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Community Calendar

Wednesday, Sept. 30

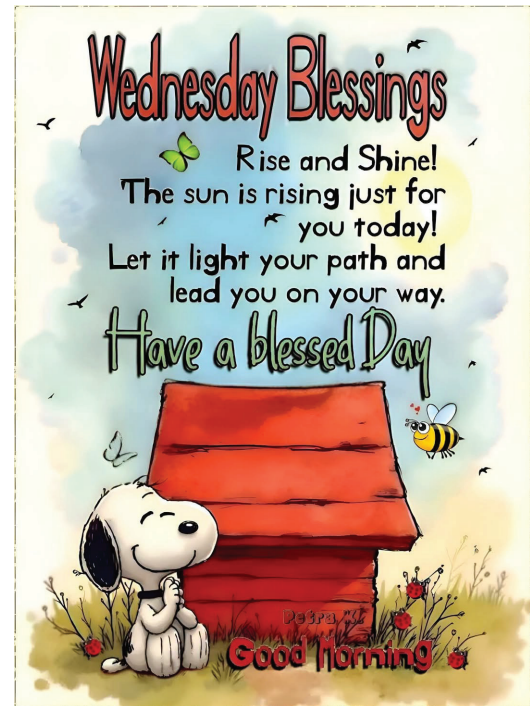
Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, broccoli, fruit, breadstick.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
School Picture Day!
Aberdeen Marching Band Festival, 9 a.m.
Fourth Grade GBB Practice, 5:30 p.m., elementary school

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Thursday, Oct. 1

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, tossed salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Egg wraps.
School Lunch: Chicken Alfredo, cooked broccoli.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.
Groton Invitational Cross Country Meet, 2 p.m., Olive Grove Golf Course
Cross Country at Sisseton Invitational, Valley View Country Club (Varsity, 4 p.m.; JV time TBA)
JH Volleyball at Milbank, 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.
JH Football hosts Aberdeen Roncalli, 4 p.m., Doney Field
Girls Soccer hosts Garretson, 4:30 p.m.
GT GBB Fall Skills, 6-8 p.m., Arena
Sixth Grade Girls Basketball Practice, 8 p.m., Arena
Winter Gear Drive at Dacotah Bank, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 2

Senior Menu: Oven baked chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Omelets.
School Lunch: French bread pizza, green beans.
Football at Deuel, 7 p.m., Cardinal Field
Winter Gear Drive at Dacotah Bank, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 3

Volleyball at Redfield Tournament, 9 a.m.

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1440

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

ShinyHunters Arrest

The FBI and Dutch National Police yesterday announced the arrest of an alleged member of the ShinyHunters cyber group, which claimed responsibility last week for hacking the FBI's jobs website.

The 24-year-old suspect was arrested on Sept. 15, a week before ShinyHunters said it stole two to three terabytes of data related to FBI employees and job applicants, including intelligence assignments and medical records. The hack was intended to pressure the bureau into retracting or revising this public advisory detailing alleged extortion tactics. It was posted days after the parent company of online learning platform Canvas paid ShinyHunters an undisclosed ransom following a hack that forced many colleges to postpone final exams. The FBI estimates ShinyHunters has breached more than 140 organizations and extorted \$70M since last year.

Dutch authorities say information found on the suspect's laptop also revealed a plot to orchestrate two murders abroad, separate from his alleged ShinyHunters activity.

Oura IPO on Hold

Smart-ring maker Oura postponed its planned initial public offering yesterday, citing uncertain market conditions despite an expected valuation of roughly \$15B. The move came after the company formally filed IPO paperwork earlier this month.

The delay comes despite strong growth at Oura, which reported \$1.21B in revenue and \$60.8M in profit for the nine months ending June 30 and expects fiscal 2026 revenue to grow 90%. The company this year reached 5.7 million paying members. Devices like Oura rings and smartwatches now track heart rate, sleep, stress, and other health metrics alongside steps and exercise, with US wearable adoption jumping from 13% to 46% over the past decade, though evidence they improve long-term health outcomes remains mixed.

Oura joins several companies delaying IPOs after a strong start to the year, with IPOs raising more than \$137B in the first half of 2026.

Magnetic Field Far Away

Scientists have detected radio signals (free w/email) from a planet beyond our solar system for the first time ever. The finding, subject to peer review, does not imply an alien civilization is trying to contact Earth. Rather, it may indicate an unusually strong magnetic field on Beta Pictoris b, a planet more than 63 light-years away.

Several planets in our solar system naturally emit radio signals as charged particles move across their magnetic fields, creating auroras. The field protects a planet's atmosphere from solar radiation, and also supports conditions for life. In Beta Pictoris b's case, the field may be around 300 times as strong as Jupiter's. It is not clear why the magnetic field would be so strong, but it could be due to the planet's young age (25 million years old) or something else, like a moon orbiting it.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Former "American Idol" contestant Caleb Flynn is found guilty of murdering his wife, Ashley, after texts to mistress reveal he wrote of desire to kill her.

New York Giants reportedly releasing Odell Beckham Jr.; the wide receiver played 20 snaps over three games and did not record a catch.

Actor Dennis Haskins, who played Principal Richard Belding on "Saved by the Bell," dies at age 75.

Science & Technology

OpenAI debuts Dots AI agent, a personal digital assistant to rival Meta's new Muse agent.

A journalist gave his life to an AI agent; here's what happened (More, free w/email)

Trump administration launches AI chatbot to help Americans navigate federal government websites and resources.

Engineers create a paper-thin robot powered by live muscle cells that can swim through water—a step toward more nimble, self-healing robots.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq -0.1%) as 30-year Treasury yield reaches 5.6%, its highest level since June 2002.

Consumer confidence in US economy falls to lowest point since 2014, per new Conference Board survey.

US ban on roughly \$1B worth of Canadian imports, including dairy products, motorcycles, and alcohol, goes into effect.

Cruise operator Carnival's shares soar 13.4% after the company reported record third-quarter revenue of \$8.4B.

Politics & World Affairs

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth will reportedly cut 20% of generals and admirals across the US military today.

... and freezes new tenure appointments at US military academies.

Supreme Court allows Trump administration to resume deportations to third countries ahead of December oral arguments; more than 25,000 people have been deported to over 30 countries.

Lindsay Clancy's lawyer casts doubt on whether she killed her kids in discussions on potential retrial.

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BATES TOWNSHIP WEED NOTICE:

OWNERS & TENANTS of Bates Township are hereby notified and required, according to law, to cut all weeds, grass, and trees in road ditches adjacent to their property or tenanted by them within Bates township on or before October 1, 2026 or same will be hired done by the township board and assessed property taxes at the rate of \$300 per half mile.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors reminds all landowners and tenants that the road right-of-way extends 33 feet from the center of the township road. This ditch is to be maintained and mowed. Any crops planted in the road right-of-way will be mowed and charged to the landowner. Landowner is responsible for spraying all noxious weeds.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors

Betty Geist

Township Clerk

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Cole Holmes is middle school teacher

by Dorene Nelson

When Groton still needed a middle school teacher, Cole Anthony Holmes applied and was hired. He and his wife, also an educator, live in Aberdeen. Holmes teaches seventh and eighth grade language arts and eighth grade social studies.

"I graduated from Aberdeen Central High School followed by getting my Bachelor's Degree at Northern State University," Holmes explained. "My first teaching job was being a substitute teacher in Aberdeen."

"My wife is also an educator, teaching art at Mike Miller Elementary School and Lincoln Elementary School, both in Aberdeen," he said.

"I feel 'called' to become a teacher," Holmes explained. "I met a Groton teacher at the Brown County Fair. As we visited, I discovered that Groton still needed an English teacher."

"I feel as if this chance meeting was supposed to happen since I wanted a full time teaching position," he explained. "I applied here as a long term sub and was immediately hired!"



Cole Anthony Holmes

Conde National League

Sept. 28 Team Standings: Pirates 8, Cubs 7, Stooges 6, Braves 6, Giants 5, Mets 4.

Men's High Games: Evan Easthouse 219, Austin Schuelke 199, Brad Waage 190.

Men's High Series: Evan Easthouse 590, Brad Waage 501, Austin Schuelke 449, Butch Farmen 449.

Women's High Games: Nancy Radke 202, Suzie Easthouse 179, Joyce Walter 162.

Women's High Series: Nancy Radke 492, Suzie Easthouse 479, Joyce Walter 427, Alice Severson 427.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Passing Medicaid ballot measure would reduce services and spike insurance costs, opponents say

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

SIOUX FALLS — Opponents of a Nov. 3 ballot measure to end Medicaid expansion if federal funding is cut said Monday that the measure would reduce access to care and shift more health care costs onto people with private insurance.

South Dakota's Republican attorney general and its opponents say Amendment I would automatically repeal Medicaid expansion if federal funding falls and no longer covers 90% of the program's costs. Proponents say the measure allows lawmakers to consider repealing, altering or maintaining it if federal funding falls below that level.

The 'No on I' coalition is led in part by Republican Jean Hunhoff, a longtime nurse and former state lawmaker who served 24 years in Pierre, including as chair of the state's budget committee.

