding to the Iran war before Election Day," tweeted Rep. Johnny Olszewski Jr., D-Md.

The Senate's scheduled to be around through September, but there's no sign it will take a close look at the data center issue. The big hope is that it will continue to be discussed back home and lawmakers will return ready to act or at least debate.

"We have to understand, 'What's the real implication here?'" Davis said.

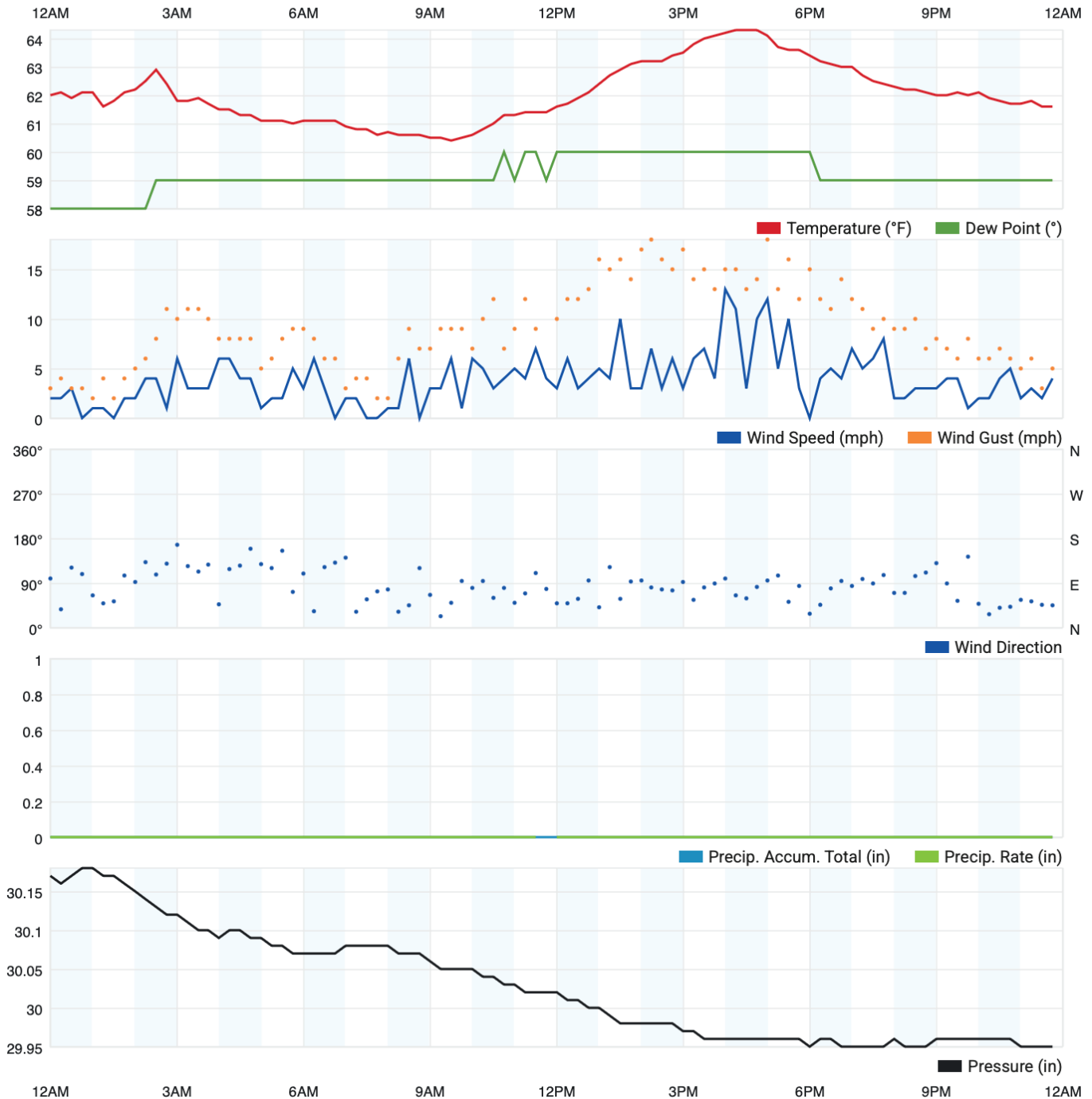
David Lightman has been a reporter or editor for more than 50 years. He's worked for the Hagerstown (Md.) Morning Herald, Riverside (Calif.) Press Enterprise, and then 10 years at the Baltimore Evening Sun, covering local news and, for six years, state government and the legislature. He spent 23 years as the Hartford Courant's Washington Bureau Chief, and 18 years at McClatchy's Washington bureau, where he covered the White House and Congress. He also served as regional editor, supervising the bureau's seven regional reporters. He was president of Washington's Gridiron Club in 2018 and won the David Lynch award for regional reporting in 2007.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 27 of 78

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 18, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 28 of 78

Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday



High: 67 °F

Slight Chance
Drizzle and
Patchy Fog
then Cloudy



Low: 51 °F

Mostly Cloudy



High: 66 °F

Mostly Cloudy



Low: 48 °F

Cloudy



High: 68 °F

Partly Sunny



Weekend Outlook

September 19, 2026
3:13 AM CDT

Today

FOG



Highs: 63-68°

- Fog and drizzle
- 15-30% chance of light rain along and west of the Missouri River

Tonight



Lows: 47-52°

- Patchy fog/drizzle
- 40-70% chance of rain across central SD

Sunday



Highs: 63-67°

- 40-80% of rain across central SD to the James Valley with the highest chances west river



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Low clouds and fog/drizzle will blanket the region this morning before conditions improve. However, fog/low clouds will linger over and along the Sisseton Hills through the afternoon. A system over the Rockies will bring chances of rain, mainly along and west of the Missouri River this afternoon with steadier rain moving in and spreading eastward to the James Valley tonight and Sunday. Rainfall amounts of a half inch to an inch are possible, highest over south central SD for locations west of the Missouri River. Temperatures remain below normal through the weekend.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 29 of 78

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 64 °F at 4:07 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 9:19 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 2:14 PM

Precip: 0.90

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1895

Record Low: 26 in 1938

Average High: 74

Average Low: 46

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.26

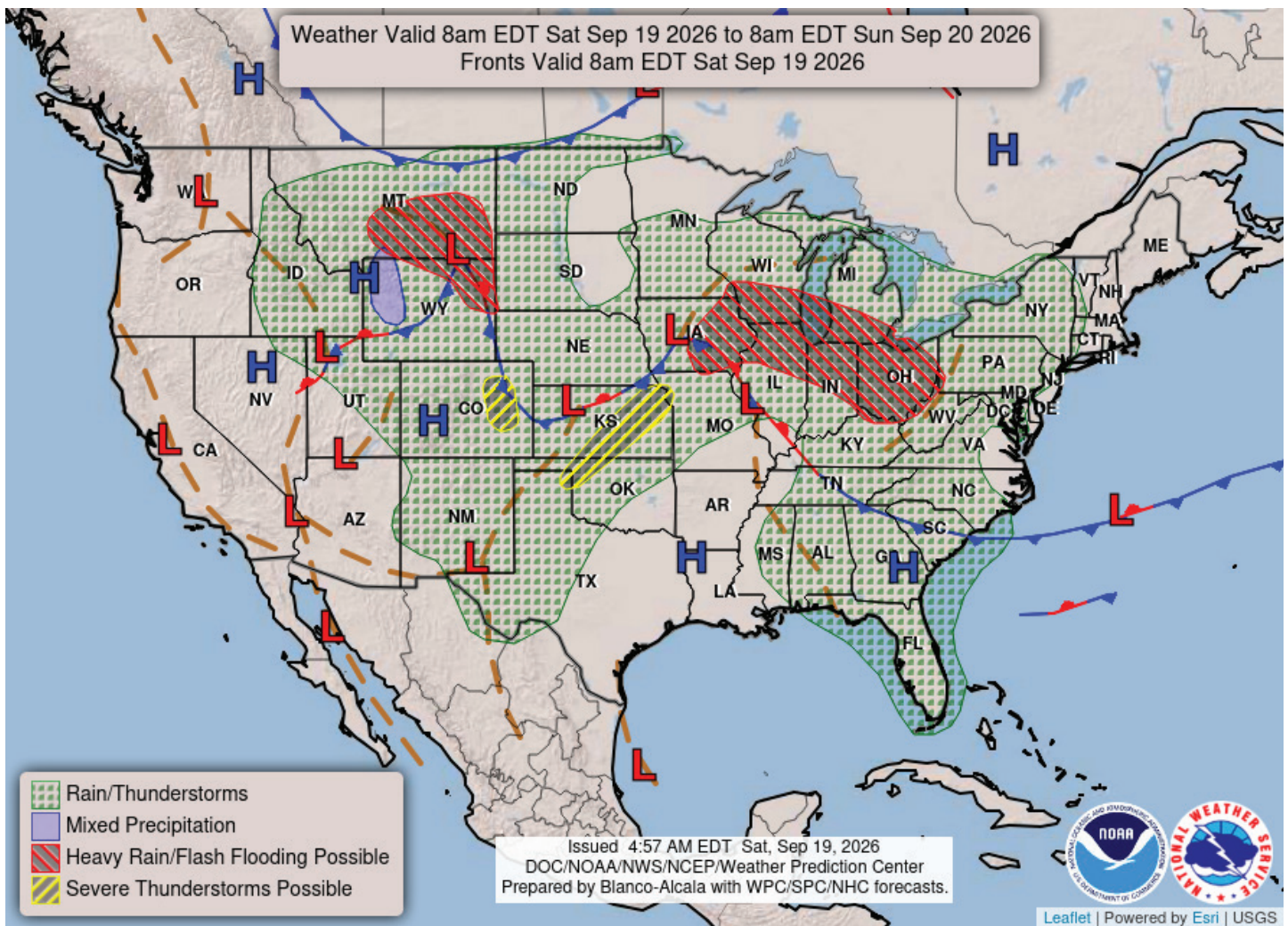
Precip to date in Sept.: 1.80

Average Precip to date: 17.60

Precip Year to Date: 21.66

Sunset Tonight: 7:36 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:16 am



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 30 of 78

Today in Weather History

September 19, 1991: Record to near record cold hit central and northeast South Dakota on this day. Temperatures fell into the 20s during the morning bringing a hard freeze to much of the area. Pierre and Mobridge had record lows of 24 degrees while Timber Lake set a record low of 21 degrees. Near record lows of 28 degrees and 22 degrees occurred at Aberdeen and Kennebec, respectively.

1947: A hurricane made landfall near the Chandeleur Islands, LA on this day. Wind gusts of 112 mph and a central pressure of 967 mb were measured at Moisant International Airport. A storm surge of 9.8 feet reached Shell Beach, Lake Borgne. Moisant Airport field was flooded by two ft. of water while Jefferson Parish was flooded to depths of 3.28 ft. New Orleans suffered \$100 million in damages. Total loss of life was 51 people. As a result of this storm, hurricane protection levees were built along the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain to protect Orleans and Jefferson Parishes from future storm surges.

1967 — Hurricane Beulah deluged Brownsville, TX, with 12.19 inches of rain in 24 hours, to establish a record for that location. Hurricane Beulah made landfall on the 20th near the mouth of the Rio Grande River, where a wind gust to 135 mph was reported by a ship in the port. (19th-20th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Cool autumn-like weather invaded the Central Rockies. Temperatures dipped into the 30s and 40s, with readings in the teens and 20s reported in the higher elevations. Gunnison CO was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 15 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Thunderstorms developing along a fast moving cold front produced severe weather in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. Eight tornadoes were reported, including five in Indiana. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 74 mph at Wabash IND. Winds associated with the cold front itself gusted to 69 mph at Kenosha WI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Showers and thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast Region. Cape Hatteras NC was deluged with nearly 3.50 inches of rain in three hours. Syracuse NY reported 1.77 inches of rain, a record for the date, and Chatham NJ reported an all-time record of 3.45 inches in one day. Hurricane Hugo headed for the Bahamas, and Tropical Storm Iris, following close on its heels, strengthened to near hurricane force. (The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 31 of 78



Daily Devotion

An Invaluable Gift

Scripture is a life-changing treasure. How can we make it a priority in our daily life?

Psalms 1:1-3: 1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

The value we place on something determines how we treat it. For instance, you probably wouldn't give much thought to caring for an old shoebox. Yet if someone placed \$10,000 inside before handing you that same cardboard container, you'd likely work hard to protect it.

Once we realize the worth of Scripture, we no longer read merely out of obligation. Instead, we hunger for its revelation and life-changing power. Here's how to prioritize God's Word:

Turn to it with expectation. Approach Scripture eagerly, trusting that the Lord has something to reveal.

Meditate on its meaning. Don't rush. Slow down and let God's truth sink deep into your thinking (Ps. 1:2).

Believe what the Lord says. Take Him at His word, even when circumstances make it difficult.

Apply the Word to your life. Obedience is where Scripture moves from the page into our daily experience. And sharing what we've learned strengthens both us and those around us.

The Bible is living truth that can protect and guide, pierce and encourage. When we handle the Word of God as the treasure it is, we will be increasingly conformed to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29).

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

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 32 of 78

The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 33 of 78



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.18.26

11 25 37 41 42 3

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

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 11 Mins 24
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.18.26

4 9 24 56 68 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$261,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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: 14 Hrs 11 Mins 24
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.16.26

1 4 21 26 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$59,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 26 Mins 24
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.16.26

16 30 44 64 67 3

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 55 Mins 24
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: 14 Hrs 55 Mins 24
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 34 of 78

News from the  Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 39, Miller 0
Baltic 47, Sisseton 20
Britton-Hecla 35, Great Plains Lutheran 6
Castlewood 43, Deubrook 0
Clark-Willow Lake 44, Parker/Marion 8
Colman-Egan 50, Iroquois-Lake Preston 10
Corsica/Stickney 44, Scotland/Menno 24
Dakota Valley 54, Custer 8
De Smet 32, Wolsey-Wessington 6
Dell Rapids 43, Milbank 7
Dell Rapids St Mary's 22, Elkton-Lake Benton 20
Deuel 38, Flandreau 7
Dupree 53, Flandreau Indian 0
Elk Point-Jefferson 42, Groton 8
Faulkton 58, Northwestern 22
Freeman 54, Centerville 26
Garretson 48, Estelline-Hendricks 16
Hanson 45, Gregory 6
Harding County 32, New Underwood 24
Harrisburg 69, Rapid City Stevens 0
Hitchcock-Tulare 40, Sunshine Bible Academy 14
Hot Springs 21, Belle Fourche 0
Howard 37, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 22
Irene-Wakonda 22, Canistota 6
Jones County 60, Burke 31
Lakota Tech 56, St. Francis Indian 12
Lead-Deadwood 56, Kadoka 14
Lemmon High School 29, Hill City 21
Lennox 22, Canton 14
Madison 28, Vermillion 26
Mahpiya Luta 36, Pine Ridge 20
McCook Central-Montrose 39, WWSSC 6
Millard North, Neb. 49, Sioux Falls Washington 18
Mitchell 31, Aberdeen Central 7
North Central 40, Leola-Frederick High School 0
Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 52, Gayville-Volin High School 0
Parkston 36, Kimball-White Lake 6
Platte-Geddes 55, Viborg-Hurley 28
Rapid City Christian 48, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 12
Riggs 55, Watertown 14
Sioux Falls Christian 42, Brookings 0
Sioux Falls Jefferson 20, Brandon Valley 14
Sioux Falls Lincoln 58, Rapid City Central 14
Sioux Falls Lutheran 34, Bon Homme 21
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 34, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 6

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 35 of 78

Sioux Valley 14, Beresford 7
Spearfish 66, Douglas 7
St Thomas More 54, Chamberlain 20
Sully Buttes 22, Redfield 0
Tea 39, Sturgis Brown High School 15
Timber Lake 12, Ipswich 8
Wall 49, Lyman 26
Warner 21, Herreid-Selby 6
Webster 12, Florence-Henry 8
West Central 48, Tri-Valley 0
White River 68, Crazy Horse 0
Wilmot 26, Waverly-South Shore 6
Winner 21, Wagner 6
Yankton 14, Huron 7

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

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Edgemont def. Cody-Kilgore, Neb., 25-5, 25-3, 25-12
Rapid City Stevens def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-19, 25-23, 25-20
Sioux Falls Washington def. Rapid City Central, 25-19, 25-11, 25-15
Yankton def. Riggs, 25-14, 25-13, 25-12
Dakota Oyate Challenge=
Lakota Tech def. Lower Brule, 2-0
Lower Brule def. Flandreau Indian, 2-0
Lower Brule def. Oelrichs, 2-0
Omaha Nation, Neb. def. Marty, 25-15, 25-17
Omaha Nation, Neb. def. Pine Ridge, 25-13, 25-13
Omaha Nation, Neb. def. St. Francis Indian, 25-22, 25-15
Omaha Nation, Neb. def. Wakpala, 25-15, 25-16
St. Francis Indian def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-21, 25-23
Tiospaye Topa def. Wakpala, 22-25, 25-20, 25-16

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

Saudi Arabia issues air raid alerts across the country, and other Mideast developments

By The Associated Press undefined

Saudi Arabia warned of a "hostile aerial threat" and issued a string of emergency alerts across the kingdom, including in its capital, late Friday and early Saturday.

Also Saturday, Iran's state TV reported that a man was executed after being convicted on charges of spying for Israel's intelligence agency Mossad.

Here is the latest news from the Middle East on Saturday. Full coverage is available here.

Alerts sound across Saudi Arabia for aerial threat

Saudi Arabia warned of a "hostile aerial threat" after issuing emergency alerts, and at least one explosion was heard in Riyadh.