Hospitals can't turn people away because they are uninsured, she said. If people lose Medicaid and their ability to pay for care along with it, Hunhoff said, hospitals will need to charge other people more to make up their losses.

"They have to serve those patients, and they're going to do it," Hunhoff said. "But they are a business, too, and like any other business, they have to have the finances to be able to continue those services."

Medicaid is a federal-state health insurance program for low income people. In 2022, South Dakota voters approved a citizen-initiated state constitutional amendment to extend Medicaid eligibility 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, only voters can alter it.

At a coalition press conference in Sioux Falls, Hunhoff and South Dakota Nurses Association President Deb Fischer-Clemens said Medicaid expansion provides health coverage to more than 31,000 South Dakotans and helps patients get preventive care and treatment before medical conditions become more costly emergencies.

"It is health insurance coverage for real people, real families and real communities across South Dakota," Fischer-Clemens said.

Fischer-Clemens said the financial burden on hospitals would only grow as more preventive care and minor treatments become emergency room visits and surgeries.

Expanded Medicaid provides about \$400 million annually to hospitals that would otherwise go unreimbursed, South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations President Tim Rave said. Without Medicaid reimbursement, more of that care would become charity or unreimbursed care, Fischer-Clemens and Hunhoff said, leaving hospitals to find other revenue sources or cut services.

"If you take that away, think about the future," Hunhoff said.

The consequences of undoing Medicaid expansion would be particularly serious in rural communities, Hunhoff said, because those hospitals and clinics often operate on thin margins.

Those costs could ultimately be spread through higher private insurance premiums, too.

"The public will pay for these people's health care, whether you cut Medicaid or not," Fischer-Clemens told South Dakota Searchlight.

The federal government could warn states if it planned to cut the federal match rate, the measure's op-

ponents argued, giving lawmakers and voters time to address a hypothetical cut. But if they didn't, Hunhoff said, programs would need to be cut or new taxes would be needed to pay for them.

Republican former Rep. Will Mortenson, of Fort Pierre, sponsored the bill to put Amendment I to a public vote. The issue is fundamentally about budget priorities, he said. If federal funding declines, lawmakers should have the flexibility to decide whether Medicaid expansion should continue, rather than protecting it ahead of other budget priorities, he said.

"This is about whether able-bodied people receiving welfare is a higher priority than, say, K-12 education," Mortenson said.

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

Appeals court poised to allow contempt probe of DHS deportation flights to El Salvador

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — Most judges on a federal appeals court seemed inclined during oral arguments Tuesday to allow a federal judge to continue investigating Trump officials for possible criminal contempt-of-court charges for defying a judicial order by sending more than 100 Venezuelan men to a brutal Salvadoran prison last year.

The administration is challenging if U.S. District Judge James Boasberg can continue a contempt investigation after the Justice Department said former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem was the sole official responsible for violating Boasberg's oral and written orders.

Ending an inquiry would be "unfair" to Noem, "who might be a sacrificial lamb because you have picked who you want to go forward," Judge J. Michelle Childs said.

The case stems from a proclamation that President Donald Trump signed in March 2025 that invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to rapidly deport Venezuelan males 14 years and older who were suspected members of the Tren de Aragua gang.

The American Civil Liberties Union sued to stop several deportation flights of 137 Venezuelans, and Boasberg issued a temporary restraining order to stop the removals. But the flights landed in El Salvador and the men were detained at a brutal mega-prison known as CECOT for four months before being released in a prison exchange with Venezuela.

The Department of Justice has only identified Noem as the official who decided to allow the planes to land in El Salvador despite the restraining order.

Boasberg is trying to identify other government officials who may also bear responsibility. The ACLU has argued the officials who provided legal advice, including now-Attorney General Todd Blanche, should be included.

All judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit participated in the rare full-court review.

They are: Chief Judge Sri Srinivasan and Judges Karen LeCraft Henderson, Patricia A. Millett, Cornelia T.L. Pillard, Robert L. Wilkins, Gregory G. Katsas, Neomi Rao, Justin R. Walker, Childs, Florence Y. Pan, Bradley N. Garcia, Harry T. Edwards, Douglas H. Ginsburg, A. Raymond Randolph and Judith W. Rogers.

Former President Jimmy Carter nominated Edwards; former President Ronald Reagan nominated Henderson and Ginsburg; former President George H.W. Bush nominated Randolph; former President Bill Clinton nominated Rogers; former President Barack Obama nominated Srinivasan, Millett, Pillard and Wilkins; Trump nominated Katsas, Rao and Walker in his first term and former President Joe Biden nominated Childs, Pan and Garcia.

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Judge not a prosecutor, DOJ says

Representing the Trump administration, Brett A. Shumate, the assistant attorney general leading the DOJ's Civil Division, argued that Boasberg does not have the authority to investigate possible criminal contempt charges and that role is only for a prosecutor.

"District judges do not investigate or prosecute crimes," Shumate said. "That's a role for a prosecutor, and so the purpose of the investigation at this point is no longer, let's figure out who the decisionmaker was. It is now, let's probe the mental state of senior government officials."

Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project, said the March 2025 order from Boasberg clearly prohibited the Trump administration from transferring the Venezuelan men to CECOT, and that Boasberg should be allowed to conduct his preliminary inquiry to identify any other potential official who violated his ruling.

"The oral order was crystal clear," Gelernt said.

Blance, Bove provided legal advice

Boasberg's inquiry involves Blanche and Emil Bove, who were both high-ranking DOJ officials at the time. Bove is a judge in the Third Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

Blanche and Bove gave legal advice to Joseph Mazzara, then the acting general counsel of the Department of Homeland Security, who informed Noem of Boasberg's oral and written temporary restraining order that blocked the deportations under the Alien Enemies Act.

"After receiving that legal advice, Secretary Noem directed that the (Alien Enemies Act) detainees who had been removed from the United States before the Court's order could be transferred to the custody of El Salvador," according to a filing by DOJ.

According to a June 2025 whistleblower account, Bove told a group of attorneys at the department before the Venezuelan men were removed, that the deportations would still occur and "we may have to say f— you to the courts," if an order blocking the removals was issued by a judge.

Before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee during his confirmation hearing to become a judge, Bove denied the June 2025 whistleblower account.

Boasberg also wants to hear testimony from the whistleblower, then-DOJ attorney Erez Reuveni, and Drew Ensign, a DOJ attorney who appeared before him in March 2025.

More facts needed

Shumate argued Tuesday that Boasberg already had the information he needed, and that the DOJ already noted that Noem was the government official who ordered the planes to continue to El Salvador.

Childs disagreed and said that there could be officials in that decisionmaking process other than Noem.

Shumate said that all Boasberg had asked the federal government was who made the decision.

"We've provided that information, but somehow that's no longer good enough," he said.

Millett agreed with Childs that there seemed to be multiple people involved in the decision that Noem made.

"It's clear from the declarations that she was receiving legal advice from a number of people within the Justice Department," Millett said. "Now, if an attorney providing legal advice to the secretary were to tell the secretary, 'you have the legal authority to f— the court order on this and go ahead and disembark people,' might it be accurate that that attorney would just as well be in contempt of court as the secretary, potentially?"

Shumate said that would "depend on the facts."

"Well, then the district court has to ask some more questions," she said.

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.

US Supreme Court allows Trump to resume deportations outside immigrants' home countries

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday granted, for now, the Trump administration's request to continue rapid third-country deportation of immigrants to countries not their own.

The decision will allow the Trump administration to carry out its aggressive deportation method of quickly removing immigrants to one of the countries — some with human rights concerns — the administration that has agreements with to take third-country removals from the United States.

The high court will hear oral arguments in December, and directed the parties to answer several questions including if the district court has jurisdiction over the issue, if the lower court can deliver classwide relief and whether the Trump administration's rapid third-country removal policy is lawful. Tuesday's order will remain in effect until the justices reach a decision in the case.

The three liberal justices, Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson, noted they would have denied the emergency request.

The lower court's order did not bar third-country removals, but prevented the deportation from occurring unless adequate time was given for a noncitizen to verify that they would not face harm in the third country.

Third-country removals are when a noncitizen is deported from the U.S. to a nation other than that person's home country. It occurs when the home country of a person with a removal order from the U.S. does not accept the person's repatriation.

A district court and appeals court found that immigrants must have an opportunity to challenge their removal to a country where they do not have citizenship if they fear for their safety or if they might be returned to their home country where they could experience harm.

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.

Congressional watchdog says Trump administration can't defy lawmakers to revoke \$810M

BY JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration must spend the \$810 million that it said last week it planned to cancel, according to a report released Tuesday by the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office.

The congressional watchdog's decision contends the White House budget office doesn't hold the ability to claw back that funding without approval from Congress.

"Any withholding of appropriated funds beyond their date of expiration, regardless of size, subverts both the constitutional process for enacting federal law and Congress's constitutional power of the purse," wrote GAO General Counsel Edda Emmanuelli Perez.

Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought disagreed with the decision, though he wrote in a social media post it was not "a surprise."

"GAO has become hyper partisan and Congress recently attempted to cut their spending because of it," Vought wrote. "GAO changed its long-time opinion on this very issue from the 1970s when they specifically noted the tool was available to the president. They make their legal assessments based on whether Democrats are in the White House."

'Pocket rescission'

A federal law known as the Impoundment Control Act allows the White House to ask Congress to cancel funding that lawmakers previously approved and the president signed into law.

Lawmakers have 45 days after the rescission request is sent to decide whether they want to approve it in full or modify the proposal. Congress declining to take any action means lawmakers have rejected the

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plans and the administration must spend the money.

A request sent during the last 45 days of the federal fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30, is known as a pocket rescission.

The Trump administration believes that sending a rescissions request during that timeframe allows it to cancel the funding regardless of whether lawmakers sign off on the plan.

The GAO has disagreed with that opinion before and reiterated it Tuesday in its five-page decision.

"The Constitution vests in Congress the power of the purse, and Congress did not cede this important power through the ICA," Perez wrote.

"Instead, the terms of the ICA are strictly limited," she added. "The ICA permits only the temporary withholding of budget authority and provides that unless Congress rescinds the amounts at issue, they must be made available for obligation. The President cannot rely on the authority in the ICA to withhold amounts from obligation, while simultaneously disregarding the ICA's limitations."

Refugee aid programs

The rescissions request the Trump administration sent Congress on Friday proposed lawmakers cancel funding for several line items, including refugee assistance programs at the Department of Health and Human Services, a Treasury Department program that provided "debt forgiveness to foreign countries that make climate change-related investments for coral reefs and tropical forests" and a grant program at the Minority Business Development Agency.

The administration submitted its first pocket rescissions request in August 2025 and cancelled \$4.9 billion without congressional action.

That came a few months after the White House budget office successfully worked with Republican lawmakers to rescind \$9 billion in funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and certain foreign aid accounts.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

GOP senator bungles accusation against former special counsel Jack Smith in heated hearing

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Former special counsel Jack Smith on Tuesday defended before a U.S. Senate panel his past investigations of President Donald Trump's possession of classified documents and alleged role in attempts to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Judiciary Committee Republicans repeatedly dissected Smith's work and accused him of weaponizing the Department of Justice. In a heated exchange, Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Mo., labeled Smith a "total dirtbag" and alleged he had perjured himself when Schmitt asked if Smith was in Atlanta on Feb. 3, 2024, during a separate sensitive election investigation development in Fulton County, Georgia. Smith said he was not there.

But it became clear Schmitt had bungled the accusations against Smith by mixing up the names of the Atlanta Hawks and Iowa Hawkeyes basketball teams, and the back-and-forth went viral on social media. Smith had attended a University of Maryland Terrapins game against the Hawkeyes, not a Hawks game, on the date in question.

Smith said in his opening statement he "will not be silenced" by threats, including Trump's calls for his prosecution.

"I stand by my decisions as special counsel, including my decision to bring charges against President Trump," Smith said. "I made those decisions without regard to President Trump's political association, activities, beliefs, or candidacy in the 2024 presidential election."

"Our investigation developed proof beyond a reasonable doubt that President Trump engaged in serious crimes against our nation," Smith said.

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Grassley: not 'normal prosecution'

The hearing comes nearly two years after committee Chair Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, alleged the former special counsel improperly collected phone records of dozens of members of Congress during his probe of Trump's role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. The insurrection followed Trump's alleged conspiracy to create fake electors to swing the 2020 presidential election in his favor.

Smith denies any wrongdoing.

In his opening remarks, Grassley argued Smith's investigation "ultimately wasn't just about Trump."

"It was about partisan agents and prosecutors mapping out the Republican apparatus," Grassley said.

"This wasn't a normal prosecution by any means. Yet today, you will certainly hear from Democrats that it was. Importantly, Mr. Smith has claimed his focus was on January 6, but his own conduct contradicts that," Grassley said moments later, citing subpoenas for records before and after the date of Jan. 6, 2021, and those that included Republican interest groups.

Durbin says 'nothing untoward'

Democrats dismissed the hearing's premise and repeatedly evoked memories of evacuating the U.S. Senate while a mob of Trump supporters violently overran law enforcement and attacked the U.S. Capitol.

Ranking member Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said attacks on Smith "are nothing but a smokescreen to distract from the president's own clear unlawful conduct."

"Let me be clear: there was nothing untoward about special counsel Smith and his fellow prosecutors conducting this investigation. The aspersions cast on Mr. Smith nonstop are petty, personal, and political," Durbin said.

Sen. Cory Booker, who is speculated to be eyeing a presidential run in 2028, said the hearing amounted to "gaslighting the American people."

The New Jersey Democrat said the scenario "should be chilling to every American that the commander-in-chief ... did everything he could to undermine the legal transfer of power, incited a riot, which several Republicans said he did, and we're now persecuting the prosecutors who followed the evidence."

Kennedy, Cruz attack Smith

But Senate Republicans maintained accusations that the Biden administration targeted Trump for prosecution just days after he announced he would challenge then-President Joe Biden in the 2024 presidential election.

Sen. John Kennedy, a Louisiana Republican, asked Smith if he told then-Attorney General Merrick Garland that he intended to prosecute the former president.

"I did so twice," Smith answered.

"And the attorney general checked with President Biden. Is that right?" Kennedy asked.

"I have absolutely no idea," Smith said, adding that he made an "independent decision" to prosecute.

"I made that decision on my own, consulting with my staff and reviewing the incredibly strong evidence that we had," he said.

Kennedy also accused Smith of partisanship for only seeking phone records of Republicans during his investigation.

"The toll records that we sought were relevant to the investigation," Smith told Kennedy, referring to historical logs that reveal time and duration of calls rather than content.

"Were you in the quad playing frisbee during (constitutional) law at Harvard Law School?" Kennedy asked, accusing Smith of violating the speech and debate clause that protects members of Congress.

"You make me want to throw up in my mouth," Kennedy said.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, who is widely considered a potential 2028 Republican presidential candidate, also attacked non-disclosure orders Smith obtained to keep the phone record subpoenas confidential.

Smith maintains he sought the orders in compliance with the law.

"Let me say congratulations, because you have succeeded where Richard Nixon failed, which is weaponizing the Department of Justice and the federal government to go after your political opponents," Cruz said.

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Details on the 'dirtbag' back-and-forth

The viral exchange with Schmitt came about when he falsely accused Smith of being in Atlanta when Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who was prosecuting Trump on a separate election conspiracy case, admitted she had a romantic relationship with a special prosecutor.

As his proof, Schmitt's aide briefly displayed a large poster containing alleged texts between staff members about Smith's attendance at an NBA game between the Atlanta Hawks and Golden State Warriors.

Smith said he could not recall going to an NBA game in Atlanta, or even visiting the city during his time as special prosecutor.

"I don't think you know that we have this stuff, so I'll give you a moment to process it so you don't perjure yourself," Schmitt said.

"You just took it down really quick, if I could look at that again," Smith said.

When Durbin requested Schmitt provide Smith with a copy of the alleged texts, the Missouri Republican moved on to his next question and said "I think you've already perjured yourself."

Wrapping up his questioning, Schmitt said, "You may think you're a hero in this story, but let me tell you something, you're a villain. ... You will go down as a total dirtbag."

Booker, Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., and Sen. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., prodded Schmitt to display the poster board again and provide a copy.

Smith said he recalled being at a University of Maryland women's basketball game against the University of Iowa to see the popular Iowa player Caitlin Clark.

"Could it be the Iowa Hawkeyes then ... Perhaps you should have looked at it more carefully?" Klobuchar said to Schmitt.

Schmitt criticized Klobuchar for interjecting before being officially called on for questioning.

"I'm gonna begin my questioning now, but I think that people should have their facts straight before they accuse someone of being a dirtbag," Klobuchar said.

How the Trump cases turned out

Trump fought Smith's prosecutions and claimed in court he was entitled to presidential immunity for any of his actions surrounding the 2020 election.

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed in early 2024.

Smith dropped the election conspiracy case after Trump won the presidential election in November 2024.

Months prior, a Florida federal judge dismissed Smith's case alleging Trump hoarded sensitive government documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate after leaving office in 2021.

Judge Aileen Cannon threw out the case in July 2024 on the grounds that the Biden administration illegally appointed Smith.

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

News orgs banned from White House accuse Trump of First Amendment violation

BY JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The three news organizations that President Donald Trump barred from entering the White House grounds earlier this month have asked a federal judge to ensure their reporters continue to have access after a temporary restraining order expires in early October.

Attorneys for CNN, MS Now and Politico filed paperwork late Monday requesting a preliminary injunction from the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, arguing that without it the administration is likely to again revoke press passes for journalists at those news organizations and possibly others.

"The President has stated that there will be 'Other Fake News Media Outlets to follow,' ... leaving other news organizations covering the White House to face the prospect that their access may likewise depend

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on the President's view of their coverage," the brief states. "And each day the ban remains in effect, the public loses access to essential reporting on the President and his administration."

Trump announced on Sept. 18 that he planned to prevent reporters from CNN, MS Now and Politico from reporting on White House grounds. Those news organizations filed a lawsuit a few days later, after several of their reporters were denied entry at a security checkpoint and had their press passes confiscated by Secret Service officers.