The alert in Riyadh was the first for the Saudi capital since the latest escalation with Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 36 of 78

No casualties or damage were reported after the alerts were lifted. Saudi authorities didn't say what prompted the alerts or the cause of the audible explosions, but they previously reported intercepting incoming Houthi missiles and drones.

UN Security Council condemns Houthi attacks

The U.N.'s most powerful body said late Friday that the Houthis' military escalation, attacks and threats "risk further expanding the conflict, threatening maritime security and international trade," while undermining regional and international efforts to secure peace in Yemen.

It warned that continued escalation would exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation in the country.

The council's 15 members called for "practical cooperation" to prevent the Iran-backed Houthis from acquiring arms, military training, financing and other military-related assistance needed to carry out their attacks. They stressed that all countries must enforce the U.N. arms embargo against the rebel group.

Iran executes man accused of spying for Israel

Iran's state TV reported on Saturday that a man identified as Hossein Pedram was executed after being convicted on charges of spying for Israel's intelligence agency Mossad.

The report said Pedram passed on to Israel classified information on "sensitive military sites" in Iran's Isfahan province. It didn't say how he accessed the classified information.

Pedram was reportedly arrested after those sites, which included missile bases, were targeted in the 12-day air war by the U.S. and Israel against Iran in June last year.

A recent surge of executions in Iran prompted an international outcry by human rights groups.

Israeli strikes kill 2 men in Gaza

Gaza's Health Ministry and Shifa Hospital officials said one man was killed in the Shijaiyah neighborhood of Gaza City. Another man, identified as the son of the ministry's director general, was killed as he walked in the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza.

The Israeli military said it struck "several military operatives" and that it would provide more details later.

The heaviest fighting between Israel and Hamas has subsided since a ceasefire took effect last October, but Israeli fire has killed more than 13,780 Palestinians in Gaza since then, according to health officials in the territory.

Kids return to school in war-devastated Gaza

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) says more than 280,000 children in Gaza are attending school in tents and heavily damaged classrooms after years of war.

At a UNRWA-run school in Nuseirat, some classrooms have no desks, leaving children to sit on blankets on the floor. Still, some families say that a return to school brings back a familiar sense of routine that was upended by war.

UNRWA education program chief Tawfiq al-Hourani said the agency hopes to restore conditions for schooling to the state they were three years ago when it operated 182 fully equipped schools. He said 95% of those schools have since been lost.

Pakistani, Iranian foreign ministers talk energy supply, shipping safety

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar discussed uninterrupted energy supplies and safe passage for commercial ships during a telephone call Saturday with his Iranian counterpart Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Dar underscored the importance of ensuring that ships pass safely and quickly, citing the potential effects of disruptions on developing countries and global supply chains. The statement did not provide details of Araghchi's response.

Pakistan has faced rising energy prices as the tensions spiked, increasing pressure on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government. An Islamist party has threatened to march on the capital, Islamabad, unless the government lowers fuel prices.

Iran files charges against race manager for allowing women to run without headscarves

Iran's state TV reported Saturday that the Tehran prosecutor's office filed charges against race organizers after women participated without covering their hair because "legal and Islamic Sharia" wasn't observed.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 37 of 78

The country's ruling theocracy requires women to wear scarves that cover their hair and loose-fitting clothes that hide their entire bodies.

Footage circulated online showing many women running the 10-kilometer (6-mile) race without the mandatory hair covering. Habib Sotoudehnejad, head of Tehran's sports department, said Saturday that about 5% of participants violated race rules.

The race was run separately for men and women.

Hard liners in Iran seek harsh penalties against women who appear in public without covering their hair.

Blast as Syrian arms depot kills 11

Syria's Defense Ministry on Saturday held a funeral for 11 soldiers killed a day earlier during an explosion in the village of Ayash in the eastern province of Deir el-Zour.

The ministry did not give a reason for the blast that also wounded several other members of the military.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the blast occurred in an arms depot at a military post. A similar explosion near the northwestern town of Sarmada earlier this month killed 14 people and wounded 11.

Turkey pulls license of Iranian bank suspected of Revolutionary Guard links

Turkey's banking watchdog, the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency, revoked the operating license for the Istanbul branch of Iran's Bank Mellat.

The agency said Saturday that it made the decision to protect depositors or the stability of the Turkey's financial system.

The announcement comes as the United States is demanding other countries tighten economic measures against Iran.

Bank Mellat has been subject to Western sanctions for years and was named in 2019 as having links to the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard Corps. The U.S. Treasury Department earlier this month imposed sanctions on a Turkish investment bank and two subsidiaries over alleged ties to Iran.

This swing state Republican keeps distancing himself from Trump.

It may not save him in the midterms

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

YARDLEY, Pa. (AP) — Mary Ryan may be a registered Republican but she has never voted for President Donald Trump, turned off by his crass style of politics and chaotic approach to governing.

But the 60-year-old medical writer from the Philadelphia suburbs has consistently backed her party's congressman, five-term Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick.

Until now.

This year, Ryan is so fed up with Trump and his grip on Congress that she is planning to vote in November for Fitzpatrick's Democratic opponent in the 1st Congressional District, Bob Harvie, a twice countywide elected commissioner who is a former social studies teacher.

Even though Fitzpatrick has pitched himself as a voice of reason in Washington, Ryan said that "I don't see it happening."

Defections like this one could sink Fitzpatrick's reelection chances and cost Republicans their narrow U.S. House majority. As one of the few Republicans representing a congressional district won by Democrat Kamala Harris in the presidential race two years ago, Fitzpatrick has done as much as any House Republican to distance himself from Trump: Fitzpatrick voted against Trump's tariffs, his signature tax legislation and his power to wage war against Iran without congressional approval. The lawmaker even skipped Trump's recent midterm convention in Dallas.

But that may not be enough to overcome the collateral damage of the president's sagging approval rating and soaring fuel prices because of the war.

Fitzpatrick, speaking briefly after a Sept. 11 memorial in his district, said he understands this year's political challenges and always considers what is best for his constituents with every vote.

"That's the job," he said. Representatives for Fitzpatrick did not respond to requests for a more complete

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 38 of 78

interview.

Democrats have tried for years to defeat Fitzpatrick

Harvie describes the race and his decision to run in almost existential terms.

"The lack of trust in our government, the lack of trust in each other and seeing each other as enemies based just on, you know, the color of your skin, the religion you practice, who you voted for," he said in an interview this summer. "I worry about just the basic foundations of this nation."

Fitzpatrick has consistently survived challenges in his politically mixed district. He won by 13 percentage points in 2024 when Harris won by less than a single point in the district. In 2022, he won by about 10 points when Democrats were elected to the U.S. Senate and governorship. In 2020, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden won the district by about 5 points while Fitzpatrick carried it by about 13 points.

"Every two years Democrats in Washington label Congressman Fitzpatrick as vulnerable. Every two years he wins anyway," said Robert Speel, an associate professor of political science at the Penn State campus in Erie. "It's, to some extent, possibly like Charlie Brown trying to kick the football and failing each time."

Harvie pointed to his deep roots in the district as a basis for why he could be different from previous Democrats who ran against Fitzpatrick.

"I'm not somebody who needs to be reintroduced or introduced to people of this district. And that's very, very different than any race he's ever run before," he said.

Jean Dolan, 61, is a Democratic voter from Newtown who has never backed Fitzpatrick and does not plan to this year. She has been frustrated with Trump's immigration crackdown and she worries about how anti-vaccine sentiment in his administration could affect public health. As she sees it, Fitzpatrick is not independent enough from his party's leaders.

"He's a nice guy. I know people like him a lot in the community," she said. But, she added, "you have to serve everyone in your district."

Fitzpatrick has been willing to criticize Trump

Fitzpatrick graduated with an MBA and a law degree and worked as a special agent for the FBI and as an assistant U.S. attorney. He also worked in private practice as a lawyer and accountant before running for the seat previously held by his brother, Mike Fitzpatrick, who died of cancer in 2020.

Jim Rachau, a 45-year-old photographer from Doylestown, is a registered independent who plans to vote for Fitzpatrick again this year. Rachau is not thrilled with the war or the economy, but said Fitzpatrick has earned his support with his prior public service as an FBI agent.

"You would think serving for the public good, he would have their best interest at heart," Rachau said.

In Congress, Fitzpatrick has not shied away from disagreeing with Trump. He criticized the president, for example, in April when Trump called Pope Leo XIV "weak," and captive to the "Radical Left."

"There's so many angry voices out there. We all know that's the case," Fitzpatrick said in an episode of a podcast launched this year with U.S. Rep. Tom Suozzi, a Democrat who represents a battleground district in New York. "People are sick and tired of the noise. They're sick and tired of elected officials not being focused on the kitchen table issues that people really care about."

Fitzpatrick also posts online regularly about meeting with groups across the district. He recently showed up to a picket line with striking sheet metal workers; he dropped by a local Catholic church's parish picnic; and he stopped at a community college hosting a maternity coalition.

Fitzpatrick spends millions on attack ads against Harvie

Fitzpatrick has also unleashed a wave of spending in the race already, disbursing nearly \$5 million, according to Federal Election Commission records.

Negative attack ads against Harvie have mushroomed. Many claim Harvie is under FBI investigation, which the Democrat denies. He has filed a federal defamation lawsuit against a super PAC running some of the ads.

According to the suit, local media reported in 2020 with few details that the FBI was investigating local government and that Harvie was called to testify as a witness in the case. His attorneys say he has never been charged.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 39 of 78

The FBI did not respond to a request for comment.

No debate has been scheduled between Fitzpatrick and Harvie, but the men appeared at the same Sept. 11 memorial, standing on opposite sides of the speaker's lectern. They did not appear to speak to each other.

Ryan, the medical writer from the Philadelphia suburbs, said she is thinking less about Fitzpatrick and more about how Republicans in Congress and their reluctance to buck the president.

"Incumbents just feel they can't cross that line. If they do, they're not going to get reelected," she said. But she acknowledged that may not matter in the end. "They might not get reelected anyway."

Voting groups sound alarm on funding shortfalls that they say could affect midterm turnout

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Several of the nation's largest left-leaning voter engagement and racial justice organizations are facing steep funding shortfalls and staffing cutbacks just as voting is getting underway in an election that will determine control of Congress for the final two years of President Donald Trump's term.

The shortfalls are setting off alarms among Democratic strategists, who are betting on high turnout and robust voter protection efforts to boost the party's chances this fall. They are worried that many grassroots groups will not be able to mount effective registration and get-out-the-vote efforts, much less protect against the possibility of election interference from the Republican administration.

America Votes, a coordinating hub for more than 400 progressive groups, has fallen "well below" the level of funding it had during the 2022 midterms, Daria Dawson, America Votes' executive director, said in a statement to The Associated Press. America Votes has acted as a nerve center for the voter mobilization efforts of groups such as the NAACP, Planned Parenthood, the League of Conservation Voters, the AFL-CIO and SEIU labor unions, as well as local groups focused on racial justice, climate and civil liberties.

"There is still time to reach voters and bring them into this election, but we are no longer talking about a future opportunity," Dawson said. "The window to engage them is open now, and it is narrowing every day."

'Surrender, not strategy,' a Democratic operative says

Wealthy donors and philanthropic groups have reduced their support of many liberal causes since the 2024 presidential election. That pullback has been especially stark for voting groups geared toward engaging communities of color.

While multiple organizers said some funders had expressed an interest in adopting different strategies, racial justice organizers have felt that as a betrayal.

A retreat in donor support is "handcuffing our ability to persuade our communities to vote in a year where there is no Voting Rights Act," said Esosa Osa, a veteran Democratic strategist and founder of Onyx Impact, a research group focused on combating misinformation in Black communities.

The Supreme Court this year knocked out one of the last remaining pillars of that landmark 1965 law, essentially gutting it.

"We are watching surrender, not strategy," Osa said.

A July memo circulated among major Democratic fundraisers warned that "the organizations that registered and persuaded millions of voters to participate in the 2018 and 2022 midterms are drastically underfunded. They have raised nearly 40% less than they had at this point in those cycles."

It further warned that funding voter mobilization groups was especially critical "given that the Democratic brand is underperforming on generic ballot tests relative to historical comparisons and the president's approval ratings."

The shortfalls have led organizations focused on engaging and mobilizing key voting groups to scale back operations and staffing over the last year. That has included programs aimed at registering and mobilizing lower-propensity voters, voters of color, and rural and younger voters.

The Democratic National Committee, which has faced its own funding challenges, has consolidated voter engagement efforts this year partly in response to the ecosystem's past shortcomings. The DNC

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 40 of 78

in a statement said it was making "historic investments" in its organizing but did not address the weaknesses among allied groups.

"We are expanding our voter protection infrastructure to defend Americans' sacred right to vote, hold Trump and Republicans accountable in court, and register and mobilize voters across the country," said Angelo Fernández Hernández, a DNC spokesperson.

Shifting donor priorities affect voter turnout groups

The reasons for the troubled funding landscape are varied and at times unclear, according to nearly two dozen fundraisers and organizers who spoke with the AP. Some donors, still disappointed with the Democratic Party and some of its allies following the 2024 presidential election, have closed their pocketbooks to liberal causes entirely.

While a small group of liberal megadonors has continued to bankroll progressive causes, most focus their support on liberal legal organizations that have taken the Trump administration to court, rather than political or voter engagement groups.

Others, including major philanthropic institutions, have pulled back out of fear of retribution that giving to political or racial justice causes could draw the administration's ire. Organizers who have engaged with potential donors said the administration's targeting of political opponents and diversity initiatives seems to have put a chill on fundraising for their causes.

Tameka Ramsey-Brown, founding director of the Michigan Coalition on Black Civic Participation, said multiple donors since the 2024 election had asked whether her group could remove the word "Black" from its name or find financial conduits to mask the source of donations for fear of retribution from the administration.

"Just being Black in this country again has become a bad word, and it has made it that much more difficult just to raise money because funders don't want the added pressure and stress or attacks on them by funding us," she said.

Smaller budgets force shifting strategies

Many of the nonprofit groups that traditionally have conducted the registration, voter education and organizing say they are trying to adapt to their new, leaner reality.

Vamos a Votar, an initiative of the largest civil rights and advocacy groups focused on Latino communities, has had to readjust its ambitions this year due to a lack of investment from funders.

"This is shaping up to be a cycle where investments haven't gone to the Black and brown communities that will ultimately decide this election," said Juan Proaño, CEO of the League of United Latin American Citizens, a member of the initiative.

In a September pitch circulated among donors, the coalition said it aimed to invest \$27.5 million in voter engagement and persuasion efforts this year, but still required \$5.4 million from donors to fund voter turnout efforts across 10 states and 17 House districts. Even that investment reflected reduced ambitions from previous pitches to donors early this year.

"It has been extremely disappointing to see that progressive donors are not meeting the moment," said Héctor Sánchez Barba, the CEO of Mi Familia Vota, one of the affiliated organizations. "We are not waiting. We are always on the front lines for our democracy and our communities."

To counter the funding cutbacks, some groups have begun relying more heavily on artificial intelligence to provide voter registration guides, share information in multiple languages and track potential election issues. Some groups have increased their partnerships with ride-sharing companies to provide free rides to polling places instead of bus shuttles.

With fewer in-person organizers, some groups are also focusing on social media and partnering with liberal content creators to boost their messages.

"In my more than 30 years of organizing, it has never been this bad to raise money to support Black causes of any kind," said Melanie Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, a nonpartisan civil rights group. "We're going to do the work, our state affiliates are doing all that is possible. ... But the bottom line is that those who believe that democracy matters should make

sure they fund the work.”

New laws trigger a fresh legal fight over Nazi-looted art in Los Angeles and Auschwitz museums

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jewish heirs of Holocaust victims and their representatives have filed two lawsuits in California staking their claims to Nazi-looted paintings that still hang on the walls of prominent museums in Los Angeles and Auschwitz.

This pair of lawsuits are the first to be filed after the recent passage of laws by California and Congress, which strengthen U.S.-based claims to artwork that were forcibly taken from Jewish families during World War II.

One lawsuit was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on Monday by the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles and its board chair Daniel Gryczman against Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena for the return of “Adam and Eve.” These are two life-size oil-on-panel masterpieces created by Lucas Carnach the Elder in 1530.

The other lawsuit was filed in federal court in Los Angeles the same day by the daughters of the late Dinah Gottliebova Babbitt, a Holocaust survivor and California-based animator who was held in Auschwitz. It demanded the return of watercolors of fellow prisoners that the artist was forced to paint for Josef Mengele, a Nazi physician who had earned the nickname the “Angel of Death.”

Spokespersons for both museums say the museums legally hold titles to the works, and intend to continue displaying them to the public. The lawsuits don’t specify the monetary value of the paintings.

Artworks pit Jewish families against museums

The issue of Nazi-looted art is an emotional, legally and ethically charged topic that pits Jewish families that have suffered inter-generational trauma against museums that say they are trying to preserve a painful, yet important, chapter of history. Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazi regime orchestrated the largest art theft in world history, seizing over 600,000 works of art across Europe from Jewish families, collectors and museums. Decades later, many of these masterpieces reside in prominent museums around the world, making the push for their recovery more complex than a simple property dispute.

Rabbi Noah Farkas is president and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, the organization to which Marei von Saher, sole heir of Dutch Jewish art dealer Jacques Goudstikker, has signed over her rights. The paintings were seized from Goudstikker’s collection by Hermann Goring, Adolf Hitler’s second-in-command and changed a number of hands before being sold in the 1960s to the Pasadena Museum of Modern Art, which was renamed Norton Simon Museum in honor of its benefactor.