District Court Judge Timothy Kelly, who was nominated during Trump's first term, issued a temporary restraining order on Sept. 23, requiring the White House to return the press passes and allow the journalists it had barred back in.

That order expires Oct. 8, but could be replaced by a preliminary injunction if the judge agrees with the request filed by the three news organizations this week.

That 49-page brief argues the president's ban retaliated against the news organizations "for engaging in speech, publication, and newsgathering activities that the First Amendment protects but the administration disfavors."

The attorneys representing the journalists wrote that Trump administration officials claiming the ban was related to national security concerns were "not credible."

They later wrote that "the President's own words leave no doubt that banning Plaintiffs from the White House and denying them the access they had as of September 18 is retaliation for their protected newsgathering and speech—adverse action intended to cow them into conforming the content of their reporting to the President's preferences and to threaten other journalists lest they suffer the same fate. That is a paradigmatic First Amendment violation."

The administration's response brief is due Friday.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

The signs offer quick cash for homes. But states want more oversight.

BY KEVIN HARDY

WE BUY HOUSES. CASH 4 HOMES. FA\$T CA\$H.

The signs, text messages and mailers promise cash, quick sales and a seamless means of unloading unwanted homes.

But advocates say the business of buying homes for cash can confuse vulnerable homeowners and rob them of home equity. And now, many states are cracking down.

Wholesalers often solicit directly, calling or door knocking looking for sales. But they're best known by the signs lining curbs and utility poles.

Real estate wholesaling operates distinctly from the traditional real estate market of listings, showings and agents. Wholesalers look to get unlisted homes under contract at a discount and then sell or assign that contract to another speculator before finalizing the property transfer — acting as a middleman and pocketing a profit along the way. The end buyer may flip the house for a profit or hold it as a rental property, but critics say the process can deprive owners of realizing the full value of their homes.

A growing number of state lawmakers worry that buyers don't fully understand the wholesaling process or even who will end up owning their home at the end of the sale. Lawmakers and regulators, backed by organized real estate trade groups and consumer advocacy organizations, are pushing for more limits on the practice. At least 15 states have recently approved new regulations of wholesalers.

Those include Missouri, where Republican state Rep. Chris Brown sponsored the House version of a law enacted earlier this year requiring wholesalers to give sellers a written disclosure at least 14 days before closing, the final step in the property transaction. The disclosure informs homeowners that the wholesaler

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may offer below market value and reassign the contract to another buyer. It also encourages sellers to contact an attorney before finalizing a deal.

Brown, who holds an inactive real estate license and is married to an active agent, said the law doesn't ban wholesaling altogether.

"We're just trying to make sure that there's transparency there, and that the seller of the property is in fact educated and fully informed as to what the wholesaler plans to do with the property," Brown told Stateline. "That's all it is."

He said wholesalers often target people facing financial problems or who own homes with major issues.

"And they're just looking to unload it, and they don't really at times understand the value of the property," he said. "So unfortunately, some of these wholesalers become a little bit predatory in nature and then people just lose a lot of equity in their house."

Critics argue that wholesalers target minority, low-income and older homeowners who may not appreciate the full value of their home. Terrell Walls, president of the Greater Kansas City Association of Real Estate Brokers, a group representing Black real estate professionals, in a statement called predatory wholesaling the "modern-day cousin" of redlining and other practices that historically denied Black families homeownership and wealth.

No state has outright banned wholesaling. But new regulations in Maryland, Ohio, Oklahoma and Texas require disclosure from wholesalers to sellers. Other states, including Illinois, South Carolina and Rhode Island, have required many wholesalers to hold real estate licenses — bringing them under the watch of state regulators.

"Legislators are responding maybe a little too aggressively, but not by much," said Jeff Watson, general counsel for the National Real Estate Investors Association, which represents 43,000 house flippers and landlords.

'Stop trying to hide'

Watson said many wholesalers are effectively acting as real estate agents without the same licensing and consumer protection rules. Many wholesalers solicit homeowners directly and then market the home to other investors or buyers once they've secured a contract.

"There is a small percentage of wholesalers, in my opinion, that do the business correctly," Watson said. "They are honest, ethical capitalists. They can buy houses that real estate agents refuse to look at let alone list ... Unfortunately, they're not the majority."

He said wholesalers can play an important role by helping to find buyers for some of the most distressed homes.

For instance, out-of-state heirs or relatives may want to unload a home quickly after a relative dies or ages out of a house. When those homes are unkempt, have animal infestations or major maintenance needs, owners can secure a quick sale without going through the traditional real estate market.

"Ethical wholesalers can do tremendous things for them," he said.

Wholesalers have publicly acknowledged that their industry is changing.

Following the enactment of an Oklahoma law last year requiring new disclosures, real estate investor Jerry Norton said wholesalers would have to start doing a better job explaining wholesaling and the value it can provide to owners of distressed homes.

Norton, who could not be reached for comment, says he has made millions flipping and wholesaling homes. He offers paid real estate investment education and runs the popular YouTube channel Flipping Mastery TV. On his show last year, he recounted how he was working to tell sellers how wholesaling works and how they make money off the transactions.

"This is the new way to wholesale. Stop trying to hide what you're doing," he said. "Address the elephant in the room. Remember, at the end of the day, the seller wants to work with someone they trust. Honesty is the pinnacle of trust. Be honest and you'll actually do more business, not less business."

Consumer confusion

The AARP has pushed model legislation across several states addressing real estate wholesaling. It would

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require wholesaler licensing, appraisals, cancellation rights and limits on aggressive marketing tactics.

Jenn Jones, AARP's vice president for retirement security and livable communities, said the organization's aim is twofold: it wants to ensure older adults can safely age at home and it wants to protect the wealth of homeowners.

"For a lot of older adults, their retirement security, their financial security is in that house," she said. "That was supposed to be the American dream: You become a homeowner and that asset builds equity, and that is the thing that gives you some comfort in your later years. It's also the thing that you have that you can pass on to your kids."

Jones said sellers should know that wholesalers may not be the end buyer of their property, should have the time for an independent home valuation and should be allowed to cancel a contract if they change their minds.

She pointed to the Oklahoma neighborhood where her mother lives. Jones' mother told her about neighbors quickly selling their homes for \$20,000 or less in cash — despite actual property values that are much higher. Her mother, who is in her late seventies, often receives calls and unsolicited visits from people looking to buy her house.

"We could probably all point to a story that we've heard or an experience that we've had," Jones said. "This is about making sure that people understand fully the decision that they're making, and they don't end up in a situation where they are potentially jeopardizing either their own financial security or that of their kids because they were pressured to sell."

Experts and lawmakers said recent measures targeting wholesalers have proved largely bipartisan and faced little pushback from the industry.

Rhode Island state Sen. Robert Britto, a Democrat, said a new law he sponsored this year faced "literally no opposition." It requires wholesalers to possess a state-issued real estate license, which he hopes will put legitimate businesses under state supervision and push bad actors out of the industry.

"I'd think there would be more opposition, but I guess those actors didn't want to really and truly expose themselves," he said. "It was a catch-22 for them ... Do I complain about it, but if I complain about it, am I showing my true colors?"

That measure was pushed by the Rhode Island Association of Realtors, which represents nearly 6,000 members across the state.

"Real estate professionals are licensed for a really good reason and sometimes the consumers would assume they were talking to a real estate professional," said Rebekah Wagoner, associate counsel for the trade group.

Wagoner said wholesaling isn't inherently unlawful or predatory and can play a role in selling distressed properties.

"Our issue is the transparency," she said. "It's that a lot of the consumers didn't understand the transaction."

Without state licensing, she said wholesalers face no accountability if consumers feel wronged.

"We want them to have a regulatory framework that means that if something happens, the consumer is protected," she said.

Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at khardy@stateline.org.

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

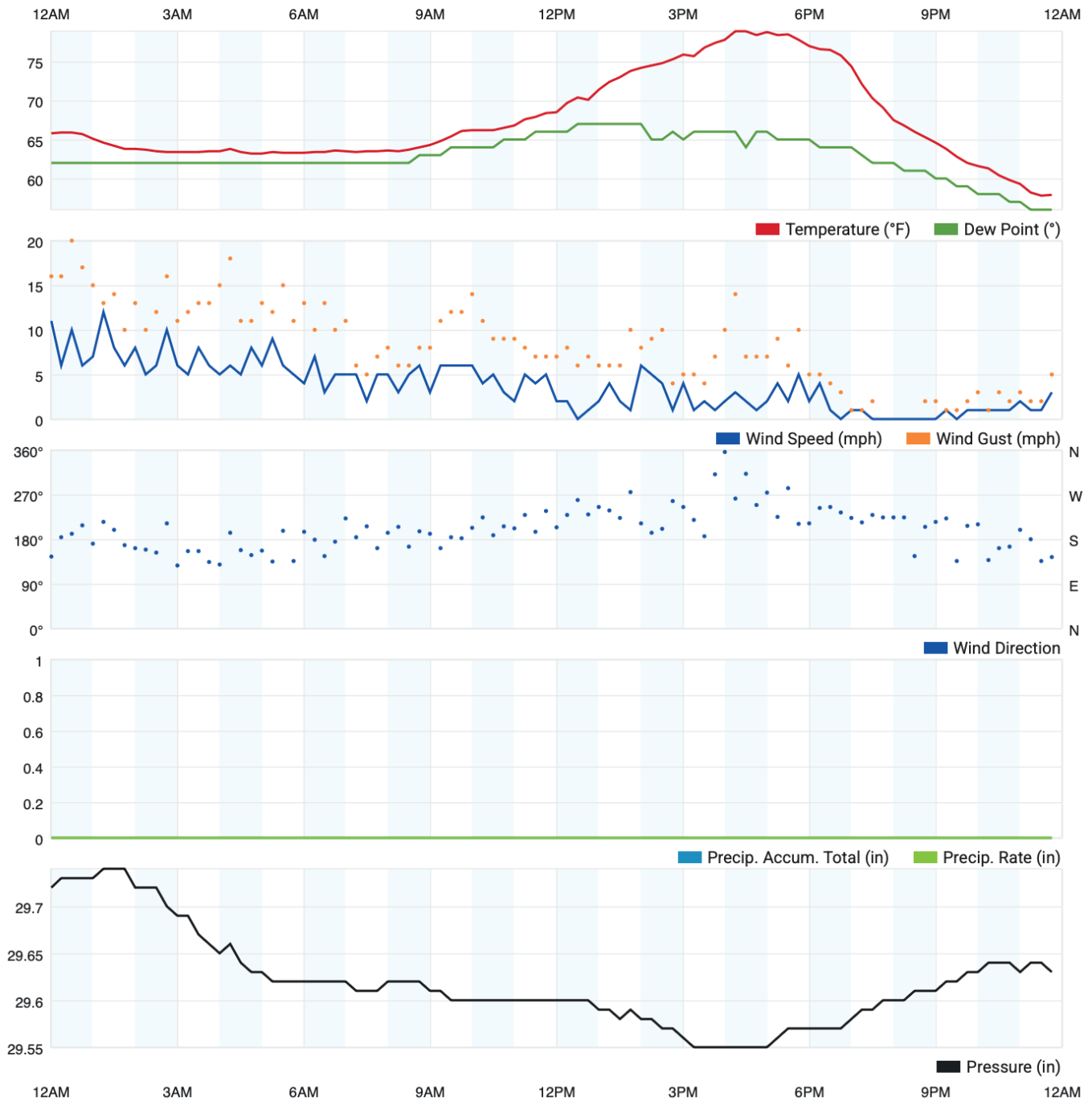
Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

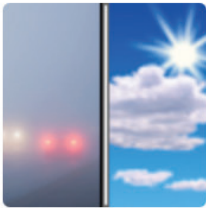
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Today



High: 76 °F

Patchy Fog
then Mostly
Sunny

Tonight



Low: 50 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 63 °F

Mostly Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 43 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Friday



High: 61 °F

Mostly Sunny

Today

FOG



Patchy dense fog this morning. Then
partly to mostly cloudy.

73-79°

Upcoming Outlook

Thurs



58-64°

Fri



58-66°

A cold front moves through tonight leaving cooler
temperatures for the start of October. Light rain
across south central SD late Thursday night.

weather.gov/abr

September 30, 2026 3:03 AM



Patchy dense fog this morning with visibility a quarter mile or less will give way to partly cloudy skies by mid-morning. A cold front moves through tonight bringing much cooler temperatures for the latter part of the week with highs in the upper 50s to mid 60s.

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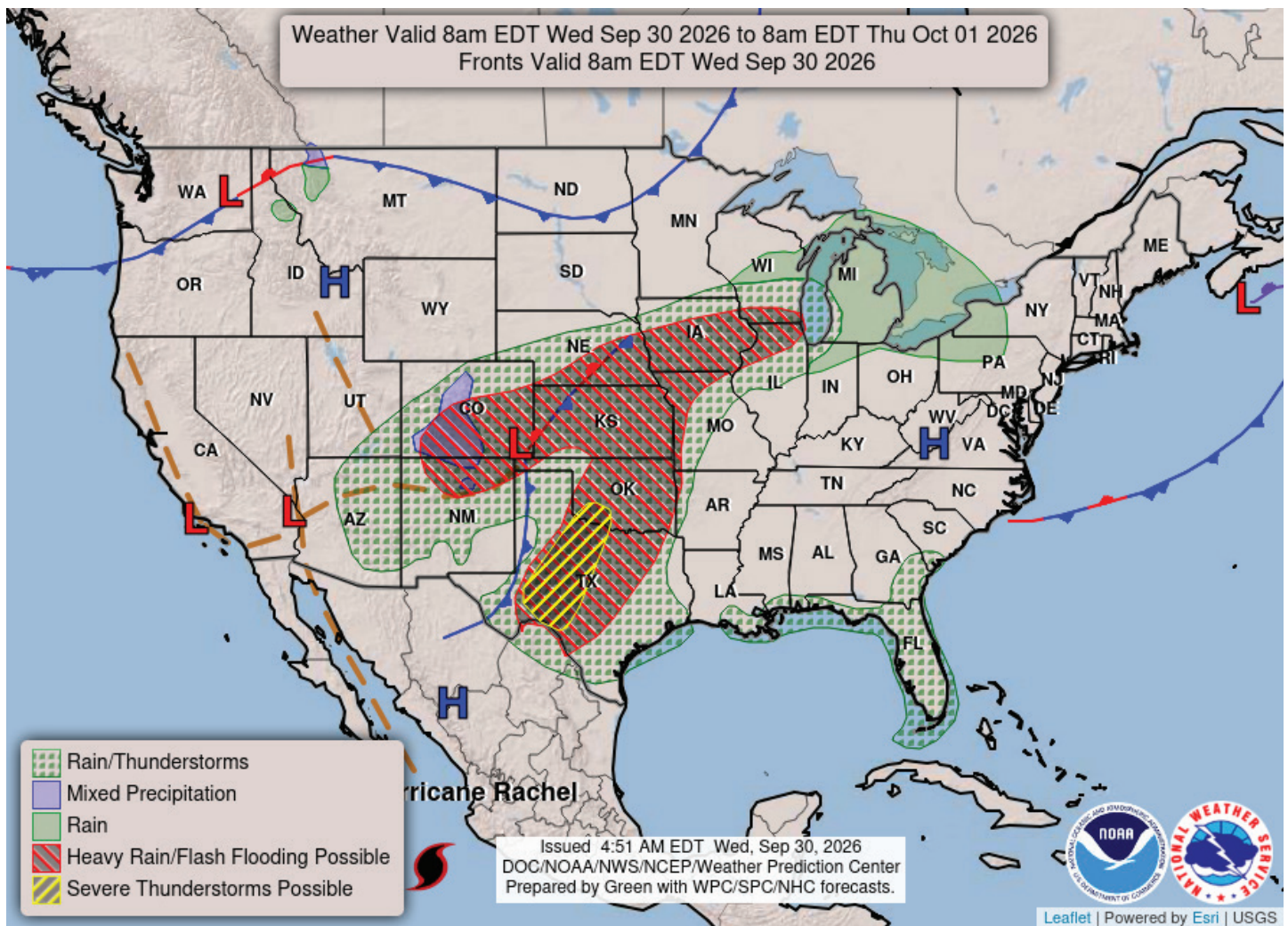
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 79 °F at 4:12 PM
Low Temp: 58 °F at 11:26 PM
Wind: 21 mph at 12:24 AM
Precip: 0.34

Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1989
Record Low: 15 in 1939
Average High: 69
Average Low: 41
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.99
Precip to date in Sept.: 2.22
Average Precip to date: 18.33
Precip Year to Date: 22.08
Sunset Tonight: 7:15 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:30 am



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Today in Weather History

September 30, 2006: Severe to exceptional drought conditions improved dramatically by the end of the month across central and north central South Dakota as above normal rainfall was recorded for the month of September.

1896: A hurricane formed on September 22 and lasted until September 30. It formed directly over the Lesser Antilles and hit Cuba, Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania. Its maximum sustained winds were at 130 mph. The heaviest rainfall deposited in association with the storm was 19.96 inches at Glennville, Georgia. This hurricane was responsible for an estimated 130 deaths and \$1.5 million in damage (1896 dollars).