Farkas said the federation plans to use most of the net proceeds from the recovered art to provide much-needed help to the about 2,500 Holocaust survivors living in the Los Angeles area.

“These are incredibly beautiful European masterpieces stolen from a Jewish family to enrich the Nazi party and fund the war and death machine against the people,” he said. “It’s our honor to take on this role on behalf of the community and use most of the proceeds to help these elderly survivors live out the last years of their lives in dignity, comfort and peace – something their family members were denied during the Holocaust.”

Marei von Saher, in a statement, said she is grateful to the Jewish organization for taking up her family’s cause.

“This effort represents a meaningful step toward justice for Holocaust survivors and victims of Nazi era atrocities,” she said.

New legislation gives lawsuits second wind

California Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel, D-Woodland Hills, wrote Assembly Bill 2867, signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in September 2024, which requires that the state law must apply in lawsuits brought by California residents or their heirs to recover art seized during the Holocaust or during other acts of persecution. Gabriel, who co-chairs the California Legislative Jewish Caucus, introduced the legislation in response to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 42 of 78

a federal court ruling, which allowed the state-owned Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum in Madrid to keep a multimillion-dollar Camille Pissarro impressionist masterpiece.

That painting had been taken by the Nazis from the Cassirer family in 1939. This case, which prompted this new law, is expected to be heard in federal court in California next month.

Gabriel said it's time for museums to "do some deep introspection on whether they want to be on the right side of history."

Museums want to preserve paintings for posterity

Norton Simon Museum released a statement pointing out that a federal court in 2018 unanimously determined that the museum had proper title to the Cranach paintings. In May 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to get involved in the case, leaving in place lower court rulings.

They said the Cranach paintings, which originally belonged to the Stroganoff family, were put up for sale in 1931 by the Soviet Union in an illicit auction in Berlin where they were purchased by Goudstikker. After a complicated journey, the paintings were sold to the museum by a Stroganoff family descendant. The museum later restored and preserved the pieces.

"For nearly 50 years, they have been on view at the Norton Simon Museum and will continue to be accessible to the public for years to come," the statement said.

Pawel Sawicki, a spokesperson for the Auschwitz Memorial, said the watercolors of Roma victims that Gottliebova Babbitt was forced to paint by Mengele to document his horrendous experiments and racial research, "must remain in the Memorial" to document the man's crimes. He said these paintings must not be mischaracterized as "Nazi-looted art" because Gottliebova Babbitt painted them against her will as a prisoner and therefore didn't have ownership of the watercolors.

While he understands the family's sentiments, Sawicki said the portraits of Roma and Sinti victims are among the few remaining documents of Mengele's criminal experiments and should be treated as unique documents related to the history of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

"While fully respecting the rights of people who created some of the documents here, we are of the opinion that any loss in the collections of the Memorial will constitute irreparable harm," he said. "... The loss of even the smallest part of the documentation is an irreparable loss and blemish on the memory of the victims of Auschwitz."

Advocates hope cases will now be heard on their merit

Joel Greenberg, founder of Art Ashes, a Philadelphia-area nonprofit that helps Jewish families track down and recover Nazi-looted art, said in addition to the California law, President Donald Trump signed into law and updated the Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery Act of 2025. This new law permanently eliminated the expiration date to allow Holocaust survivors and their heirs to indefinitely pursue the recovery of these works of art.

Greenberg said the new federal law gave families the right to reclaim their art for up to six years from the time they find out in whose possession they are.

"These new laws mean that technical defenses will no longer stick in court," he said. "Every case will be heard on its merits."

He said the new legislation also ensures that these Jewish families have their day in court and a fair process to determine ownership of the stolen art.

"It will make sure the stories of what happened to European Jewry is not lost and forgotten," he said. "The art can still be returned to the rightful owner."

Will AI models achieve the ability to improve autonomously?

Leading labs say the scenario is near

By KAITLYN HUAMANI and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

Once a distant ambition for technology researchers, the prospect of artificial intelligence models teaching themselves autonomously to be more efficient and capable appears ever closer to reality.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 43 of 78

As the technology advances, developers say it is approaching "recursive self-improvement," or RSI, in which AI models find ways to improve themselves and build their successor. It could bring the promise of advances in science and medicine, tech company executives say, but also risks.

The uncertainty over where it all could lead is at the heart of growing fears about AI evading human control, and possible threats to humanity, which led several AI moguls to join last weekend in a call to slow down the technology's pace of growth.

Anthropic this week detailed how its model Claude is helping the company to develop the next, more intelligent version of itself. Claude is now 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 models are not working completely autonomously — at least not yet.

Here are some key points about recursive self-improvement.

What is recursive self-improvement?

Leading AI companies have different definitions for recursive self-improvement. Some define it as when there is any feedback from AI on model improvement, while others define it as AI working toward that goal fully autonomously.

Autonomous recursive self-improvement essentially means AI that can improve itself designing the next version of the system, then the next version, and so on, said Anthony Aguirre, president and CEO of the nonprofit Future of Life Institute and a physics professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

"The really important thing here is that as AI is doing more of it, it gets faster, because AI operates just much, much more quickly than the humans do," he said.

The fear around RSI is based largely on a runaway superintelligence emerging from that process, said John Thickstun, an assistant professor of computer science at Cornell University who studies methods that control the behavior of AI models. But he said a more grounded view suggests a kind of recursive self-improvement has been going on in AI development for a while now.

"We have already, for years, been using these models in supportive roles for creating the next version of these models. So people use the past generation of models to write code for the AI systems that then create the next generation," he said.

For years, prominent AI researchers such as OpenAI co-founder Andrej Karpathy have experimented with trying to get AI models to train and improve new AI systems. Those efforts have brought minor improvements, but not big creative leaps, Thickstun said.

But AI companies today, Aguirre said, are much closer to pulling off those bigger leaps in improvement.

"You can see in these plots from Anthropic over time, more and more of research is being done by the AI and it's becoming closer and closer to fully autonomous," he said. "And the result of that success, ultimately is something that is, I think, extremely scary. I think this is probably the worst idea in the history of humanity to do this. And yes, they're doing it."

Some AI labs say RSI is not far off

Anthropic's recent announcement provided the public — and other labs — with some insight into RSI progress, and it encouraged its competitors to share similar metrics. Still, the company has not expressly said how close it is to achieving fully autonomous model improvement.

ChatGPT maker OpenAI announced this month that it has developed an automated "research intern," which it defines as a system that can carry out well-defined research tasks under human direction, including "tasks that would take a skilled researcher a few days." The company has said it is moving forward with the goal of creating an automated AI "researcher" by March 2028.

The company said in that announcement that while RSI can help align models' actions with human values and intentions, that doesn't mean "rapid RSI is necessarily an outcome we should pursue."

"Whether and how to proceed must depend on our ability to preserve human control and on informed democratic choices about the benefits and risks," the company said in a blog post.

Elon Musk seems more eager to forge ahead. He said in March that for xAI's Grok models, "humans are gradually getting less and less in the loop" on model improvement and that "every successive model is

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 44 of 78

built by the one before it," but clarified that the process was not yet fully automated. That target might be reached by the end of this year, he added, "but not later" than 2027.

Microsoft and some other leading AI companies seem to be taking a different approach.

Mustafa Suleyman, the CEO of Microsoft AI, has said the company is moving toward "humanist super-intelligence," or advanced AI capabilities that are in service of people and humanity at large. Suleyman said in a 2025 essay that this would not mean "an unbounded and unlimited entity with high degrees of autonomy," but rather AI that is "carefully calibrated, contextualized, within limits."

How development slowdown talks could impact RSI

A key challenge labs face — and have been facing essentially since the technology's inception — is ensuring their safety measures advance alongside the models' capabilities.

Divisions have emerged in the tech industry over calls for a coordinated AI slowdown for safety, and not every major player in the AI space has specifically commented on their path forward with RSI.

Anthropic, which has been a leading voice in the calls for pacing, has said it would slow or temporarily pause its development work — assuming its global competitors also did so, and in a "verifiable manner."

OpenAI explicitly said this month it does not yet know how to "safely get all the way to aligned, full RSI," adding that the company "cannot assume that progress in alignment and safety will keep pace." More capable systems can become harder to monitor, it continued, but pursuing RSI is still a goal it says it values because an "automated AI researcher can also be an automated safety or alignment researcher."

Knife attack on Sikh trucker in Wyoming stirs fresh fears in community

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP) — The stabbing of a truck driver at a remote Wyoming rest stop had U.S. Sikhs on edge Friday amid rising anti-immigrant vitriol against the community and its truck drivers in particular.

The Sikh victim was attacked from behind early Sunday while in a restroom at the Bitter Creek rest stop on Interstate 80 midway between Cheyenne and Salt Lake City, according to court documents. He suffered stabs to the neck and chest and over a dozen other cuts but survived.

While police say the motive is unknown, the attack came after deadly crashes involving Sikh truck drivers led to debate about commercial driver's licensing requirements — sparking hatred toward Sikhs as a group, community leaders said.

Anti-Sikh sentiment has been especially severe on truck-driving forums, said one Sikh in the trucking industry, Harsimran Singh, CEO of Gillson Trucking in Stockton, California.

"I've been here for the last 25-plus years," Singh said. "I never felt this kind of hate before."

Police were still investigating what prompted the Wyoming attack by a man who left the rest area driving a truck-trailer combination, Sweetwater County Sheriff's Department spokesperson Jeff Sheaman said.

"We have zero motive," Sheaman said.

The victim allegedly told police he was trying to use the restroom when he was attacked from behind. He pushed the attacker, he said, and didn't see the knife at first, according to the police affidavit filed in the case.

Within hours, police arrested Andrew Kris Bzdak in nearby Carbon County, Wyoming. A family at the rest area who heard the attack allegedly followed Bzdak's truck back onto the highway and tipped off police to help find him, according to the affidavit.

Video taken from a truck at the rest area showed the victim walk casually into the restroom, followed by a man police said was Bzdak. Soon after, Bzdak allegedly was recorded running from the restroom, followed by the stumbling, wounded victim who fell at least once, according to the affidavit.

Bzdak remained jailed on \$1 million bond Friday in Rock Springs, on suspicion of attempted murder, a crime punishable in Wyoming by up to life in prison. An initial appearance was scheduled for Thursday.

A phone message left at an address for Bzdak in Catawissa, Pennsylvania, wasn't immediately returned,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 45 of 78

nor was a phone message for him at the jail and for his Wyoming public defender, Gary Arnell.

Despite no evident motive, the attack was unnerving for Sikhs, who number around 750,000 in the U.S. Many live in California.

Sikh men wear beards, uncut hair and turbans, and many work as truck drivers. Advocacy groups estimate at least 150,000 Sikh truck drivers work in the U.S.

In August 2025, authorities said a Sikh truck driver's U-turn on a Florida turnpike caused a crash that killed three people. The crash prompted investigations as well as reports about Sikh truck drivers being harassed.

Then last October, a Sikh truck driver accused of being under the influence of drugs caused a fiery crash that killed three people, authorities said.

Both drivers were in the U.S. illegally, according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which Singh, the trucking CEO, blamed for stirring anti-immigrant hatred with social media posts.

One such post, since taken down, showed a dark-skinned man with a beard that read, "Get off our roads, you don't know how to drive Mr. Singh." DHS officials have said the post referred specifically to the driver in the Florida crash. But Sikh community representatives pointed out that a large number of Sikhs — well over 100,000 in the U.S. and millions worldwide — have the last name Singh.

No matter what motivated the attack, the crime is difficult to separate from racism toward Sikhs, said Jasjit Singh, legal services director for the Sikh community group Jakara Movement and a representative of the victim.

"We were making noise about this," Jasjit Singh said. "That is how the community feels. Until something really bad happens to us, nothing is going to really happen."

The victim was headed home Friday after five days in a Casper hospital and hopes to drive his truck across Wyoming again, Jasjit Singh said.

But Harsimran Singh, the trucking CEO, also remained apprehensive.

"We are probably going to see more of this," Harsimran Singh said. "I'm not surprised that it has happened."

Oil prices are high but could be much worse. Trump has China's Xi to thank for that

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It could be much worse.

When President Donald Trump launched his war against Iran in late February, energy analysts issued dire warnings that oil prices could more than double during a protracted conflict and urged investors and motorists to buckle up for a bumpy ride.

The war grinds on and oil prices certainly remain volatile. But the most dire projections have not yet come to pass six months into a conflict that has no end in sight.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is making a much-anticipated state visit to Washington next week, could make a credible argument that the world has his country's energy strategy to thank for that.

It's unclear how much the two leaders will discuss Iran during the visit, which comes as Trump's Republican Party faces pressure from voters over high gasoline prices, and as China's buffer is being further tested as the conflict in the Middle East spreads. Trump, who has sought to keep a fragile trade truce with Beijing intact, has been careful in public comments about differences with Xi over the country's relationship with Iran.

"We've been free-riding off Beijing in a weird way," said Rosemary Kelanic, director of the Middle East program at Defense Priorities, a Washington think tank. "China's doing it because they understand that they're on the train that Trump is driving off a cliff. If oil prices go way up, that hurts the global economy. If it hurts the global economy, it hurts them."

China's stockpiles helped Xi weather the storm — so far

Beijing spent years and billions of dollars amassing the world's largest oil stockpile, building its strategic

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 46 of 78

reserve to about 1.4 billion barrels by the end of last year, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's estimates. To protect China from foreign supply risks, Xi made energy self-reliance a part of the country's latest five-year plan.

Drawing from the massive stockpile allowed China, the world's second-biggest oil consumer and Iran's top buyer, to dramatically cut crude imports once the U.S. and Israel began their bombardment and Tehran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz. The country was also helped by its shift toward electric vehicles in recent years and increasingly tapping into other energy alternatives.

China's oil import diet in turn helped ease global demand, softening the upward price effects for the United States, Europe and beyond.

"The Chinese deserve credit," said retired U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery, an analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a hawkish Washington think tank. "They did in 10 years what took us 25 years after the 1973 oil crisis to do: really build a kind of strategic petroleum reserve that could allow you to weather this."

But that resilience faces new challenges. Attacks by Iran-backed militias this month led Saudi Arabia to temporarily shut a vital pipeline that transports crude across the kingdom to ports on the Red Sea.

The Yemen-based Houthis have also seized two strategic islands in the southern Red Sea, bolstering the Iran-backed rebels' ability to disrupt a key maritime shipping route. Planned talks among Gulf nations focused on reopening the Strait of Hormuz, which were supposed to take place earlier this week, have also been put on hold.

Before he meets Xi, Trump is set to meet Tuesday with leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council in New York, on the sidelines of the annual United Nations General Assembly. The group includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain.

Oil industry experts say the moment remains tenuous

Analysts at Bank of America last week forecast oil at \$83 a barrel for the second half of the year "in light of more persistent disruptions to Hormuz," but said they still expected shipping through the strait to gradually pick up.

But if violence escalates and keeps a chokehold on traffic, prices could reach \$95 to \$120 a barrel, while damage to major energy infrastructure could produce spikes of up to \$150 a barrel, the analysts wrote.

Brent crude averaged about \$69 per barrel last year and currently is hovering around \$100. Brent crude briefly peaked in late April, touching \$126.

How China has weathered the volatile oil market caused by Trump's war is ultimately seen by Beijing as "a vindication of Xi's last five-year plan and his focus on self-reliance," said Jonathan Czin, a former senior CIA analyst who is now at the Brookings Institution.

Deep differences between Trump and Xi on Iran persist

The war in Iran — and its impact on the global economy — is expected to be on the agenda for the Trump-Xi talks. But the prospects of the world's two biggest powers coming up with a breakthrough appear dim.

Over the course of the conflict, the Trump administration has faced resistance when urging Beijing to use its considerable economic leverage to press the Islamic Republic to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Chinese officials, who have expressed strong opposition to the U.S. war, also have bristled at more recent administration threats to ratchet up economic pressure on nations and entities still doing business with Iran.

To be certain, analysts say there's little altruism in how China came to sit on its massive stockpile of oil.

Experts believe Beijing was driven by contingency planning for potential military action to take over the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which China considers its own territory. Tapping the reserves now has been far from ideal for Beijing — but seeing global oil prices skyrocket was not ideal, either.

Trump treads carefully on differences with China over Iran

The leaders last met in Beijing just four months ago, and could meet twice more later this year.

After the talks in May, Trump claimed Xi agreed with him that a nuclear-armed Iran is a bad idea and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 47 of 78

that the Strait of Hormuz must be reopened. Chinese officials have neither affirmed nor denied Trump's telling of the private conversation.

The U.S. administration has also warned China not to aid Iran's military effort. But earlier this week, Trump downplayed a Wall Street Journal report that Chinese entities had supplied Tehran with satellite images of a Jordanian military base ahead of an Iran strike in July that killed three U.S. soldiers working there.

"You know, when they say that China spies on us, I say you're right, and we spy on them too," Trump told reporters.

Trump at the outset of the war called the conflict a "little excursion" that would last a matter of weeks.

He also has repeatedly predicted that oil prices will quickly plummet once the conflict ends. Less than three months into the conflict, he even declared "everybody was wrong" because the most dire projections for oil prices didn't come to pass.

The White House did not respond to queries on whether Trump credits China's actions with helping keep oil prices from hitting the worst-case levels.

But energy analysts credit Beijing's slashing imports as having the single greatest impact on moderating prices since the start of the war. China's crude imports averaged just 8.1 million barrels per day in the second quarter. That's almost 4 million barrels per day, or 32% lower than in the first three months of the year, according to U.S. data.