1959 — Three tornadoes spawned by the remnants of Hurricane Gracie killed 12 persons at Ivy VA. (The Weather Channel)

1970 — A nineteen month drought in southern California came to a climax. The drought, which made brush and buildings tinder dry, set up the worst fire conditions in California history as hot Santa Anna winds sent the temperature soaring to 105 degrees at Los Angeles, and to 97 degrees at San Diego. During that last week of September whole communities of interior San Diego County were consumed by fire. Half a million acres were burned, and the fires caused fifty million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1977 — The temperature at Wichita Falls, TX, soared to 108 degrees to establish a record for September. (The Weather Channel)

1986 — Thunderstorms, which had inundated northern sections of Oklahoma with heavy rain, temporarily shifted southward producing 4 to 8 inches rains from Shawnee to Stilwell. Baseball size hail and 80 mph winds ripped through parts of southeast Oklahoma City, and thunderstorm winds caused more than half a million dollars damage at Shawnee. (Storm Data)

1987 — Afternoon thunderstorms in Michigan produced hail an inch in diameter at Pinckney, and wind gusts to 68 mph at Wyandotte. A thunderstorm in northern Indiana produced wet snow at South Bend. Seven cities in the northwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including readings of 98 degrees at Medford OR and 101 degrees at downtown Sacramento CA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Unseasonably warm weather prevailed over Florida, and in the western U.S. The afternoon high of 94 degrees at Fort Myers FL was their tenth record high for the month. Highs of 98 degrees at Medford OR and 99 degrees at Fresno CA were records for the date, and the temperature at Borrego Springs CA soared to 108 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thirteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, as readings soared into the upper 80s and 90s from the Northern and Central High Plains Region to Minnesota. Bismarck ND reported a record high of 95 degrees, and the temperature reached 97 degrees at Broadus MT. Afternoon thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced wind gusts to 60 mph at Wendover UT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: The past month was the coldest September ever recorded in interior Alaska. Fairbanks averaged a frigid 31.7° which was 13.2° below normal and the first below freezing September ever. Beginning on the 9th and on every day for the rest of the month, a new record low was set for either low minimums or low maximums, or both. On this date, the city plunged to 3° to set a new all-time record low for September. Snowfall for the month totaled 24.4 inches which was more than three times the previous record for September.



Faithful With What He's Given

Being a good steward means taking what God has given you and investing it in His kingdom

Matthew 25:14-30: 14 "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.

15 "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

16 "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.

17 "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more.

18 "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

20 "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.'

21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

22 "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.'

23 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

24 "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

25 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'

26 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed.

27 'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.

28 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'

29 "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

30 "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In the Parable of the Talents, the master gave each of his servants an assignment to carry out in his absence, along with the resources to accomplish it. Upon his return, he asked for an account.

Similarly, God has chosen us to be His servants. He's prepared work for us to do, and He supplies the abilities to achieve it. Some of that work is shared by fellow believers who are also loving the Lord through service, such as showing care for people and making disciples. Other aspects are specific for us individually. What mattered in the parable wasn't the size of the return; it was the faithfulness of the servants who trusted their master enough to invest what he'd given them.

Being a good steward of what God has entrusted to us means investing in His kingdom rather than clinging to what feels safe or comfortable. The servant who buried his talent let fear keep him from stepping out in faith. The rebuke he received is a warning worth paying attention to.

Through Jesus, we have everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). With His help, we can confidently step into whatever He's prepared for us. The Master who entrusted us with our assignment isn't waiting to judge us. He's inviting us to hear the words every servant hopes for: "Well done" (Matt. 25:21).

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.29.26

9 26 27 38 58 5

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 37 Mins 54
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.29.26

10 15 16 27 64 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$321,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 22
Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.28.26

7 12 39 45 47 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$5,820,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 37 Mins 54
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.26.26

10 11 17 29 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$70,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 52 Mins 54
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.28.26

11 20 26 43 46 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 21 Mins 53
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.28.26

17 21 29 42 49 7

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$409,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 21 Mins 53
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

2026 Aberdeen Marching Band Festival Attending Bands & Approximate Step-Off Times

PARADE ROUTE: 15TH Ave. NE from Dakota Street to Main Street

AWARDS: Strobe Community Center Gym

The Livestream Link:

Website: www.hubcityradio.com/marchingband or YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@HCRSportsNetwork>

Middle School Bands

9:00 – Warner Middle School Band

9:07 – Holgate-Simmons Combined 8th Grade Marching Band

High School Bands

9:14 – Groton Tigers Marching Band

9:21 – Northwestern Marching Wildcats

9:28 – Redfield High School Marching Band

9:35 – Frederick Area Marching Titans

9:42 – Warner High School Marching Monarchs

Combined Bands

9:49 – Ipswich Tigers Marching Band

9:56 – Langford Area Marching Lions

10:03 – Aberdeen Christian Marching Knights

10:10 – Faulkton Marching Band

10:17 – Hoven Marching Greyhounds

10:24 – Aberdeen Roncalli Marching Cavaliers

10:31 – Castlewood Warrior Marching Band

Exhibition Bands

10:38 – Aberdeen Central High School Golden Eagles Marching Band

(following the parade: CHS will perform in the Strobe Activities Center Gym)

10:45 – Northern State University Marching Wolves



Kucker gets his first archery buck

Korbín Kucker had a heck of an adrenaline rush after shooting his first archery buck over the weekend. His big prize was featured on the "South Dakota BIG Bucks" facebook page.

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News from the Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

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Bison def. Dupree, 25-19, 25-15, 25-12
Bon Homme def. Gregory, 17-25, 17-25, 25-15, 25-18, 15-8
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Bridgewater-Emery def. Ethan, 25-19, 25-12, 25-22
Britton-Hecla def. Sisseton, 25-16, 25-19, 25-10
Burke def. Tripp-Delmont-Armour, 25-16, 25-10, 22-25, 25-9
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Gettysburg def. Sully Buttes, 25-27, 25-23, 25-17, 25-19
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Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-16, 25-12, 25-12
Herreid-Selby def. Timber Lake, 25-18, 25-7, 25-16
Highmore-Harold def. Sanborn Central-Woonsocket, 25-15, 20-25, 25-18, 15-25, 15-5
Hitchcock-Tulare def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-6, 24-26, 25-13, 25-14
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Parkston def. McCook Central-Montrose, 25-19, 19-25, 25-21, 21-25, 15-6
Philip def. Hill City, 25-21, 25-22, 25-17
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Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Man City guilty of almost all the 115 financial charges, Premier League says in explosive verdict

By JAMES ROBSON and STEVE DOUGLAS AP Sports Writers

MANCHESTER, England (AP) — Manchester City artificially inflated its revenue by more than \$1 billion over nearly a decade, circumventing fair-play rules that restricted rival clubs and allowing it to pad its roster with some of soccer's biggest stars, an investigatory panel found in a bombshell report published Tuesday.

In what is widely viewed as the biggest scandal in Premier League history, the independent panel determined that the United Arab Emirates-backed team committed almost all of the 115-plus violations it was accused of during a period in which City changed the landscape of the world's most popular soccer league. That included 80 from 2009-18 for alleged financial misdeeds and another 35 from 2018-23 for allegedly not cooperating with the investigation.

City's alleged financial wrongdoing — made possible in part through what the league said were "sham" commercial deals — was worth more than 900 million pounds (\$1.19 billion). Premier League chief executive Richard Masters said the ruling showed City "systematically broke Premier League rules for nearly a decade."

"This disciplinary case, and this decision, are the most significant in Premier League history," Masters said.

City now faces severe sanctions that could include a huge points deduction or even expulsion from the league, causing heavy reputational damage to its Abu Dhabi ownership.

The Premier League said sanctions will be decided during a separate hearing held by the independent commission at an unspecified date.

The club plans to appeal

City has always denied wrongdoing and said in a statement that it was "disappointed and surprised" by the ruling. It plans to appeal the verdict and said it would be "relentless" in its fight to clear its name, which would further drag out a case that has already run for more than three years.

Any appeal by City would have to be made by Friday, the league said.

In an internal video to City staff — obtained by broadcaster Sky News — the club's CEO, Ferran Soriano, went into detail about why he felt the verdict was wrong.

"This has gone on for so long that it is important to remind ourselves that the whole Premier League case against us is based on a single false accusation: that the owner's personal money was somehow and secretly put into the club via some sponsors from Abu Dhabi," he said. "This is just not true. Irrefutable evidence has been provided to the Premier League commission that shows it could not happen and that it did not happen."

A drawn out investigation

The allegations first arose in 2018 from leaked club emails and documents, and the Premier League initiated its case more than three years ago. Tuesday's findings come after it emerged last week that the

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accusations against City were expected to be upheld following an exhaustive process.

City is accused of providing misleading information about its finances over a nine-year period from 2009-18 — a span in which it emerged from the shadow of its crosstown rival, Manchester United, won three titles and signed some of the world's best players, including Yaya Toure, Sergio Aguero and Kevin de Bruyne.

The violations included failing to provide accurate financial information and submitting inflated figures for sponsorship deals out of Abu Dhabi, hiding payments and breaching financial rules established by the Premier League and UEFA, European soccer's governing body, intended to keep clubs financially stable by not spending beyond their means.

On top of that, City faced many other charges of failing to cooperate with the investigation between 2018-23.

"An independent commission has found Manchester City guilty of all charges related to serious breaches of the Premier League's financial rules over a nine-season period," the league said, "and the majority of charges in relation to its failure to co-operate with the league's investigation."

Regarding the sponsorship deals, the league said: "Manchester City arranged 'sham' contracts (which misrepresented the true agreement between the parties) with a number of its commercial partners, as well as relying on 'sham' agreements with others, to artificially inflate the club's revenues and reduce its costs.

"The club," the league added, "filed misstated accounts and concealed the true state of its finances from its auditors and football regulators."

The purpose of City's "schemes" was to "artificially inflate the club's revenues, and reduce its costs, by more than £900 million (\$1.19 billion) during the affected period, to appear to comply with financial rules," the league said.

The finding suggests that City's rise to the top of the English game, fueled by investments from Abu Dhabi that delivered by its expensively assembled, star-studded squads, was achieved at least in part by evading the league's financial regulations.

An outpouring of anger

The panel's findings have plunged English soccer into chaos, with rival clubs calling for compensation for lost earnings and threatening to sue, and fans and even some other teams' players wondering whether City should be stripped of titles.

There's also the question of whether City's top stars, like Erling Haaland and Rayan Cherki, will stay at the club and what the future holds for Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He is the deputy prime minister of the United Arab Emirates and a member of Abu Dhabi's royal family who bought City in 2008 and has gone on to own a group of worldwide teams — under the City Football Group banner — including New York City FC and Melbourne City.

City has always maintained its innocence, saying in 2023 when the charges were laid that there was a "comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence that exists in support of its position."

Even over the weekend, City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak said there remained a "confidence and intent in proving the club's innocence."

The appeal could end up in the High Court in London if City feels the process in the case was unfair.

Melbourne City FC reaction

On Wednesday league officials in Australia said they'd wait to see how the fallout from Manchester City's financial situation develops, believing it's too early to raise concern around A-League club Melbourne City FC, which has been owned by the City Football Group since 2014. Since then Melbourne City has won the league in 2021 and 2025.

Australian Professional League chief executive Steve Rosich said the APL, which operates the top domestic men's and women's competitions, had never investigated Melbourne City regarding its financial matters.

"No it doesn't concern us," Rosich said. "There is further work to follow and findings to follow in the legal process, so we'll consider that. The international football economy is intertwined, so all parties will be reviewing that."

Hedge fund CEO Ken Griffin gives record \$3B to Carnegie Mellon to build Miami campus

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH AP Education Writer

Carnegie Mellon University announced Wednesday that hedge fund CEO Ken Griffin is donating \$3 billion, with the bulk of the money for a new campus in Miami focused on societal challenges.

The Pittsburgh-based private research university said the gift is the largest ever single gift to a U.S. university. Other donations topping the billion-dollar mark include \$1.8 billion from former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to Johns Hopkins University in 2018. And Nike co-founder Phil Knight and his wife, Penny, also have been prolific donors, including a \$2 billion gift to Oregon Health & Science University in 2025.

Griffin's gift includes \$2 billion to build a new 35-acre campus in Miami's Wynwood neighborhood, just north of downtown. The campus is expected to enroll around 3,500 undergraduate, master's and doctoral students. Construction is scheduled to begin next year.

Rather than academic majors, it will focus on what the university and Griffin described in a news release as "grand challenge areas," such as human health and biological discovery; national security and strategic capabilities; energy and climate resilience; and advanced manufacturing and industrial transformation.

The rest of the money will be divided evenly between the Pittsburgh campus' computer science program, which will be renamed after Griffin, and other unspecified projects on the main campus.

"Throughout our history, CMU has anticipated moments of profound technological change and responded with new ways of thinking and solving problems," Carnegie Mellon's President Farnam Jahanian said in a news release praising Griffin. "Artificial intelligence represents one of the defining intellectual developments of our time, and it demands that we rethink how we educate students, conduct research and partner with others."

Colleges are facing growing pressure to prepare students for a workforce that is rapidly being transformed by AI. Job postings including AI and machine learning in the skills requirements or job title are exploding.

At the same time, financial pressures on higher education are mounting. International enrollment is dropping, just as many states are seeing their classes of high school seniors begin to shrink because of U.S. demographic changes. Meanwhile, expenses like fuel, healthcare and technology are rising.

Griffin, a GOP megadonor who founded the Citadel investment firm, owns a waterfront home in Miami, which is part of a growing metropolitan area whose population tops 6.4 million.

The area already is home to the University of Miami, a private research university; Florida International University, a public research university; and Miami Dade College, which started out as a community college but also offers some four-year degrees. Combined, enrollment at the three schools totals around 135,000. Several smaller private colleges are also based in the area.

But Griffin, who has donated over the years to causes such as medical research, charter schools and other universities, saw room for something new.

"The opportunity to bring Carnegie Mellon to Miami places our city at the heart of humanistic and scientific advancement and amplifies the University's international reach and impact," said Griffin, who is joining Carnegie Mellon's Board of Trustees, in a news release.

Even before the announcement, Carnegie Mellon had growing ties to Florida, a state where conservatives have increased their influence on higher education.

Its computer science department runs a program designed to teach middle school students in Florida and several other states about AI. The university also is involved in a partnership with the Gates Foundation to deploy AI-powered course materials for introductory math classes at Miami Dade College.

Russia pounds the Kyiv region, killing 4 and targeting the power grid

By HANNA ARHIROVA and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia pressed on with its weeklong missile and drone barrage of Kyiv and areas around the Ukrainian capital, killing four people including a child while targeting the power grid and a key internet exchange point, officials said Wednesday.

Moscow's steep escalation of its aerial campaign since the end of August heaps pressure on Ukraine as it braces for winter, when Russia regularly bombards energy facilities to deny Ukrainians heating and running water.

Ukrainian officials say Moscow is not engaging with U.S. efforts to halt the fighting, 4 ½ years after Russia invaded its neighbor. Moscow says it wants a comprehensive settlement rather than a temporary truce, although its demand for Ukraine to surrender land is unacceptable for Kyiv.

A child was killed and three other people were rescued from the rubble of a private home in Vyshhorod, in the wider Kyiv region, said Tymur Tkachenko, head of the regional military administration.

Russia has exploited gaps in Ukrainian air defenses by firing ballistic missiles and new jet-powered drones, both of which are hard to stop. Air raid alerts are disrupting daily life, sending people running for shelter and denting economic output.

The attacks killed three people in the capital and wounded at least four others, with another person killed near the city, according to authorities.

The main Russian targets were energy infrastructure in Kyiv and the surrounding region, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media, describing it as "a difficult attack" as Moscow stretches Ukraine's air defenses.

Zelenskyy thanked foreign countries supporting Ukraine for recent deliveries of air defense help. "And the closer we get to winter, the more of this protection we need," he said. "We must do everything to ensure that Russia's bet on ballistic missile and drone terror does not pay off."

Russia fired 2,850 jet-propelled drones at Ukraine in August but by Tuesday it had already launched 3,177 this month, Ukrainian Air Force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said.

The attacks come in waves, Ihnat told Ukrainian television late Tuesday, mostly aimed at Kyiv and the surrounding region. Ukraine needs more missiles for U.S.-made Patriot air defense systems to counter ballistic missiles and for other ground-based air defenses, he said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its overnight attack hit a hydroelectric and a thermal power plant, an electrical substation, an energy storage facility and a data center.

Ukrainian officials didn't confirm those strikes. Authorities reported hits on civilian areas of at least four Kyiv districts.

The US military says its withdrawal of troops from Iraq is complete

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The U.S. military announced on Wednesday that it has completed the withdrawal of all American troops from Iraq, ending a 12-year mission to fight the Islamic State group. The last U.S. troops left an air base in northern Iraq under a deal between Baghdad and Washington.

The withdrawal, agreed on two years ago, comes against the backdrop of the ongoing war between the United States and Iran that has also sometimes spilled over into Iraq, with Iran-backed militias firing on U.S. troops and the U.S. striking the groups' strongholds.

Baghdad touted the end of the U.S. mission as a sign of the country's increasing strength and sovereignty.

The withdrawal was also celebrated by Iran-backed groups but raised concerns among some other Iraqis, particularly in the Kurdish region. Meanwhile, questions loom around the future of the Iraqi militias, which the Baghdad government has sought — with little success so far — to disarm.

Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said in a statement that U.S. troops and equipment had completed

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an "orderly departure" from the air base in Irbil, in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

"This milestone reflects the success of a 12-year campaign that defeated ISIS as an organized military threat in Iraq and across the region," he said. "It also marks a transition from a wartime coalition mission to an Iraqi-led security effort supported by a more normal bilateral security relationship."

Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi presided over the handover ceremony and described the U.S. withdrawal as the beginning of a "new phase, one defined by Iraq's sovereignty, the strength of its institutions, the readiness of its forces, the unity of its decision-making, and balanced partnerships with its friends."

He said Iraqi security forces will continue the fight against IS and the government will ensure that non-state groups no longer hold weapons.

U.S. troops invaded Iraq in 2003 to topple Saddam Hussein. They departed in 2011, but three years later, Iraqi authorities invited a smaller U.S.-led mission to fight the Islamic State group, which had rampaged across Iraq, seizing large swaths of territory.

With the extremist group reduced to scattered sleeper cells, Washington and Baghdad agreed in 2024 to wind the mission down.

U.S. troops pulled out of bases in most areas of Iraq last year but maintained a small presence of hundreds of troops in the semiautonomous northern Kurdish region. Bases there have regularly come under attack since the U.S. and Israel launched their war against Iran on Feb. 28. Iran-backed Iraqi militias also have coordinated with Yemen's Houthi rebels to attack Saudi Arabia.