"It's remarkable how China managed the market," said Michael Lynch, president of Strategic Energy and Economic Research, a firm providing consulting services and analysis in the oil and gas industry. "They didn't panic and by turning to their inventories they kept the price down for everybody."

Even as trading and markets moved faster, Warren Buffett made patience profitable and cool

By JOSH FUNK and STAN CHOE AP Business Writers

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Even in the age of algorithms, short attention spans and TikTok teases, Warren Buffett continued to profit with his patient bargain-hunting approach while offering folksy advice on investing and life.

As chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, Buffett became famous for his unwavering and methodical investing style: Buy good businesses when their prices are low, stay on the sidelines when prices are too high and be patient with well-chosen picks. He rode that to decades of beating the rest of the U.S. stock market before he retired as Berkshire's chairman on Friday, less than a year after giving up his role as CEO.

The formula of buying good things at low prices sounds simple, and it's the foundation of a style of investing called "value" hunting. But it periodically comes under criticism when the hot new thing is enthralling Wall Street, whether it's dot-com stocks in the late 1990s or gold when its price was setting records early this year. (Buffett is famously skeptical of gold as an investment, saying it "has two significant shortcomings, being neither of much use nor procreative.")

The investing world has had other celebrities. J.P. Morgan built his reputation by investing in railroads during the 19th century. Andrew Carnegie helped build the U.S. steel industry and became famous for his philanthropy. Jim Cramer and Kevin O'Leary are on TV shows. But few ever cracked into the national consciousness like Buffett, and none did so from near the geographic center of the country in Omaha, Nebraska.

Buffett offers enduring lessons on life and investing

Many professional investors also adhere to Buffett's style of bargain-hunting. But none have had the kind of folksy humor and candor that can draw hordes of investors each year, like those attending Berkshire Hathaway's annual shareholder meeting.

More than 40,000 people would pack an Omaha arena on the first Saturday in May to hear from Buffett and his longtime investing partner, Charlie Munger, who died in 2023 and espoused a similar take-it-slow and make-it-right approach to investing. Besides talking about how they hunted for well-run businesses

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 48 of 78

and the news of the day, they would also regularly confess to their own mistakes and crack wise.

"Not a day goes by where what I've learned about Warren doesn't affect me positively, both personally and financially," said Todd Finkle, a retired professor. He grew up in Omaha, knows Buffett's children and wrote the book, "Warren Buffett: Investor and Entrepreneur."

When Finkle would bring students to visit the "Oracle of Omaha" for extended Q-and-A meetings, Finkle said the first topic Buffett would discuss was never financial.

"He didn't say anything about money. The first topic that he would always bring up is that the most important thing you'll do in your life is to pick who to marry."

He built a reputation for honesty and trust

Following a scandal at Salomon Brothers, in which Berkshire Hathaway had an ownership stake, Buffett became chairman and testified in Congress. He said all employees were told, "After they first obey all rules, I then want employees to ask themselves whether they are willing to have any contemplated act appear the next day on the front page of their local paper to be read by their spouses, children and friends with the reporting done by an informed and critical reporter."

That reputation for honesty, along with his famed patience for investments, helped Buffett stay famous even in this "post-truth" era where people scroll through feeds at finger-flicking speed. He's such an icon that scammers would use him in AI-generated videos that appeared to show him endorsing questionable investments or political candidates.

On Reddit's WallStreetBets forum, traders share picks for potential get-rich-quick opportunities in day-trading stocks and options. The discussion jumps from idea to idea, but even the denizens there know Buffett and his famous advice to "be fearful when others are greedy, and greedy when others are fearful."

His reputation is so strong and his advice so well-known that some memes on the forum ironically joke about doing the opposite, with a picture of Buffett suggesting that everyone freak out and sell in a panic.

Buffett's lessons go well beyond business

Bob Miles, who has taught a college course about Buffett for 16 years, said that people might initially get attracted to Buffett because he is rich and has made many Berkshire shareholders wealthy. But their interest deepens after reading Buffett's annual letters, which became required reading for many investors, and hearing him speak in interviews.

Through reading and listening, people would glean nuggets from Buffett like his core rules for investing: "Rule No. 1: Never lose money. Rule No. 2: Never forget Rule No. 1." Or that "you only find out who is swimming naked when the tide goes out," referencing how tough times will quickly show who has been taking too much risk. He also suggested that "who you associate with is just enormously important. Don't expect that you'll make every decision right on that. But you are going to have your life progress in the general direction of the people you work with, that you admire, that become your friends."

"People associate him with successful investing, but I look at him more and more as kind of a guide toward how to live a successful life, whatever your talents happen to be," Miles said.

Few investors have broad appeal like Buffett

At the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of business, trips for students to Berkshire's annual meetings were always a hot ticket. "I don't know of any time that it wasn't popular," said David Musto, a finance professor at the school and faculty director of the Jacobs Master of Science in Quantitative Finance.

With Buffett's departure from the stage, the obvious question is whether anyone else could replace him as the world's most famous value investor.

Musto said some other big names still exist in the investing world, such as Will Danoff at Fidelity Investments, who is retiring from day-to-day management at the end of the year. But it's difficult to find someone with as strong and as long a track record as Buffett's. Or the wit and personality.

Musto said it's important for value investing to remain a force in the market, particularly when traders are jumping into meme stocks, obscure cryptocurrencies and other bets built more on hope than belief that it's a good business trading at a good price.

"It certainly helps to have people in the middle," Musto said, "thinking about the value of a stock."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 49 of 78

Atlanta Braves clinch 8th playoff berth in 9 years with victory over Astros

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — The Atlanta Braves held a subdued celebration when they clinched a playoff berth Friday night after missing out last season.

The first-place Braves beat the Houston Astros 6-2 to punch their ticket to the postseason for the eighth time in nine years. They secured at least a National League wild card and reduced their magic number to three for winning the NL East.

Afterward there was no wild celebration, but rather a simple toast with bubbly before they began looking ahead.

"We've got our eyes on bigger and better things," outfielder Michael Harris II said. "We're trying to win the East. So got to go out there and do what we know we can do and hopefully we can celebrate big for that."

First-year manager Walt Weiss echoed the sentiment shared by Harris.

"Everything you get in this league is earned," Weiss said. "I've said it a few times this year, but great group, what they've overcome this year, and hopefully some bigger celebrations ahead."

Harris, Ronald Acuña Jr. and Matt Olson each hit a two-run homer to help the Braves bounce back after dropping two of three games to the Chicago Cubs this week.

Atlanta is trying to hold off the Philadelphia Phillies for the NL East title and could wrap up the division crown as soon as Sunday. Atlanta's win Friday night coupled with Philadelphia's 6-3 loss to the Mets gave the Braves a five-game lead over the Phillies with eight to play.

Weiss was asked about helping the team back to the playoffs in his first season as manager after spending eight seasons as Brian Snitker's bench coach.

"I always say it's always about the players," Weiss said. "They're the ones out there performing. We've got a good staff. When you accomplish things, it's an organizational effort. ... It takes everybody and we've got a really good group."

If the Braves take the division, it will be their seventh NL East championship in nine years.

Atlanta's return to the playoffs comes after a disappointing 2025 season in which the team went 76-86 and finished fourth in the division, snapping a streak of seven straight playoff appearances that included six consecutive NL East titles from 2018-23. That run was highlighted by beating the Astros to win the 2021 World Series.

Friday's victory gave the Braves 90 wins, marking the fifth time in the last eight full seasons that they've reached the mark. The only teams with more 90-win seasons in that stretch are the Dodgers with eight and the Brewers and Yankees with six apiece.

Ed Sheeran is set to return to stage for 1st time since Macklemore was cut and other acts withdrew

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Ed Sheeran is set to resume his tour Saturday — possibly solo — after all his supporting acts withdrew in solidarity with opener Macklemore, who was dropped after making pro-Palestinian comments onstage.

It remains to be seen how Sheeran will handle the performance at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field given the departure of his opening acts and supporting band. Sheeran has performed much of his Loop Tour concerts solo, but he had been joined for several songs at each stop by the Irish folk band Beoga. Macklemore, Sheeran's original U.S. opener, had been replaced by Danish band Lukas Graham and Irish singer Aaron Rowe before they backed out.

Finneas, Billie Eilish's brother and musical collaborator, was due to tour with Sheeran in South America later this year before he too dropped out earlier this week.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 50 of 78

Sheeran has not said anything publicly since losing the artists' support. As of Friday, tickets were still available for Saturday's show, and his website did not list any replacement acts. A coalition of pro-Palestinian organizations plans to protest outside the show Saturday afternoon.

The show comes after a tumultuous week that opened with Macklemore being dropped in response to exclaiming "Free Palestine" during a Sept. 5 show in New Jersey. Sheeran has said he was not responsible for the decision, which came at the urging of New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft. His company owns a stadium where Sheeran's tour was scheduled to play on Friday.

Within hours of Sheeran's statement Tuesday, his supporting acts withdrew.

Macklemore said Wednesday he is donating \$1 million to support Palestinian relief efforts and called on Kraft to match the gift; a spokesperson for Kraft has said the billionaire and Sheeran have each agreed to donate \$2 million but have not specified where the money will be directed. Sheeran's representatives have not responded to multiple requests for comment.

Sheeran's Loop Tour was the highest-grossing in the world, with an average box office gross of over \$7 million per city, Pollstar said in May. Through the end of 2025, Sheeran was the No. 3 top-earning concert act since 2021.

Sheeran has said the tour promoter was ultimately responsible for the decision to drop Macklemore.

The Grammy winner was adamant in his Tuesday statement that he wouldn't be drawn into discussion of the war in Gaza, arguing that his fans don't come to his shows to hear about these issues.

He also said he "spoke with the venues at length all week to try to build a bridge" before Macklemore was dropped. He insisted he would never willingly let down his fans or abandon the touring crew and others who rely on him to make a living.

While promoters and venues wield great power over concert tours, experts say an artist of Sheeran's magnitude generally has the final say about what happens concerning the shows.

Trump has a deal to build US military presence in Greenland while leaving island in Denmark's hands

By AAMER MADHANI and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced Friday he has a deal with Denmark to bolster the U.S. military presence in Greenland after months of threatening to take the island by force from the NATO ally — an agreement that also keeps the Arctic territory in Denmark's hands.

Trump in a social media post announcing the deal said the emerging agreement "gives the United States permanent control over security, and all other needs, in Greenland, completely addressing ALL of our many U.S. concerns."

He added that with the agreement his administration would "immediately" begin the process of developing a larger military presence on the mineral-rich Danish territory.

The deal came after officials from U.S., Greenland and Denmark quietly negotiated for months behind the scenes, searching for solutions to address some of Trump's security concerns about a territory of roughly 56,000 residents.

For Trump, the Greenland issue had largely been put on the back burner as he launched a military operation to oust former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro from power and joined with Israel to start a war against Iran.

With the announcement of the pact, Trump is able to tout a foreign policy achievement ahead of the midterm elections. The six-month-old Iran conflict has reshaped the race, undermining Trump's campaign pledge to steer clear of foreign conflicts and challenging Republicans as they cling to narrow majorities in Congress.

The office of Denmark's prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, said the deal will be signed by all three governments next week during the United Nations General Assembly, but parliamentary action is still needed by the Danish and Greenland governments before it can be enforced.

In a statement she said "the agreement recognizes the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Greenland

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 51 of 78

and Denmark and upholds both people's right "to self-determination."

Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen said the emerging deal benefits all three governments and "recognizes Greenland's interests."

Allies pushed back on Trump's call for the US to acquire Greenland

With his return to the White House last year, Trump called on Denmark to sell the island to the United States, while insisting Greenland is crucial for U.S. security. He pointedly wouldn't rule out taking the island by military force, even though Denmark is a NATO ally of the U.S.

Denmark and Greenland repeatedly said the island is not for sale and condemned reports of the U.S. gathering intelligence there. The U.S. push for Greenland was also fiercely opposed by Russia and much of Europe.

But Trump with the announcement Friday suggested an understanding may have been reached that could bring an end to what was viewed as an existential crisis by Denmark.

"We look forward to working with the wonderful people of Denmark and Greenland toward a magnificent future with respect to this large, and highly strategic, parcel of land," Trump said in his post. "We will be very protective of it!"

Trump had claimed the U.S. needs Greenland to deter threats from Russia and China, and has repeatedly made false claims of Chinese and Russian military forces lurking off the island's coastline.

The agreement bans any non-NATO base in Greenland, limits adversaries from being able to make investments in Greenland and guarantees that China and Russia cannot have a base in Greenland, according to a State Department official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio cheered the statement as a "historic deal" and "huge win" for the United States.

"Greenland will forever be part of the strategic defense area of North America and exclude any adversary from it and the surrounding area," Rubio said. "This deal permanently and completely addresses our national security concerns in Greenland."

The island is crucial to North America's defense

But the U.S. has long had a military presence in Greenland, holding several bases and installations through the Cold War before dialing back its presence.

The U.S. still operates the remote Pituffik Space Base in northwestern Greenland, which was built after the U.S. and Denmark signed the Defense of Greenland Treaty in 1951. It supports missile warning, missile defense and space surveillance operations for the U.S. and NATO.

Greenland sits off the northeastern coast of Canada, with more than two-thirds of its territory lying within the Arctic Circle. That has made it crucial to the defense of North America since World War II, when the U.S. occupied Greenland to ensure it didn't fall into the hands of Nazi Germany and to protect vital North Atlantic shipping lanes.

Despite Trump's repeated aggressive comments toward Denmark about Greenland, Danish officials had repeatedly made clear that they stood ready to work with the U.S. to expand the American military presence and strengthen U.S. commercial interests in Greenland.

Still, Trump's repeated demands for Greenland and threats to take it by force rattled the NATO alliance and discomfited European allies, said Imran Bayoumi, an associate director at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security.

"I think Americans really underestimate how damaging it was for the image of the United States in Europe," he said. "I think Greenlanders, Danes, Europeans saw this as a real attack on their sovereignty, and it's going to take a lot of work to repair."

Trump administration begins building border wall in Texas' Big Bend region

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

COMSTOCK, Texas (AP) — The Trump administration has started building the border wall through a west Texas section of the Big Bend region, marking the first major construction in an area of the U.S.-Mexico border where the administration's plans have met heavy opposition.

The start of construction marks an important milestone in the administration's \$46 billion plan to line the border with walls, barriers, roads and technology as it seeks to make good on a key campaign promise by President Donald Trump to finish the wall. And it comes as Customs and Border Protection says it has doubled the pace at which it is building the wall across the U.S.-Mexico border.

Customs and Border Protection said in a statement to The Associated Press that "border wall panel installation is underway" in a 47-mile stretch of Hudspeth County in west Texas known as Big Bend 1. There are a total of five project areas that make up the roughly 500-mile Big Bend region stretching from an area of Hudspeth County south of El Paso to Lake Amistad.

CBP said the first panels were erected on September 15. On a map on the agency's website where the agency posts updates of wall construction across the entire southern border, a photo showed a crane lifting one of the 30-foot-tall steel wall panels into place while construction workers looked on.

The new activity was separate from a border infrastructure project in the nearby Big Bend National Park, where the administration has temporarily suspended construction in an attempt to reach out to opponents.

Activist plan to keep up their fight

In the broader Big Bend region of Texas, CBP has run up against concerted opposition from landowners, environmental groups, business owners and ranchers who say the remote region isn't a high-traffic area for illegal immigration.

Activists said Friday they would continue opposing the border infrastructure projects in the rest of the Big Bend region, even as the panels were being installed.

Clara Benson, one of the founders of the No Big Bend Wall Coalition which has been fighting against CBP's plans, said in an interview Friday that the organization had been receiving reports of trucks moving supplies into the remote area along the Rio Grande and that contractors had been clearing yards to stage supplies.

But speaking from Washington, D.C. where she and others in the coalition were meeting with lawmakers, she said that the organization and others would continue to fight the wall-building plans across the region.

"We will continue to fight for this land no matter what the outcome is. We will continue fighting to the end," said Benson. "You talk to people in west Texas and they say even if they put it up, we'll fight for them to take it down. So this fight is not over."

Trump has vowed to complete the border wall

The news comes as the administration is speeding forward with a plan to line the entire border with a combination of 30-foot-tall steel bollard walls, barriers designed to stop vehicles from crossing the border, new patrol roads, and various technologies to deter and detect migrants or smugglers from crossing the border.

Customs and Border Protection said it is building an average of 12 miles of barriers per week along the 2,000-mile border with Mexico and recently reached a milestone of 200 miles of new barriers built since the second Trump administration took office.

The 12-miles-a-week average is double the pace that the agency's head, Rodney Scott, cited earlier this year.

The agency has faced opposition from environmental groups, a small town that worries the wall will cause flooding in its area, Native Americans who say the construction is disturbing sacred sites and landowners who say the construction will infringe on their land.

In Texas, much of the opposition has centered on the agency's plans for Big Bend National Park, in the state's southwest on the Rio Grande that is a draw for tourists from around the world. But up and down-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 53 of 78

river outside the park, much of the land is owned by private landowners, many of whom have pushed back against the government's efforts.

Earlier this week, landowners, ranchers and business owners in the Big Bend region along with a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the region's landscape and heritage sued to stop the administration's plans.

Activists and landowners have also shown up at county meetings to push their elected officials not to cooperate with contractors hired by CBP to build the wall, and many landowners have refused to allow government officials or contractors onto their land to survey it.

Trump announces all 50 states joining Medicaid drug pricing model

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced Friday that all 50 states will join in on a program set to provide Most Favored Nation pricing to some drugs within the Medicaid program, bringing the net price of selected drugs down to prices paid in certain other countries.

The Trump administration claims that Medicaid will save billions on prescription drug costs as a result of the plan, dubbed the Medicaid "GENEROUS" model. Experts say the savings are unclear since the content of the deals isn't public.

"This one thing alone should win us the midterms," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office Friday, flanked by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Mehmet Oz and others.

Friday's announcement comes as cost-of-living issues are at the forefront of voters' concerns ahead of the midterm elections in November. In a way to address affordability concerns, Trump has cut deals with pharmaceutical companies so that the cost of some drugs in the U.S. would not be dramatically higher than in other affluent nations. But critics say his administration has not presented a viable plan for broadly addressing rising health costs, especially after Republicans let expire Affordable Care Act subsidies earlier this year that sent plan costs soaring.

Last year, Trump signed an executive order instituting a "Most Favored Nations" policy, where the U.S. would commit to paying the same price for medications as the nation that pays the lowest price anywhere in the world.

The White House in May estimated that Trump's deals with pharmaceutical companies to lower some of their U.S. prescription drug prices to levels charged in other countries could save \$529 billion over the next 10 years.

Patients in Medicaid, the state and federally funded program for people with low incomes, already pay a nominal co-payment of a few dollars to fill their prescriptions, but lower prices could help state budgets that fund the programs.

Trump said, "Every state will have the ability to use those extra billions of dollars to invest in other healthcare improvements or something else."

The true cost of the claimed savings is unclear since few details of the deals struck by the Trump administration and participating pharmaceutical companies have been made public, making it hard to independently verify the projected savings.

Kush Desai, a White House spokesman, pointed to drug deals negotiated during former President Joe Biden's term under the Inflation Reduction Act that did not include commercially sensitive information and said experts "now poking holes at the Trump administration for also not wanting to disclose commercially sensitive information should be regarded as either an idiot or partisan hack."

Kathy Hempstead, a senior policy adviser at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, told The Associated Press that there is significant pressure on the administration to provide more granular data to justify its cost-savings claims, and that the lack of information creates a barrier to legislative action.

"He is saying Congress should codify all of his MFN arrangements," Hempstead said. "But it's kind of unreasonable because it's not clear what Congress would actually do. No one knows what is in these deals."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 54 of 78

She added that there is concern about whether the current administration's tenure will affect the longevity of these price cuts and whether prices will revert once the administration leaves.

Some want to see more people benefit from lower drug pricing.

JD Hayworth, a former Republican congressman and spokesperson for the Pharmaceutical Reform Alliance, said in a statement that Friday's announcement reflects "meaningful progress, but that progress remains incomplete," as millions of Americans not enrolled in government healthcare want lower drug prices.

Drug prices for patients in the U.S. can depend on a number of factors, including the competition a treatment faces and insurance coverage. Most people have coverage through work, the individual insurance market or government programs like Medicaid and Medicare, which shield them from much of the cost.

Trump targets more news outlets, saying he will ban CNN, MS NOW and Politico from the White House

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday that he was barring CNN, MS NOW and Politico from the White House due to what he called unfavorable coverage and "fake news," and threatened that more such media bans could be coming — the latest salvo in the president's increasingly aggressive response to media coverage he finds unfavorable.

Like many of Trump's other confrontations with news organizations — some of which are playing out in the legal arena — this threat has potential First Amendment implications. There was no immediate indication, though, that he was following through.

Trump wrote on his social media site that effective immediately, "I am banning" CNN, MS NOW and Politico "from the White House as a result of their constant 'reporting' FAKE NEWS!" Minutes later, speaking at an event in the Oval Office, Trump was asked to explain his statement.

"Because they're fake news," he said. "You get so tired of reading and seeing fake news. When you look at CNN, it's just fake. That's why their ratings are no good. When you look at MS NOW ... , it's fake news."

"And when you look at Politico ... the stories they wrote are fake. So there's a lot of news and there may be others to join them, and maybe they can get better," he said. "But our country has to have honest news."

He gave no further details on how the ban would be implemented. Journalists from CNN, MS NOW and Politico were still on the White House grounds as of late Friday afternoon with no signs of being removed.

CNN denounced the move, saying it stands behind its White House team and their "fair and accurate reporting."

"We have a right under the U.S. Constitution to do that reporting without hindrance or interference from the government," it said in a statement posted on X. "Should the ban which President Trump threatened go ahead, it would be an illegal assault on that fundamental and constitutionally-protected right."

Politico said it would "continue to fairly report on this White House and future ones. We will vigorously defend our First Amendment rights against any attempt to restrict them." MS NOW did not immediately return an email asking about the ban.

The White House has confronted the media more in Trump's second term

In his second term, Trump and his administration have upped the ante and punished certain media outlets, both in the courtroom and through regulatory action. Trump has also lashed out at individual reporters in person or over social media, sometimes in strikingly personal terms.

The move follows the president's decision last year to bar Associated Press reporters from the Oval Office, Air Force One and other events in retaliation for the news outlet's decision not to follow his lead in changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico, which lies partially in Mexican and other waters. The AP said that it would note when appropriate that Trump had ordered it renamed the "Gulf of America."

The AP filed suit and the case is ongoing. Since returning to office, Trump has pursued other legal action against a variety of different outlets, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and the BBC. His administration is also involved in a long-simmering confrontation involving ABC over renewal of its broadcast licenses.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 55 of 78

Trump seeking to block White House access for CNN is especially notable, as it could upend the traditional five-network television pool that travels with the president and tracks his every move — meant to provide independent coverage of his actions and interactions for the Americans who elected him and for the world. CNN was traveling with the vice president on Friday to Iowa.

The National Press Club was one of several groups immediately criticizing Trump's threatened action. "Banning news organizations from the White House based on the administration's disapproval of their coverage is a clear attempt to control which voices are allowed to witness and report on the exercise of presidential power," said the group's president, Mark Schoeff.

In legal terms, that's called "viewpoint discrimination" — the government singling out specific media outlets for the content of what they say or publish. That legal principle is at issue in many of the court cases around Trump's treatment of the media.

"Someone needs to explain to President Trump how the First Amendment works," said Tim Richardson, journalism and disinformation director at PEN America. "As we've seen time and time again, this administration's hostility toward the press is never about the accuracy of news stories, but about its inability to withstand scrutiny of its actions."

And Seth Stern, chief of advocacy at Freedom of the Press Foundation, said it was "difficult to imagine a more blatant violation of the First Amendment than Trump banning news outlets from the People's House for criticizing the government."

He added: "These outrageous attacks only demonstrate how scared he is of an informed public."

Trump provided no details

In his social media announcement, Trump did not provide details on how the ban would be implemented.

It came moments before he spoke to reporters in the Oval Office as part of a health care event. He later planned to take the press pool to his golf club in Virginia for a meeting and dinner sponsored by his Super PAC before spending the weekend at Camp David — one of the few places reporters don't follow him.

"Media Outlets shouldn't be able to constantly write or report FICTION and LIES when they're covering the President of the United States, the Trump Administration, or the United States of America," Trump wrote. "Other Fake News Media Outlets to follow."

At the event, Trump doubled down on his opinions about various media outlets.

"The New York Times is so fake. Washington Post is disgusting," he said.

Trump's defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, applauded the decision in a post on X. "The Department of War fully supports President Trump's decision to kick CNN, MS NOW and Politico to the curb so they can publish their Fake News from outside the White House," Hegseth wrote.

In the 1977 case *Sherrill v. Knight*, a federal appeals court ruled that although the White House is not required to open its doors to the news media, once it establishes press facilities for credentialed journalists, it cannot deny access based on the content of a journalist's coverage.

The court held that any denial must serve a compelling government interest and that the journalist must receive notice, the chance to respond and a final answer in writing.

Cuba hit with another blackout as millions across the island are left without electricity

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba's power grid collapsed once again on Friday, leaving millions of people across the island without electricity for at least the sixth time since U.S. President Donald Trump cut off fuel to the island in January.

The Ministry of Energy and Mines announced the islandwide power outage on its official X account and added that officials had begun "activating service-restoration protocols."

"No one can stand these constant blackouts. There isn't enough food, there's no water, there's no electricity -- you have no idea," Mercedes Rodriguez, a 60-year-old worker in Havana, told The Associated Press as she waited for public transportation to return home. "The country is in such a sad state, and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 56 of 78

there are no words for what we're going through."

According to Cuban authorities, a failure reportedly occurred in transmission lines in the western part of the country, causing the system to collapse in that area — as far as Matanzas province — and the eastern section of the island was subsequently disconnected.

The official newspaper Granma reported that "unstable" weather conditions further aggravated the grid's situation.

By dusk, power had been restored to 5% of users in Havana, which has a total of about 862,000 customers, according to official data. Small power-distribution "micro-islands" were being established in the provinces of Camagüey, Pinar del Río and Granma. Some systems serving hospitals and other emergency facilities were being reactivated.

Power grid collapses have become increasingly common over the past two years because of the severe economic crisis gripping the island. They have worsened since January, after the United States imposed an energy blockade aimed at forcing a change in Cuba's political system.

The restrictions prevent Cuba from importing the fuel needed to operate its thermoelectric power plants, as well as replacement parts required to maintain infrastructure that in many cases has become obsolete. Just one tanker of fuel has been delivered since, by a Russian tanker in March.

The two most recent nationwide blackouts occurred in early August, following others in July and March, as well as several regional outages.

Even when the national power grid is working, Cubans regularly endure outages lasting more than 30 consecutive hours.

The blackouts have had a significant impact on the population and, combined with the energy embargo, have led to transportation limitations, reduced work hours and flight cancellations, in addition to serious public health consequences.

The power outages also affect basic activities such as cooking, water supply, and internet and telephone service.

Abilén Marrero, a homemaker, sat resignedly at the entrance to her building in central Havana on Friday. "Maybe it'll come back this afternoon or tomorrow—there's no way to know. We just have to wait," she said.

Iran war's cost grows to \$43.6 billion in new US military estimate

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military's price tag for the Iran war has grown to \$43.6 billion as of Sept. 3, according to a new estimate provided this week to lawmakers.

The figure from U.S. Central Command, which oversees operations in the Middle East, offers the most up-to-date cost for the conflict since it was launched by the United States and Israel on Feb. 28. A Congressional Budget Office report released Tuesday said the war had cost \$38 billion through Aug. 1 and will continue to rack up expenses of around \$3 billion a month depending on the conflict's intensity.

The new breakdown, seen by The Associated Press and reported earlier by Bloomberg and Punchbowl News, also showed the continued use of expensive munitions by American forces. Weapons costs jumped by more than \$6 billion in just over a month, from \$21.7 billion listed in the CBO report to \$28.1 billion in U.S. Central Command's estimate.

The financial cost is just one measure of the impact of the Iran war, which also is affecting oil prices and the stock market and has led to deaths and injuries of American troops. The political costs will be calculated in November's midterm congressional elections, with Republicans facing increasing headwinds from the war's unpopularity.

The latest cost estimate has emerged as the Trump administration pushes for a historic \$1.5 trillion military budget proposal. The White House also is asking Congress to approve a \$95 billion package that would help fund the Iran war and other priorities.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth called for the budget's passage during a speech Friday in Austin, Texas,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 57 of 78

at Saronic Technologies, which makes drones for the Navy.

"We're asking for \$1.5 trillion in the current budget to make generational investments to keep our country strong and sustain good, high-paying jobs for American manufacturers like Saronic," Hegseth said. "We will deliver on this generational investment. We will fund this department."

Meanwhile, Democratic senators are demanding that Hegseth provide a full accounting of the costs of the Iran war. In a letter to the Pentagon chief, the lawmakers criticized the Defense Department for withholding basic budget information from Congress and the American public even as U.S. casualties and taxpayer costs increase.

The U.S. military's one-page breakdown to Congress this week includes costs for operating warships, planes and bases as well as for equipment losses and medical support for troops. Casualties tallied by the Pentagon have included 18 dead and more than 830 wounded, according to the Defense Casualty Analysis System.

The report does not include damage to U.S. bases in the Middle East, which the Islamic Republic has attacked with ballistic missiles and drones. A report from the Pentagon inspector general released Monday said Iranian strikes have damaged and destroyed hundreds of buildings and other structures at U.S. bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman and Jordan.

In the new report to Congress, the figure for munitions was by far the largest, constituting well over half of all costs. The advanced weapons that have been in the most demand are defensive missile interceptors, such as those launched by the Army's Patriot and THAAD systems.

The diminished stockpiles also have caused alarm in Europe, where U.S. and NATO officials have told the AP that there is a "beyond critical" shortage of missile interceptors. Saudi Arabia also is running low on interceptors and has turned to regional and Western allies for assistance as its standoff with Houthi rebels in Yemen drags on.

Wall Street drifts lower as bond yields rise and oil prices swing

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street capped an up -and- down week Friday with a mixed finish for U.S. stock indexes, as elevated bond yields and oil prices weighed on the market.

The S&P 500 inched 0.2% higher after drifting between modest gains and losses for much of the day. The benchmark index also posted its second straight weekly loss.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average slipped 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.4%.

The majority of stocks on Wall Street fell, and helping to weaken them was rising pressure from the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury climbed to 5% from 4.94% late Thursday after it topped the 5% level early this week for the first time since 2023.

Higher yields slow the overall economy by making it more expensive for everyone to borrow money, from the U.S. government to people looking to buy houses to businesses wanting to build AI data centers. They also tend to undercut prices for stocks and other investments.

Yields have been climbing in a long march since the COVID pandemic knocked them nearly to zero in 2020. The ascent has accelerated recently because inflation has remained stubbornly high for years.

Inflation is well above 3% by several measures. It worsened due to higher oil prices caused by the war with Iran.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, got to nearly \$110 early this week, up from a little over \$70 in July. It has been seesawing since.

It briefly dropped below \$102 in overnight trading before erasing much of the loss and settling at \$103.87, down 0.9% from the day before.

Rising oil prices have pushed gasoline prices to \$4.47 per gallon, up from \$3.20 per gallon a year ago, according to AAA. That is tightening the squeeze on household budgets. Diesel prices are at a record \$6.45 per gallon and that has a more direct impact on shipping costs for everything from groceries to clothing.

High inflation has been raising expenses for everyone, and more companies are giving details about

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 58 of 78

how much.

Steel maker Nucor said late Thursday that it expects to report an increase in profit from its steel mills business in the third quarter from the second because it's able to charge higher prices. But it's also having to absorb higher costs. It gave a forecast for overall profit in the third quarter that fell short of analysts' expectations, and its stock sank 6.3%.

Berkshire Hathaway edged up 0.1% after famed investor Warren Buffett said he's giving up his role as chairman of the company. Buffett already gave up his role as CEO of the company, where he built a reputation for buying stocks at relatively cheap prices and being patient with his investments.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, General Motors fell 5.1% and Qualcomm dropped 5.8%.

Among stocks that gained ground were Coinbase Global, which climbed 11.7% for the biggest gain among S&P 500 stocks, and Robinhood Markets, which climbed 9.1%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 12.74 points to 7,650.50. The Dow dropped 95.40 points to 51,682.64, and the Nasdaq added 104.25 points to 26,552.55.

In stock markets abroad, indexes slumped across Europe, including drops of 1.5% for the CAC 40 in Paris and 1.5% for London's FTSE 100.

Asian indexes did better. South Korea's Kospi jumped 2.7%, and Japan's Nikkei rose 1.4%.

The Bank of Japan raised its benchmark interest rate in a widely expected move, up to its highest level in 31 years. It followed the Federal Reserve, which raised its federal funds rate earlier this week for the first time in three years in efforts to rein in high inflation.

"With consumer spending resilient, the AI buildout continuing, and the labor market solid, the Fed was running out of reasons to stay on the sidelines after more than five years of above-target inflation," said Angelo Kourkafas, senior global strategist, investment strategy, at Edward Jones.

The Fed's move could keep upward pressure on Treasury yields, particularly because officials suggested they may need to hike the federal funds rate again this year. But it also helped strengthen faith that the Fed would do what's necessary to get inflation back to its 2% target. That's even if it causes pain for the economy in the short term and upsets President Donald Trump, who has been calling for lower interest rates.

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 began Friday, ushering in the final six weeks for Americans to decide which party they trust to lead Congress through a cost-of-living crisis, a prolonged war in Iran and other pressing issues.

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

Friday was the start of early voting in Virginia. Voters in a few other states, including Minnesota and South Dakota, can 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.

At a voting location in Fairfax, Virginia, 18-year-old college student Sanya Singhal was among the first to vote early in person Friday morning, arriving well before the site opened to get in line.

"Why not just have a little fun in life, you know, try to be the first early voter?" she asked. "I really want to participate in my democracy."

At a voting location in suburban Richmond, a poll worker rang a bell as the building opened and about a dozen voters in line began to file in. Stephen Gura was excited to be the first.

"This election is critical. We need to stop the Trump agenda," said Gura, who added that he voted for U.S. Sen. Mark Warner, a Democrat, and Shannon Taylor, the Democratic nominee against Republican

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 59 of 78

incumbent Rob Wittman in the 1st Congressional District.

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

Votes underway after redistricting and Trump's bid to control how elections are run

At the suburban Richmond voting center, a steady stream of voters flowed in and out. William Curry, a 74-year-old retiree who described himself as a libertarian-leaning independent conservative, voted for Warner's Republican challenger, Bert Mizusawa, and Wittman. Curry said he generally approves of the job Trump has done, apart from the war with Iran.

"He's in a mess he can't get rid of," Curry said of the conflict.

On a rainy day in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Bill Goehring, 67, said he voted early at the county office because he will be traveling later. He voted for a mix of Democrats and independents, and said Trump's "dictatorial tendencies are bad for America."

John Thomas, a conservative retired police officer at the Sioux Falls office, said his biggest concerns were public safety and election integrity. He said he doesn't want to see votes in federal elections from immigrants living in the country illegally. Such fraudulent voting has been found to be extremely rare.

Trump's immigration agenda is "spot on," the 77-year-old said.

"We wouldn't be a country that much longer if it had stayed the same for another four years," he said.

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

It also follows an unprecedented spate of mid-decade redistricting for the 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 is a resident of a different congressional district than in 2024.

Those partisan efforts are expected to continue before the 2028 elections after a landmark ruling this year from the U.S. 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 nation's highest court this week rejected Trump's bid to restrict mail ballots, but several of his administration's other efforts to influence the voting process and investigate state voter lists continue.

Virginia's Democratic attorney general warned Thursday that Trump's administration may have violated the state's laws after a whistleblower accused federal employees of misrepresenting themselves on voter lookup tools to hunt for noncitizen voters.

Trump for years has raised the specter of widespread noncitizen voting in U.S. elections, and this year is no exception. But 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 Republican president continues "his disinformation campaign and his attack on election officials." But he said he thinks "the process will hold as it has in past years."

At least a few Friday voters were motivated to vote early in part because of Trump's actions.

In Minneapolis, 47-year-old business processing engineer Dragan Colakovic said he didn't want to wait until Election Day for fear of being stopped by immigration agents. He said Trump's surge of agents to Minnesota in an immigration crackdown earlier this year terrified him. He is a naturalized U.S. citizen who moved from Bosnia in 1997 and saw the horrors of war in the former Yugoslavia.

"This echoed what I saw in Bosnia," he said of the heavily armed immigration agents who repeatedly swept through his neighborhood, which has many immigrants.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 60 of 78

"These were my neighbors, my friends," being arrested, he said.

Sixty-three-year-old Democratic voter Laura Bland in Virginia's Henrico County said she cast a ballot early to send "a signal that we're still here" despite Trump's efforts to curtail mail voting.

"Regardless of whether you vote for a Democrat, Republican, people are not going to be stopped or intimidated from participating in our elections," Bland said, nearly moved to tears.

Advocates suggest voters cast their ballots early

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 "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.

The top official at the U.S. Postal Service also encouraged voters who cast ballots by mail to get them in a week before they're due.

"Everything is solved if people vote early," Postmaster General David Steiner said in an interview.

In a news 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.

Carney says Canada is 'strong' as US borrowing costs rise and Europe ties deepen

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on Friday cast Canada as moving quickly beyond its historical reliance on the United States after a whirlwind week in which he embraced the prospect of becoming the European Union's first associate member.

Carney, who returned from Europe on Thursday night, said Canada and Europe had "launched a process for a new alliance." He also called the latest U.S. tariffs a "miscalculation" and repeated that suspending trade talks with Washington last month was the right decision.

"Amidst this global rupture, we must move forward," Carney said.

He spoke Friday to Liberal lawmakers gathered in Ottawa ahead of a new session of Parliament, his first public remarks since returning Thursday evening from Strasbourg.

A day after telling the European Parliament that Canada and Europe needed greater resilience so no country could control their markets, impair their sovereignty or dictate their choices, Carney pointed Friday to Canada's fiscal position as another source of strength.

Carney, a former head of the central banks of both Canada and England, also appeared to contrast Canada with the United States as U.S. government borrowing costs remain significantly higher than Canada's.

"We're now seeing financial markets starting to change the pricing ... to separate the strong from the weak," Carney said. "We are the strong. We are Canada strong."

The remarks capped a seven-day stretch in which he hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, convened major global investors in Toronto, met new U.K. Prime Minister Andy Burnham in Liverpool and addressed the European Parliament.

In Strasbourg, Carney embraced a shift toward Europe, calling for a far deeper alliance spanning energy, critical minerals, defense, artificial intelligence, research and other strategic sectors where he says Canada can no longer afford to depend on a single country.

The next major step is an Oct. 29-30 Canada-EU summit in Montreal.

President Donald Trump has imposed tariffs on Canadian goods, repeatedly talked about making Canada the 51st state and threatened additional economic measures. Trade negotiations collapsed last month and remain suspended.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 61 of 78

Carney also touted a business tax break announced at this week's Canada Investment Summit that is expected to cut the effective tax rate on new investment to 6.4%, less than half the U.S. rate.

"We didn't need a big beautiful bill. We needed a targeted initiative," Carney said, drawing laughter with an apparent jab at Trump's signature tax-and-spending law.

Carney also appeared to mimic Trump while boasting that a major clean-energy project would produce the equivalent of "18 Hoover Dams," repeating the phrase as he twice used the president's familiar accordionlike hand gesture.

The government announced nearly half a trillion dollars in investment commitments around the summit.

"In the last seven days, we have stood shoulder to shoulder with an ally, we've catalyzed record investment into our country, we've deepened our ties with Europe," Carney said.

"It's a lot, but that was the warm-up."

Russia begins 3 days of voting in a parliamentary election set to cement the Kremlin's power

By The Associated Press undefined

Russians on Friday began three days of voting in the country's first wartime parliamentary election, which features virtually no opposition and is all but certain to secure the Kremlin's political dominance.

Authorities spread the election over the weekend, ending Sunday, in a bid to boost turnout among the 111 million eligible voters, and they even allowed electronic balloting. Turnout was about 30% as of late Friday, including online voting, according to the Central Election Commission.

The Kremlin wants the parliamentary election — the first since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 — to underline public support for the war and give a veneer of legitimacy to its action. It has sought to avoid any political risks by stamping out even the slightest sign of dissent.

"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," President Vladimir Putin told the nation before the vote.

The Kremlin said Putin voted online Friday and released images of him in front of a computer screen.

The main Kremlin party, United Russia, is all but assured to retain its overwhelming control of the lower house, the State Duma. Several smaller parties of the "systemic opposition" that vote in sync with the government on all key issues also are expected to retain their presence.

Voters cast two separate ballots, filling half of the Duma's 450 seats by selecting political parties listed on the ballot. The rest are contested in single-seat constituencies, with voters choosing individual candidates.

Some Russians hope for a different future

Russians interviewed by The Associated Press expressed different expectations from the election.

Dmitry Kirillin in Moscow said earlier this week that he would like "to see some changes. To see a different party" at the helm. But Muscovite Alexander Vertukhin believed "what United Russia and the communists are doing is quite sufficient; their platforms cover everything."

Speaking at a Moscow polling station Friday, pensioner Galina Vavilova said she thought ending the war in Ukraine "is the main thing, of course."

"That is the most important thing right now. Everyone wants peace, that's what it comes down to. So that our guys are safe and sound," she said.

Another pensioner, Lyudmila Kalinina, wished for life "to stabilize for the better" and for "an end to the big divide between the ultra-rich and the extremely poor, because, after all, many people don't live a very sweet life."

Vladimir Chubarev, a 72-year-old professor, expressed hope "for all the important initiatives our government is undertaking to succeed," adding: "And, of course, for victory."

Russia has silenced anti-war voices

The liberal Yabloko party, the only registered political entity that dared to criticize the war, was removed from the ballot last month by Russia's Supreme Court, and only has a few dozen candidates in the single-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 62 of 78

constituency races. Additionally, some anti-war politicians have been imprisoned or forced to flee abroad ahead of the campaign.

The election follows a summer of Ukraine's long-range drone strikes on oil refineries that triggered a widespread fuel crisis. Warehouses belonging to online retailers Wildberries and Ozon also were attacked. The damage has exacerbated problems for the Russian economy and brought the war home for millions.

In Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi, polling stations were briefly closed because of a threat of a drone attack, local officials said. One polling station in the Krasnodar region had to be set up in a different venue after a drone shattered windows there, said Central Election Commission head Ella Pamfilova.

For the first time, the parliamentary election includes residents of four Ukrainian regions that Moscow illegally annexed after the war began, but still doesn't fully control. Voting also is taking place in Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014.

Voters dropped their ballots in a box at one polling station in the Russian-held part of the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine as an armed Russian soldier stood nearby and watched.

Speaking at a meeting with officials, Putin said that Ukraine was trying to hamper the vote, mentioning a Ukrainian strike that killed the head of a polling station in the Zaporizhzhia region.

In the Russian-held Luhansk region, 14 polling stations were using backup power sources after Ukrainian drones damaged electrical lines, Pamfilova said.

Separately, Russian officials said Ukrainian attacks earlier this week killed a polling station chief and wounded another in the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia region. There was no immediate comment from Ukraine on the accusation.

Authorities in Kyiv denounced the voting in the Russian-held areas as illegal and urged foreign governments and international organizations not to recognize the election, warning Ukrainians that taking part in organizing the balloting could carry criminal liability.

European Commission spokesperson Christian Wigand also called the voting in Russian-held regions "illegal" and said the European Union condemns it.

"These so-called elections represent yet another blatant violation of international law. The European Union does not, and will never recognize either the holding of these so-called elections, sham elections, in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine or their results," he said.

Wigand said the way the elections are held "underscores the continued and deepening erosion of democracy in Russia," and that the Kremlin "deprives voters in Russia of a genuine choice about the future of their country."

He also noted that Russia decided not to invite observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, disregarding its commitments. He vowed the EU will continue to support Russian civil society organizations, human rights groups and independent media.

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 cite 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 he escaped while on temporary 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.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 63 of 78

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

Cooper was not the governor when the man was released or when he was later charged with killing the refugee.

"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, a 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, said Cooper had emptied prisons and released thousands of violent criminals.

"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," RNC National Press Secretary Natalie Baldassarre said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Trump paints North Carolina as a 'dangerous state'

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

Decarlos Brown Jr., who is Black, faces murder and other charges in Zarutska'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 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 Zarutska, 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,"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 64 of 78

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."

There was no response to an AP email sent Thursday seeking comment from Whatley's Senate campaign.

Vance blasts Democrats as 'lunatics' in Iowa rally push for GOP candidates

By JOSH BOAK and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa (AP) — Vice President JD Vance on Friday mounted a vigorous defense of the Trump administration's policies and Iowa GOP candidates on the November ballot, arguing that the Democrats had turned into the party of "lunatics," in his second trip to the politically consequential state this year.

While in Iowa, Vance tried to nationalize the elections, invoking Democratic candidates in other states such as Kansas, Texas and New York at a time when the state's Democratic ticket has tried to keep its focus local. But he took plenty of swings at Iowa Democrats, saying their candidate for governor, Rob Sand, was a "career politician" and not a moderate, despite his public persona.

"Let's send the crazy packing and get them out of Washington, D.C., and get them out of Des Moines," Vance told the crowd at the Mid-America Center in Council Bluffs, located on the western edge of the once-Republican stronghold state. Iowa has found itself with competitive races for the Senate and the governor's mansion this year.

Zach Lahn, the GOP nominee for governor, campaigned alongside Vance, who showered him with effusive praise. But missing was Republican U.S. Rep. Ashley Hinson, the party's Senate candidate, who did not attend the rally Friday due to previously scheduled events, according to her campaign.

Council Bluffs is home to Josh Turek, the Democratic nominee for the Senate who represents the area in the Statehouse.

"It's no mystery why Vance is here," Turek wrote in a fundraising appeal ahead of Vance's visit. "It's because his billionaire bosses are terrified that their grip over Iowa is slipping — and with it, their narrow Senate majority."

Vance spoke about job growth under the Trump administration and was greeted with cheers for the administration's work on immigration and border security. Continuing on his laundry list of White House

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 65 of 78

accomplishments, Vance mentioned the administration's work to get "most favored nation" prescription drug prices and highlighted the policies on not taxing tips or overtime and protecting Social Security.

In the agriculture-heavy state, Vance said he was perhaps "most proud of what we've been able to do for Iowa farmers," pointing to efforts by the administration to open up more global markets to American-grown food.

Still, Vance urged voters to be patient.

"Whenever you hear me talk during this midterm campaign, I'll say Rome was not built in a day because we know there's a lot of work to do," Vance said.

Vance took his first trip to the state as vice president in May, campaigning alongside Rep. Zach Nunn, one of the party's most endangered incumbents this year. Nunn and Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, another Iowa Republican, voted earlier this week in a symbolic measure to halt the war in Iran, underscoring how the military conflict that Trump launched is causing political troubles for his own party.

The vice president has been one of the most visible surrogates on the midterm campaign trail, jetting to locations such as Kansas, Wisconsin and his native Ohio to promote Republican candidates and the administration's achievements.

Friday's rally location is in Iowa's 4th Congressional District, which is being vacated by Republican Rep. Randy Feenstra after his failed bid for governor. Democrat Dave Dawson and Republican Chris McGowan are vying for the seat. That race is not considered one of the more competitive races in this election.

Vance's visit to the state shows Republican candidates are in political trouble in November, said Katie Smith, a spokesperson for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, in a statement.

"Iowans have had enough of their D.C.-first, Iowa-last priorities and will hold them all accountable for their agenda that's caused skyrocketing prices at the pump, grocery stores, and doctor's office," Smith said.

Holdout juror in Clancy trial didn't have 'any doubts' that she was responsible for killing her kids

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The lone juror who wanted to convict Lindsay Clancy of murder for killing her three children said he was certain of her guilt, but that other jurors wouldn't listen to him, according to a statement released by his lawyer Friday in his first public comments on the case.

Eleven of 12 jurors were ready to clear Clancy of criminal responsibility, with the majority feeling that the Massachusetts mom was in the grip of a rare condition called postpartum psychosis when she strangled her kids. But juror Michael Desronvil sided with the prosecutors, who had argued that Clancy knew what she was doing.

"I didn't have any doubts," Desronvil said in a statement released on X by his lawyer, Edward Paltzik.

The jury's foreperson had claimed in an earlier media interview that Desronvil had admitted having "reasonable doubt" about Clancy's guilt, but wanted to convict her anyway. Desronvil said that wasn't true.

"As I tried to explain different possible theories during deliberation, I kept getting cut off as if I had doubts based on the evidence presented," he wrote. "Based on all the physical evidence, key witnesses, and what the prosecution presented, I thought it was enough proof that she (Clancy) knew exactly what she was doing and planned."

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

The jury's deadlock forced the judge to declare a mistrial on Sept. 4, leaving the case unresolved. The Plymouth County district attorney has yet to say whether he'll seek to put Clancy on trial again.

Neither side disputed that Clancy strangled her children, Cora, Dawson and Callan, in the family's home in 2023 before trying to end her own life. But her attorney said she was a loving mother experiencing deep

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 66 of 78

delusions and other mental health problems, for which she had been getting treatment.

Since the trial ended, Desronvil has been both publicly praised and scorned for his actions, and his personal life and past financial and legal problems have become the subject of scrutiny by the news media and amateur sleuths.

Among the public revelations: He had a restraining order against him at the time of jury selection and was facing eviction from his apartment due to over \$12,000 in unpaid rent. He also was accused of domestic violence in 2021, a charge that was later dismissed.

Some of the opinion has fallen along political lines, with Desronvil being praised by some conservative pundits as a hero.

Paltzik, whose past clients have included President Donald Trump and Martin Shkreli, said on X that Desronvil was in "an undisclosed secure location" in a rural part of northern New England and would not be giving interviews.

"As a devoted father and man of God, he will not be defeated or shattered by the wicked who wish harm upon him," Paltzik wrote.

A fundraiser to cover what organizers say are costs of "security, lawyers, and lost work" for Desronvil has raised over \$289,000.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has rolled out the welcome mat for him, saying that if he is being harassed, "Florida will provide asylum."

"I'm sure he'd be welcomed and appreciated," DeSantis wrote on X.

Bombing at mosque near police offices in Pakistan kills at least 21

By RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — A vehicle bomb exploded Friday at a mosque near police offices in northwestern Pakistan as gunmen tried to storm the compound in an attack that killed at least 21 people and wounded 80 others, police and rescue officials said. Among those killed and wounded were police officers attending prayers at the mosque.

The coordinated assault was the latest in a surge of militant violence near the border with Afghanistan where Pakistani Taliban militants have increasingly targeted police and other security forces as the government intensifies operations against them.

The bombing occurred in Kohat, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. An attacker apparently rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into the mosque, said Zulfiqar Hameed, the provincial police chief.

At least seven armed gunmen also attempted to enter the police compound and exchanged fire with officers. Six of the gunmen were killed, according to police, who said one suicide bomber attacked the nearby office of an intelligence agency.

The police compound housed counter-terrorism police, who had carried out operations against militants across the province in recent years.

Most of those killed were police officers, hospital officials said. Bilal Faizi, a senior rescue official, said most of the dead and wounded had been attending prayers at the mosque.

Photos from the scene showed the outer wall of the police offices had collapsed and the mosque was badly damaged. Smoke rose over the site after the blast, which witnesses and residents said was heard far away, followed by gunfire. Inside the mosque, piles of bricks and concrete buried the floor, wires dangled from cracked walls and daylight poured through jagged holes in the roof, while a ceiling fan hung above the wreckage.

Residents said the exchange of fire continued hours after the coordinated attack.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack and expressed sorrow over the casualties. He directed authorities to accelerate rescue operations.

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 police said.

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. Pakistan 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.

Tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan have remained high since Pakistan targeted alleged TTP hideouts in Afghanistan in 2025. The strikes triggered border clashes, prompting Qatar and Turkey to mediate a ceasefire. China later facilitated peace talks, but the two sides failed to reach an agreement.

Friday's bombing came a day after Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported Turkish intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalin met with Sharif, the Pakistan army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and intelligence chief Lt. Gen. Asim Malik.

Kalin said Turkey would continue to make efforts to help resolve the tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan through dialogue, the news agency reported.

The Turkish intelligence chief also met with the government in Afghanistan. Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesperson for the Afghan Taliban, said Thursday that top officials in Kabul held talks with Kalin and a senior Qatari security official. The talks addressed tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Pentagon is moving forward with mandatory testosterone testing for most male troops

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon has rolled out formal guidance for mandatory testosterone testing for male service members 30 and older, a policy that leaves out women for now and faces questions from medical experts about the need and efficacy of such a program.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced in July that a new program to screen troops for "testosterone deficiency" was necessary to allow them to operate at their "absolute best." The new clinical guidance, released late Thursday, outlines how the program would work.

The Pentagon's efforts to test for low testosterone coincide with growing interest in the hormone that has been driven by men's health influencers and podcasters, many of whom recommend the drug as a way to boost energy, muscle and feel younger.

However, many experts say those far-reaching benefits aren't supported by the science. Hegseth's messaging on the hormone has blended established scientific facts with broader, and less substantiated, claims.

The new guidance clarifies that the mandatory testing would initially apply to only male service members. Hegseth's initial memo in July directed mandatory testosterone deficiency screenings for all troops, but the clinical guidance released Thursday says it is for "testosterone deficiency in the male service member."

The guidance says "the female clinical practice guideline is being reviewed and will be posted upon approval." The Pentagon has not said whether female troops would be able to be evaluated for estrogen-based therapy as they enter perimenopause.

Testosterone declines naturally with age and can affect sexual function, mood, bone density and other measures. But experts have long debated how to diagnose those problems and whether to treat them by replacing the hormone.

In the last decade, federal studies have shown that boosting testosterone improves erectile dysfunction, low libido and other issues in men.

The Pentagon's top spokesman, Sean Parnell, said Thursday that "by proactively identifying and treating suboptimal hormone levels," the Pentagon aims to "invest in the health of its warfighters, strengthen their performance, and maximize force readiness."

Medical groups generally don't recommend automatic screening of testosterone levels. Instead, medical guidelines typically recommend testosterone for men who report symptoms — including low libido and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 68 of 78

depressed mood — and have two blood tests confirming low levels of the hormone.

The Pentagon's policy breaks from that approach, requiring testosterone screening for all male personnel 30 and older and allowing younger members also to request screenings.

Otherwise, the new guidelines mostly conform to medical standards, including acknowledging the limited benefits of replacing the hormone.

For instance, the guidelines say, "Evidence does not support its use to improve energy, vitality, physical function, or cognition." Instead, the document mentions "demonstrated benefits" for sexual function and certain body measures, including bone density.

The policy does not make replacement therapy mandatory should a service member be found eligible, while the guidelines flag long-established side effects of boosting testosterone, including the potential for a drop in sperm count. When men receive testosterone externally, the body typically reduces — or even stops — its natural sperm production.

As a result, military doctors are instructed not to prescribe testosterone therapy to anyone hoping to have children in the near future.

Another complicating factor for troops is the controlled nature of testosterone itself. The memo notes that its "use in the deployed environment raises supply, custody, storage, and continuity considerations that should be resolved before departure rather than in theater."

The new guidance makes clear that injectable testosterone "requires controlled room temperature storage and controlled substance accountability" and that troops who are on replacement therapies need to ensure they have enough of a supply despite the fact that federal law limits prescriptions on controlled substances like testosterone.

The caution and practical hurdles within the documentation over the use of testosterone while on deployment stand in contrast to remarks from Hegseth in July, when he argued that the rigors of the modern battlefield demand "maximum psychological and mental readiness" and that testosterone therapy was part of the solution.

Duncan Sheik, Tony- and Grammy-winning 'Spring Awakening' composer and pop star, dies at 56

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Duncan Sheik, the Tony- and Grammy-winning singer-songwriter who crafted the music for "Spring Awakening," has died. He was 56.

Sheik died Thursday night, according to a post on his Instagram page. "The world has lost a singular talent, and deeply influential voice in music and theater," the post reads. "His musical legacy will continue to inspire generations to come."

Sheik had been best known for his lasting radio hit "Barely Breathing" when he turned his sights on Broadway with "Spring Awakening," resulting in the envelope-pushing show that musicalized teenage angst.

"With the exception of our director, we are all kind of Broadway outsiders. We wanted to shake things up a bit. And we just set out to make this really cool piece of theater," Sheik told The Associated Press in 2007, as the show swept Tony nominations.

Sheik also tackled musicals based on "American Psycho" and "Alice in Wonderland," and "Barely Breathing" spent 55 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100, peaking at No. 16. But he was probably best known for "Spring Awakening," which ran for over 860 performances on Broadway starting in 2006.

"His deep feeling and his delight gave us so much beauty," playwright and actor Eisa Davis wrote. "Duncan, thank you for your friendship and for the sublime music."

'Spring Awakening' roused a new side of Sheik — and Broadway

The musical — adapted from a 19th-century play by German playwright Frank Wedekind, with music by Sheik and lyrics by playwright Steven Sater — is frank in its portrayals of incest, abortion and suicide. It's intended partly as a warning that teens need good information about sex to avoid tragic mistakes.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 69 of 78

"I don't mean to be disrespectful to more traditional theater composers," he told the Los Angeles Times in 2015. "I love Stephen Sondheim. But it's my mission to make sure that the theater is paying attention to what the rest of the world is listening to."

Sheik and Sater were practicing Buddhists who met while chanting. They were collaborating on Sheik's third album, "Phantom Moon," when Sater mentioned he was working on a new production. Neither had written a musical before.

"I said to Steven, 'I'm happy to do this musical, but I only want to do it if the music in the play is the kind that I and my peers can get behind stylistically and relate to and enjoy,'" Sheik told the AP in 2006.

They made a pact: They'd retain the provincial, 19th-century Germany setting but with, as Sater put it, "the characters breaking into pop-contemporary when they sing."

"Spring Awakening" won eight Tony Awards, including best musical, as well as the Grammy for best musical show album.

"Sheik's music, spare in its simple orchestrations, lush in the lapping reach of its seductive choruses, embodies the shadowy air of longing that infuses the show, the excitement shading into fear, the joy that comes with a chaser of despair," The New York Times said in its review.

The show is beloved in the musical theater community for breaking ground in staging and content, alongside the likes of "Rent" and "Hamilton." It returned to Broadway in 2015 in a well-received production by Deaf West Theatre. An off-Broadway version is slated to open this fall, as is his musical "Memoirs of Amorous Gentlemen," based on Moyoco Anno's manga of the same name.

The cast of the original show was loaded with breakthrough actors like Jonathan Groff, Lea Michele, Lilli Cooper, Jennifer Damiano, Gideon Glick, John Gallagher Jr., Lauren Pritchard and Krysta Rodriguez, who have each gone on to fame in TV, film and stage. Groff would go on to earn a Tony with "Merrily We Roll Along," and Michele became a superstar with "Glee."

Sheik blended musical theater with pop music

Sheik next channeled the music he heard getting past the velvet ropes of trendy, late-1980s Manhattan clubs for a Broadway adaptation of the Bret Easton Ellis novel "American Psycho."

The 1991 novel — later made into a 2000 movie starring Christian Bale — chronicles a homicidal New York yuppie named Patrick Bateman who is obsessed with high-end clothes and beauty products even as he slashes his way through Manhattan. Sheik, who also supplied lyrics, recalled only getting halfway through the book before throwing it across the room as a Brown University student.

For one standout song, "You Are What You Wear," he reached out to old girlfriends to ask a question: What were you really into wearing in the late '80s? He put the answers in the tune about high fashion: "Chanel, Gaultier, or Giorgio Armani/Moschino, Alaïa, or Norma Kamali/Should I rock/The Betsey Johnson/ Or stick with classic/Comme des Garçons?"

"Duncan is really a genius and an intellectual and brings something both uniquely his but importantly of this period to the stage," producer Jesse Singer told the AP at the time.

Because Bateman, played onstage by Benjamin Walker, fancies himself a bit of a music critic — spewing mostly inane ruminations about Phil Collins and Huey Lewis and the News — Sheik also peppered his score with sly reworkings of "In the Air Tonight" and "Hip to Be Square."

"There's definitely an art to be able to write a song that on one level is a pop song and one that also has to tell a story and keep an audience engaged in terms of a larger narrative arc," Sheik told the AP in 2013. "When you're writing a song for the theater, it has to accomplish all this other stuff. It has to work in tandem with all these other agendas and creative impulses."

The show, directed by Rupert Goold and with a story by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, made its premiere in 2013 in London. On Broadway in 2016, it bombed, lasting less than 90 performances.

"We were all sort of worried that it might be too violent for people and it might seem too misogynist," Sheik told the AP on the eve of the opening. "But, in fact, the truth is this piece is a critique of a certain way of thinking about things. So in truth it's better to go all-in."

'Barely Breathing' was nominated for a Grammy

Growing up between South Carolina and New Jersey, Sheik learned guitar as a child and got his first

synthesizer when he was 12. He was heavily influenced by Talk Talk, David Sylvian and Nick Drake. His self-titled debut album was released in 1996 and Rolling Stone gave it a four-star review, calling it "a defiant debut — beautiful and benevolent of spirit."

"Barely Breathing," from that album, was nominated for best pop vocal performance in 1998 and would be kept alive on TV shows like "Glee" and "Girls."

Other projects include "Whisper House," an album and musical — a ghost story that ran in 2010 at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego — and "Legerdemain," an album that explored the tension between art and commerce. His most recent album was 2022's "Claptrap."

But for someone who had once been a total stranger to Broadway, he told AP in 2016 that he had a sense of mission.

"I feel like it's become my project to kind of drag different people who might not normally go to musical theater pieces to come see a piece of musical theater," he said.

He is survived by his parents; his wife, Nora Ariffin; and a daughter, Ines.

Warren Buffett gives up chairman title at Berkshire Hathaway in the next step of his succession plan

By JOSH FUNK and MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writers

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Warren Buffett is stepping down as chairman of Berkshire Hathaway in the next step of the transition at the top of the \$1 trillion conglomerate he led for more than six decades.

Buffett, 96, will become chairman emeritus and will take on his new role immediately, the company said Friday. His oldest son, Howard, will become Berkshire Hathaway's new chairman, part of a long-planned succession. Howard Buffett has been on the Berkshire Hathaway board since 1993.

Warren Buffett, known by a legion of financial market followers as the Oracle of Omaha, will remain a director. He had been Berkshire Hathaway's chairman since 1970, but he took control of the struggling New England textile company in 1965.

Greg Abel took over for Buffett as the CEO of the \$1 trillion conglomerate at the start of this year though Buffett continued to come into the office each day to look for new investments and deals and offer Abel any advice. It's not clear whether Buffett will change his routine at all now.

"I have served Berkshire since 1965," Buffett said in a letter to shareholders. "Sixty-plus years in, I still have the best job in the world. That is not something many people my age can say, and I have never felt better about what comes next."

Investor Adam Mead, who wrote "The Complete Financial History of Berkshire Hathaway," said Buffett seems to be trying to lessen the impact on Berkshire when he eventually dies by taking this step now. Berkshire's announcement didn't reveal any health issues for Buffett, but Mead said "He's now 96, so even a cold could be a health scare."

Greg Abel will continue as CEO with Howard Buffett becoming chairman

Buffett said that he is confident with Abel and his son Howard leading Berkshire Hathaway.

"Greg runs the company; Howard will guard its culture and values — both worth more than anything on our balance sheet," he said. "Think of Howard as a policy the shareholders own and hope never to claim against."

Abel started managing all of Berkshire's non-insurance businesses in 2018 when he was elevated to vice chairman, so he knows the various companies well including BNSF railroad, the utilities and manufacturing operations as well as name brands like Dairy Queen and See's Candy. But CFRA Research analyst Cathy Seifert said investors still have questions about how well Abel will be able to deploy Berkshire's massive \$365 billion cash pile.

"There was a premium awarded Berkshire stock because of their financial strengths and because of this famed investor who was allocating capital. I think it's naive to assume that this is business as usual. It's not," Seifert said. "What this does is amplify some of the execution risk in the strategy and the significance of the transition."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 71 of 78

The next orderly step in Warren Buffett's succession plan

Michael Withers, professor of management at the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business, said Buffett took a deliberate approach to Berkshire Hathaway's succession plans and has carried out the transition step by step.

"Buffett seems to have understood that succeeding him wasn't just about finding another extraordinary leader," he said. "It was about building a structure that could preserve what makes Berkshire different long after he has stepped away. The test moving forward will be whether Abel and Howard can honor that legacy while still giving Berkshire room to adapt to a market that looks very different from the one Buffett mastered."

Buffett's fortune has been amassed through Berkshire Hathaway stock. Buffett built the company into an investing conglomerate and an icon of Wall Street by buying insurance companies and reinvesting the money from premiums in stocks and other companies. In 2024, Berkshire Hathaway became the first non-tech companies valued at more than \$1 trillion.

Buffett, a longtime philanthropist, has given away roughly \$66 billion worth of stock since 2006 with the bulk of that going to his friend Bill Gates' foundation. But this summer he announced that his three children will now take over all of the charitable decisions and distribute the rest of his fortune by the end of 2034.

Buffett's take on finance has created its own gravitational pull. When Berkshire Hathaway reveals the stocks that the company has acquired or sold in public disclosures, it can shake markets.

During his time as CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, the company nearly doubled the returns of the S&P 500, with a 19.9% compounded annual growth rate compared with the index's 10.4% gain.

"Warren's impact on Berkshire and its owners is without parallel in the history of American business," Abel said in a prepared statement. "The culture Warren built and the values he championed will remain at the heart of Berkshire, and Howard will be their guardian."

Shares of Berkshire Hathaway dipped slightly in Friday morning trading.

Infantino's opponents at FIFA call for \$10M payments to federations from post-World Cup reserves

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — FIFA's member federations should each get an extra \$10 million from its swelling cash reserves after a successful World Cup, the soccer body's vice presidents from Europe and North America said in a letter Friday to its president Gianni Infantino as they stepped up efforts to oust him for trying to sell stakes in the tournament to private investors.

The letter says FIFA should have cash reserves of \$6 billion after the World Cup and can afford such a "one-off release" — which would total \$2.1 billion to the 211 federations — UEFA's president Aleksander Ceferin and CONCACAF's leader Victor Montagliani tell Infantino in a letter seen by The Associated Press.

UEFA and CONCACAF want to remove Infantino — either before or at the FIFA presidential election next March — after leading a global backlash in July against his World Cup sell-off plan to investors led by Joshua Kushner.

He is the young brother of Jared Kushner, the son-in-law of U.S. President Donald Trump. Infantino built close ties to Trump ahead of this year's World Cup held in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, and was a regular visitor to the White House.

The call for \$10-million payments to the national federations — who will elect the next president — is a clear counter to Infantino's offer of \$20 million for each to support his now-failed project.

The message in Friday's letter appears to be reassuring FIFA members they will get increased funding even without Infantino in the office he has occupied since 2016.

The letter says already promised FIFA funding — \$20 million for each of the 211 through 2030 — "would continue in full as already committed."

FIFA was approached for comment.

Ceferin and Montagliani told Infantino they want a full and independent analysis of FIFA's finances ahead

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 72 of 78

of an Oct. 15 meeting in Zurich, to help decide how much money can responsibly be given to member federations.

The UEFA and CONCACAF leaders shape as key players at the scheduled meeting next month of the Infantino-chaired FIFA Council — its first since his secretive private equity plan was revealed by press reports in late July.

“Lastly, please note we will be informing the other four confederation presidents to support this motion,” Ceferin and Montagliani wrote.

The Asian Football Confederation also has been critical of Infantino in recent weeks. The soccer bodies in South America and Africa have backed Infantino, who traveled to the Caribbean last month trying to shore up support from CONCACAF members there, despite Montagliani asking him not to visit.

FIFA’s election timetable

FIFA has set a Nov. 18 deadline for candidates to enter the election that is decided four months later in Rabat in Morocco, a key ally of Infantino and 2030 World Cup co-host with UEFA members Spain and Portugal.

After a profitable World Cup in North America, Infantino looked set to be re-elected unopposed for a fourth and final term through 2031 until the private investment furor.

It is unclear who could emerge as a rival candidate, though European soccer leaders are due to gather at a UEFA-hosted event before the FIFA Council meeting.

Past speculation has typically landed on Canada’s Montagliani and the Qatari president of Paris Saint-Germain, Nasser al-Khelaifi. He is both a member of the Qatari government and UEFA’s executive committee. Neither has said they want to challenge Infantino, who has been publicly supported by the Qatar soccer federation.

UEFA’s pursuit of Infantino in U.S. courts

UEFA has asked courts in Manhattan and Florida to authorize discovery of evidence from, respectively, Kushner’s investment firm in New York and FIFA around the \$20 billion commercial spinoff project, that was to be known as FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE).

The European soccer body said last month it wanted documents and communication for a potential criminal complaint against Infantino in FIFA’s home country Switzerland, for possible financial mismanagement.

America’s long history of falling for hucksters and their outlandish promises

By JONATHAN FAHEY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — America: land of possibility. And also: land of suckers.

Our enduring belief that anything is possible — whether based in reality or not — has helped the nation become the world’s largest economy. It has also led us to fall head over heels for hucksters and charlatans, again and again.

If so much is possible here in America, who is to say it’s not possible that the next new supplement, device or scheme might make you young, strong, rich or all of the above, all at once?

America brought us Clark Stanley, the Rattlesnake King, who sold us what he called “snake oil liniment” that promised to remedy pain, lameness, sprains, bunions and “reduce large joints to their natural size.” America helped create Charles Ponzi, who could deliver you 50% profit in just 45 days by investing in stamp coupons.

These old examples are easy to laugh at or be mortified by, but we should be careful: We are as willing as ever to believe claims that, when subjected to even a modicum of common sense seem ludicrous. Raw milk has special powers? Peptides can make us young again? A blast of vitamins through an IV can flush out your hangover?

Why do we keep falling for this stuff? There’s a simple, poignant reason: “People really don’t want to die.”

So says Dr. Lydia Kang, author of a book on medical fads called “Quackery” and associate professor of internal medicine at University of Nebraska Medical Center. There’s a desperation to it. “Everybody has a

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 73 of 78

deep wish to have a long and fruitful life," she says, "without disability or pain and with your brain intact."

This is not uniquely American, of course. But these instincts and tendencies are amplified in America, with its relentless optimism, its spirit of individualism and its lightly regulated capitalism.

The truth doesn't matter

When we fall for claims or cling to beliefs after they've been disproved, we're not necessarily being stupid.

We don't have beliefs to create an accurate representation of the world, said Tali Sharot, a neuroscientist professor at University College London. Instead, she said, it's simply "to have beliefs that will get us the most rewards and help us avoid harm. And sometimes those beliefs are the accurate ones, but sometimes they're not."

Hope and belief can provide optimism that things could get better, which can in turn at least temporarily improve mood and mental health. "Believing that your future will be better than the past and the present — even if your future will not be better," Sharot said, "Many times can be optimal."

That opens us up to the lure of supplements, balms and techniques that promise benefits that are extremely unlikely to materialize. On one hand, they are a tragic waste of hard-earned money and sometimes have negative side effects. On the other hand, "you gain something from trying," Sharot said, like positive anticipation or excitement.

Hope produces hype

But these tendencies leave us open to exploitation by companies that want our money. And they are really good at what they do.

Throughout U.S. history, there is a clear pattern: A hint that something might work opens a crack in a door that companies barge through, capturing the desperation — and the paychecks — of people who are hurting, tired or scared.

Dr. Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician who signed the Declaration of Independence, was frustrated by his inability to save people during a yellow fever epidemic in 1793. He then read autopsy reports that suggested purging and bloodletting could help and he took it to an extreme. According to one account: "So much blood was spilled in the front yard that the site became malodorous and buzzed with flies."

Charles Stanley's snake oil was fake — the U.S. Bureau of Chemistry in 1916 found that it was mainly mineral oil, with "fatty oil (probably beef fat), capsicum, and possibly a trace of camphor or turpentine." But he got the idea from Chinese laborers who used oil — from a very specific snake — that did likely have some anti-inflammatory properties.

Gray areas leave regulators and health professionals in a difficult spot: It's often impossible to say definitively that something doesn't work. In the meantime, companies pounce. "What's scary is that they will take that hope and they will try to stick it in a bottle and sell it to you at whatever price that they think that you can afford," Kang said.

True breakthroughs raise hopes

Of course science, technology and the nation's relentless economic engine have produced countless true wonders, which in turn softens the ground for credulous thinking.

We can cross the country in a flying metal tube. We can tap into nearly all of human knowledge using a small rectangle of metal and glass. Medical advances and especially vaccination have nearly eliminated childhood diseases that killed up to half of children before age 5 when the nation was founded. An American born in 1900 was likely to live until just 47 years old. U.S. life expectancy is now 79. Who's to say it can't double again? Why should there be any limit at all?

Now we're subjected to ever more tantalizing claims, Kang said, thanks to an endless stream of social media hawkers (euphemized as "influencers") peddling "treatments" and other shortcuts along our 250-year-strong pursuit of happiness.

Even the nation's top health official, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has promoted or given voice to those advocating or selling unproven treatments.

"The guard rails are off right now," Kang says. "It's actually worse than it has been before, because of social media, because of what's on the internet, and because the so-called trusted people we're supposed to be getting advice from are not trustworthy. And I think that puts the American public in far greater

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 74 of 78

danger.”

One thing that hasn't changed in 250 years: Americans' willingness to get suckered

By JONATHAN FAHEY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — America: land of possibility. And also: land of suckers.

Our enduring belief that anything is possible — whether based in reality or not — has helped the nation become the world's largest economy. It has also led us to fall head over heels for hucksters and charlatans, again and again.

If so much is possible here in America, who is to say it's not possible that the next new supplement, device or scheme might make you young, strong, rich or all of the above, all at once?

In 1897, a Baptist minister convinced us that his company could extract gold from the seawater near Lubec, Maine. A company called Bailey Radium Laboratories in East Orange, New Jersey, introduced a hit product in 1925 called Radithor that it advertised as “a cure for the living dead” that could restore vitality and cure impotence.

There was no gold in Maine's seawater. And Radithor didn't turn people into Adonis; it poisoned them with radiation.

Americans have been suckered by fraudsters so bold that their schemes are now part of everyday speech.

America brought us Clark Stanley, the Rattlesnake King, who sold us what he called “snake oil liniment” that promised to remedy “pain and lameness, for rheumatism, neuralgia, sciatica, sprains, bunions,” cure “partial paralysis of the arms and lower limbs” and “reduce large joints to their natural size.” America helped create Charles Ponzi, who could deliver you 50% profit in just 45 days by investing in stamp coupons.

These old examples are easy to laugh at or be mortified by, but we should be careful: We are as willing as ever to believe claims that, when subjected to even a modicum of common sense, seem ludicrous. Raw milk has special powers? Peptides can make us young again? A blast of vitamins through an IV can flush out your hangover?

Why do we keep falling for this stuff? There's a simple, poignant reason: “People really don't want to die.”

So says Dr. Lydia Kang, author of a book on medical fads called “Quackery” and associate professor of internal medicine at University of Nebraska Medical Center. There's a desperation to it. “Everybody has a deep wish to have a long and fruitful life,” she says, “without disability or pain and with your brain intact.”

Other experts say there are sociological and evolutionary reasons to be attracted to outlandish and even disproven claims.

This is not uniquely American, of course. But these instincts and tendencies are amplified in America, with its relentless optimism, its spirit of individualism, its lightly regulated capitalism, its desperate ambition to get richer or healthier or prettier, and a desire to get in on the action driven by suspicion: Others surely have gamed the system, so why can't I?

“It's sort of a wild wild West cowboy situation,” Kang said. “People are like, ‘Well, if you're not going to do it, I'm going to do it myself.’”

The truth often doesn't matter

When we fall for claims or cling to beliefs after they've been disproved, we're not necessarily being stupid.

We don't have beliefs to create an accurate representation of the world, said Tali Sharot, a neuroscience professor at University College London. Instead, she said, it's simply “to have beliefs that will get us the most rewards and help us avoid harm. And sometimes those beliefs are the accurate ones, but sometimes they're not.”

Overconfidence, for example, can land you a mate or a job you aren't qualified for, she said. People can get a sense of community, support and belonging by believing what others in a group believe. “If it's a false belief, it doesn't matter,” Sharot said.

Believing that vaccines cause autism, despite conclusive evidence that they don't, gives families and loved ones something to blame and provides them with support from a group that shares in their anger,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 75 of 78

fear and pain.

And hope and belief can provide optimism that things could get better, which can in turn at least temporarily improve mood and mental health. "Believing that your future will be better than the past and the present — even if your future will not be better," Sharot said, "Many times can be optimal."

The lottery is almost guaranteed to lose you money — it's a terrible financial decision. People know this. But they also know that a lottery ticket is a little slip of hope, a chance to imagine a richer future. "What you buy for sure is kind of the fun of thinking about it," she said. "That is something that you are guaranteed to get."

Our thinking is similar when it comes to the supplements, balms and techniques that promise benefits that are extremely unlikely to materialize. On one hand, they are a tragic waste of hard-earned money and sometimes have negative side effects. On the other hand, "you gain something from trying," Sharot said, like positive anticipation or excitement.

Hope produces hype

But these tendencies leave us open to exploitation by companies that want our money. And they are really good at what they do.

Throughout U.S. history, there is a clear pattern: A hint that something might work opens a crack in a door that companies barge through, capturing the desperation — and the paychecks — of people who are hurting, tired or scared.

Dr. Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician who signed the Declaration of Independence, was frustrated by his inability to save people during a yellow fever epidemic in 1793. He then read autopsy reports that suggested purging and bloodletting could help. So he took it to an extreme, giving the sick high doses of calomel and jalap — a mercury compound and the powdered root of a Mexican plant that together make an extremely potent laxative — while aggressively draining their blood. According to one account: "So much blood was spilled in the front yard that the site became malodorous and buzzed with flies."

Charles Stanley's snake oil was fake — the U.S. Bureau of Chemistry in 1916 found that it was mainly mineral oil, with "fatty oil (probably beef fat), capsicum, and possibly a trace of camphor or turpentine." But he got the idea from Chinese laborers who used oil — from a very specific snake — that did likely have some anti-inflammatory properties.

Radiation did and does have medical uses, opening the door for William J.A. Bailey to market his Radithor as a "health tonic" — until one prominent and enthusiastic customer took so much his jawbone decayed and he died of radiation poisoning.

Gray areas leave regulators and health professionals in a difficult spot: It's often impossible to say definitively that something doesn't work, especially without a study that no one is willing to waste precious time and resources on.

In the meantime, companies pounce. "What's scary is that they will take that hope and they will try to stick it in a bottle and sell it to you at whatever price that they think that you can afford," Kang said.

Countless supplements and unapproved "treatments" are based on hints of potential benefits in animal studies or small observational studies that can't prove cause and effect. Today, some longevity seekers are pinning hopes on rapamycin, a drug given to organ transplant patients, that has increased lifespans in yeast, flies and mice.

Some incredibly successful drugs such as insulin and the weight loss drugs Wegovy and Zepbound are peptides, short chains of amino acids that can be made into countless configurations. That is sparking a whole industry that markets other peptides — largely unproven and untested — that are said to increase muscle growth, speed recovery and fight aging. Sound familiar?

True breakthroughs and powerful anecdotes fuel expectation

Of course science, technology and the nation's relentless economic engine have produced countless true wonders and enduring anecdotes, which in turn softens the ground for credulous thinking.

We can cross the country in a flying metal tube in a few hours. We can tap into nearly all of human knowledge using a small rectangle of metal and glass. Medical advances and especially vaccination — a radical concept, once — have nearly eliminated childhood diseases that killed up to half of children before

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 76 of 78

age 5 when the nation was founded. An American born in 1900 was likely to live until just 47 years old. U.S. life expectancy is now 79, its highest level ever. Who's to say it can't double again? Why should there be any limit at all?

We may be more susceptible now than we have ever been. We're subjected to ever more tantalizing claims, Kang said, now that we have devices in our pockets that deliver an endless stream of hawkers (euphemized as "influencers") peddling "treatments" and other shortcuts along our 250-year-strong pursuit of happiness.

Social media is excellent at mimicking the type of messaging scientists say our brains are most open to believing: direct, personal appeals from people who look trustworthy and claim to have had personal experience. And in the U.S., it can be an especially appealing alternative to an expensive, impersonal health system that is absurdly hard to navigate.

Even the nation's top health official, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has promoted or given voice to those advocating or selling unproven treatments and wellness products, including vitamin A as a measles treatment, peptides and raw milk.

"The guard rails are off right now," Kang says. "It's actually worse than it has been before, because of social media, because of what's on the internet, and because the so-called trusted people we're supposed to be getting advice from are not trustworthy. And I think that puts the American public in far greater danger."

The great American swindler George C. Parker, who sold the Brooklyn Bridge — more than once — would have loved it. And would he have a deal for you.

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 eight people, local government and police officials said.

The shooting at Banga National High School in the South Cotabato town of Banga is 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 also shot himself and died.

Banga Mayor Albert Palencia told DZBB radio that the gunman hit 10 students in the classroom next to his, two of whom died while eight were wounded. A person who was hyperventilating was also brought to a hospital, according to the governor.

Tamayo said the gunman's best friend told officials that the teenager was a member of an online "true crimes community." Authorities were investigating the account and whether it had any connection to the shooting, he said.

Mayor Palencia said the 16-year-old gunman told his friends to go home after lunch because "he was going to do something" and they might get involved. He said the shooter's classmates thought it was a joke.

After lunch, the gunman started shooting students in the classroom next to his, hitting 10 of them. He then changed the magazine of his 9 mm gun and shot himself, Palencia added.

He said the gun belonged to the shooter's father, a Department of Education employee, who hid the weapon in a vault, which was destroyed by his son.

Police found posts made by the shooter in the online community, where young people involved in school shootings are idolized, Palencia added.

Quoting the gunman's school adviser, Palencia said the mother of the boy wanted to bring him to a psychiatrist.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 77 of 78

Trump pushes his \$5,000 'dividend' pledge if GOP wins midterms. Republican candidates, not as much

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

President Donald Trump came to battleground North Carolina doubling down on a tantalizing and implausible midterm promise. "If we win," he said, "we're going to get you \$5,000. So that's it. Very simple."

The Republican candidates who spoke at the rally had nothing to say about it.

Their silence reflects a broader pattern. About a week after the president unveiled his "Trump dividend" pledge at the party's unusual midterm convention in Dallas, there is little evidence that Republicans in competitive races have incorporated it into their campaigns.

The pledge hasn't been a staple of television advertising, whether from Trump's own political operation or his party's candidates. It usually only comes up when reporters ask about it, prompting most Republicans to sidestep the idea.

The Republican National Committee considers the proposed payments part of Trump's broader economic vision and says candidates should get behind it.

"Of course we encourage all Republican candidates to run on his agenda, and that includes efforts to put more money in the pockets of the American people," spokesperson Natalie Baldassarre said.

There are some exceptions. Republican Rep. Derrick Van Orden, who is seeking reelection in a battleground Wisconsin district, has praised the proposal.

The idea comes as the economy confronts rising interest rates, continuing inflation and climbing fuel costs. Republicans are fighting to keep their majorities in the House and Senate.

Trump previously promised to use savings from the Department of Government Efficiency and revenue from tariffs on imports to distribute payments of \$2,000 or more, but none of that came to pass. The president has said he did not think congressional approval would be needed for the idea, which could cost more than \$1 trillion, but House Speaker Mike Johnson indicated the promise would require lawmakers to act.

Democrats point to those previous suggestions for a payout to raise skepticism about the \$5,000 pledge.

"This idea is nothing more than a recycled broken promise that voters know Republicans will never deliver," said Viet Shelton, a spokesperson for the House Democratic campaign arm.

Republican campaign advertising has largely focused on the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, including provisions that temporarily cut taxes on tips and overtime. Other candidates are concentrating on local issues or attacks against their opponents.

Doug Heye, a Republican strategist and former Republican National Committee communications director, said there is little mystery about why candidates have been reluctant to embrace the pledge.

"It's a dumb idea," Heye said. "There's no way to pay for it and it would spike inflation."

Today in History: September 19 State funeral of Queen Elizabeth II

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Sept. 19, the 262nd day of 2026. There are 103 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 19, 2022, Great Britain and the world said a final goodbye to Queen Elizabeth II at a state funeral that drew presidents and kings, princes and prime ministers — and crowds who thronged the streets of London.

Also on this date:

In 1796, President George Washington's farewell address was published. In it, America's first chief executive advised, "Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all."

In 1881, the 20th president of the United States, James A. Garfield, died 2 1/2 months after being shot by Charles Guiteau; he was succeeded by Vice President Chester A. Arthur.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 105 ~ 78 of 78

In 1955, President Juan Peron of Argentina was ousted after a revolt by the army and navy.

In 1957, the United States conducted its first contained underground nuclear test, code-named "Rainier," in the Nevada desert.

In 1985, the Mexico City area was struck by a devastating earthquake that killed at least 9,500 people.

In 1988, Olympic diver Greg Louganis suffered a concussion after striking his head on the diving board during the preliminary round of the 3-meter springboard diving competition at the Seoul Summer Games; Louganis would recover from the injury and win a gold medal in the event the following day.

In 1995, The New York Times and The Washington Post published the manifesto of Unabomber Ted Kaczynski (kah-ZIHN'-skee), which proved instrumental in identifying and capturing him.

In 2004, Hu Jintao (hoo jin-tow) became the undisputed leader of China with the departure of former President Jiang Zemin (jahng zuh-MEEN') from his top military post.

In 2008, struggling to stave off financial catastrophe, the administration of President George W. Bush laid out a radical bailout plan calling for a takeover of a half-trillion dollars or more in worthless mortgages and other bad debt held by tottering institutions. Relieved investors sent stocks soaring on Wall Street and around the globe.

In 2011, Mariano Rivera of the New York Yankees recorded his 602nd save, making him baseball's all-time leader in the category.

In 2017, a powerful earthquake shook central Mexico, collapsing buildings, killing at least 226 people and sending thousands fleeing into the streets in densely populated parts of the greater Mexico City area and nearby states.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Rosemary Harris is 98. Singer-songwriter Paul Williams is 85. Singer Bill Medley (The Righteous Brothers) is 85. Singer Sylvia Tyson (Ian and Sylvia) is 85. R&B singer Freda Payne is 83. Actor Jeremy Irons is 77. Model-actor Twiggy Lawson is 76. Musician-producer Nile Rodgers is 73. Rock singer Lita Ford is 67. Musician Jarvis Cocker (Pulp) is 63. Country singer Trisha Yearwood is 61. Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina is 60. News anchor Soledad O'Brien is 59. Actor Sanaa Lathan is 54. "Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon is 51. Actor Columbus Short is 43. NBA player Trae Young is 28.