The Iraqi government initially linked the Sept. 30 deadline for U.S. withdrawal to the disarmament of non-state armed groups by that date.

While a handful of less-influential militias have agreed to turn over their weapons, powerful groups close to Iran rejected the prospect or set conditions for disarming that the government would be unlikely to meet.

Al-Zaidi has since walked back the deadline. He told The New York Times earlier this month that the deadline for militia disarmament has been pushed to June 2027.

The effects of the U.S. withdrawal may not be immediately visible, particularly since the U.S. military presence had already been scaled down. But officials in Iraq's Kurdish region have expressed anxiety about the departure and particularly about the removal of U.S. air defense systems.

The Kurdish regional government's Peshmerga Ministry said the Kurdish region had faced more than 1,000 drone and ballistic-missile attacks during the recent U.S.-Iran conflict.

"The departure of the United States from the Kurdistan Region under these complex regional circumstances, without the provision of a defense system, is a matter of concern," the statement said.

Iran-allied groups in Iraq, meanwhile, have celebrated the U.S. withdrawal.

"The expulsion of the occupation forces, defeated, from the land of Iraq is the beginning of full sovereignty," Abu Mujahid al-Assaf, a security official with the powerful Kataib Hezbollah militia, said in a statement.

He added a warning to al-Zaidi and his government not to carry out American plans, threatening that "any government that does not work for the benefit of the people will be overthrown by all means."

Burundi says it will accept migrant deportees from the United States but details are vague

NGOZI, Burundi (AP) — Burundi has agreed to accept people deported by the United States who have no previous connection to the East African country, a spokesperson for the country's president said Tuesday.

Nancy Ninette Mutoni said Burundi would accept only people who were not facing prosecution and had no links to terrorism. She spoke during an event attended by government officials in Ngozi.

Mutoni did not say when the deportees would arrive or how many people Burundi had agreed to receive. She said preparations were underway to provide accommodations and help the deportees live in local communities.

"Receiving them requires serious planning — where they will stay, what they will eat and how they will live alongside the local population," Mutoni said.

The Trump administration has expanded third-country deportations as part of its immigration crackdown,

sending people to countries where they are not citizens and may never have lived. The United States has sent deportees to several African countries, including Eswatini and South Sudan.

A U.S. appeals court ruling last week threw the program into question. Lawyers for immigrants said a flight carrying about 70 people had been scheduled to travel from Louisiana to Burundi, Rwanda and the Central African Republic but was canceled.

The ruling did not prohibit third-country deportations but required that people facing removal have a meaningful opportunity to raise concerns about possible persecution or torture. The Trump administration has defended the policy as necessary when deportees' home countries refuse to accept them.

AP investigation: Warnings ignored as Venezuela coastal towers faced quake forces they couldn't take

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GARANCE BURKE Associated Press

CARABALLEDA, Venezuela (AP) — Scientists had warned the government not to build along Venezuela's coastal strip of La Guaira.

The area's seaside Caribbean communities, not far from Caracas, were near a major fault line and a mountain range that had unleashed repeated, destructive natural disasters. The soil was poor, a type of silt that would only amplify shaking in an earthquake.

Ignoring the advice, the government threw up exactly the wrong kind of buildings for that location: tall concrete apartment complexes.

It was all a recipe for destruction, according to an Associated Press investigation that relied on interviews with dozens of engineers, seismologists and former government officials.

The people of La Guaira never stood a chance on June 24 when powerful, back-to-back quakes struck. "They were defying nature" when government officials decided to build there, said Carlos Valdés, head of the seismology department at the Institute of Geophysics of the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

The quakes killed more than 6,500 people and left over 17,000 homeless. The government of acting President Delcy Rodríguez has done little to quell the rage of those who survived the quakes in the three months since that June evening — and she has failed to address why so many buildings collapsed and so many died.

The answer, in fact, can be traced back to 2010 and decisions made after mudslides and heavy rain displaced more than 100,000 people across the country, experts and former government officials told the AP.

That's when the Venezuelan government raced to ease a humanitarian crisis by constructing scores of apartments on the strip of land flanked by crystalline waters of the Caribbean Sea to the north and lush mountains to the south.

The setting was idyllic. The land beneath it was not.

An area prone to natural disasters and earthquakes

When Venezuela was rocked by the 7.2- and 7.5-magnitude earthquakes, at least 14 apartment towers in La Guaira fell nearly at the same time, pancaking one floor on top of another, trapping hundreds inside. Fires broke out as gas tanks exploded. People screamed for help. Few survived. Bodies were recovered from what used to be bedrooms, stairs, hallways and kitchens. Many were found hugging.

The area, in northern Venezuela, is no stranger to natural disasters.

A deadly 6.6-magnitude earthquake hit the area in 1967, prompting among other actions the design of quake-resistant construction guidelines and the creation of the Venezuelan Foundation for Seismological Research, a counterpart of the U.S. Geological Survey. Similar to June's earthquakes, it destroyed buildings in La Guaira's parish of Caraballeda and Venezuela's capital, Caracas.

But no disaster had devastated La Guaira like the floods and mudslides that killed tens of thousands of people in 1999. After the tragedy, President Hugo Chávez's government chose engineer and then-science minister Carlos Genatios to helm a reconstruction plan.

His team worked with local and international experts to develop a hazard-mitigation program for the state, which included land-use restrictions along the coastal strip primarily to reduce the dangers associ-

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ated with rains and, to a somewhat lesser extent, earthquakes, Genatios told AP in an interview.

"There are areas, tracts of land, that should not have been used because they are prone to flooding during major surges; in such places, one should place very lightweight structures, parks, sports courts or similar facilities that do not cause major damage and, above all, do not result in fatalities," Genatios said.

Genatios said scientists warned officials that the area's history of mudslides and floods would enhance the risks posed by earthquakes. That's because any buildings would be constructed on the loose, rocky soil that had been deposited there over centuries by floods and mudslides.

The area was also near the major San Sebastian Fault line that runs off the coast and right underneath La Guaira state.

The government disregarded the dangers. In 2011, at Chávez's direction, it kicked off a massive push to expand public housing to assist people who had been displaced by torrential rains that led to deadly floods and mudslides in late 2010. The government had relocated the displaced — many among them supporters of Chávez's self-described socialist movement — to public schools, government buildings, military facilities and even the presidential palace.

The government lacked enough land to build its projects, which led to expropriations and to Chávez himself encouraging Venezuelans to help the state compile a list of abandoned lots. As buildings went up, trade and watchdog organizations raised concerns about the projects' compliance with construction standards, including seismic-resistant design requirements, and the quality of materials used such as cement and steel.

The rise of apartment complexes

Housing towers reminiscent of East Germany's prefab communist era high-rises were built in Caraballeda as part of the Great Housing Mission Venezuela program. Each tower became known as an "O-P-P," a shortened version of "O-P-P-P-E," the Spanish acronym of the office Chávez tasked with carrying out the program. All but four of the 43 towers erected in the state of La Guaira were in Caraballeda.

A state-owned newsletter published a photo of one of the towers with the caption that proclaimed it "proudly stands as a symbol of revolutionary justice."

People assigned apartments in Caraballeda were delighted when they finally received the keys. Many had lived with relatives or in shelters after being displaced by the 2010 torrential rains. Adults and children finally had bedrooms of their own. Bathrooms came with doors. The beach was a short walk away.

However, they noticed problems right after moving in: Potable water service was essentially nonexistent; elevators stopped working; and trash chutes were breeding grounds for rats and cockroaches.

And they were unaware of the risks during an earthquake. Apartment complexes that were between 10 and 20 floors could end up swaying at the exact same rate as the seismic waves, in a phenomenon known as resonance. The syncing results in the building swaying farther and longer, putting additional pressure on columns and increasing the likelihood of damages and collapse, experts said.

It is unknown whether government contractors followed Venezuela's building codes. It is also unknown whether officials conducted soil studies before construction began, or whether those studies were ignored. The government has not made public blueprints, soil studies, inspection records or the "descriptive memorandum," a document that should include engineering and architectural specifications.

Francisco "Farruco" Sesto, who headed the office responsible for Chávez's housing mission, did not respond to an interview request from AP.

Less than two weeks after the earthquakes, he told an influencer affiliated with the government that land chosen for public housing projects underwent soil studies. He did not show proof to back that assertion, but he did push back on post-earthquake criticism, claiming it is part of an "insidious, malicious campaign" against the housing mission, and he seemingly tried to shift responsibility to the private sector.

"I want to point out that the vast majority of homes built by the state are actually constructed by the private sector as well," Sesto said. "The state acts as the great organizer — the great planner, if you will ... Who performs these soil studies? Primarily, specialized private companies."

Engineers feared the powerful blow June's quakes delivered

Venezuelans were shocked to see the collapsed buildings by the sea. Scientists were devastated, too,

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but not surprised. The earthquakes were not just powerful. They dealt the very type of blow engineers fear most — a near-fault pulse.

"It was truly instantaneous — very, very, very violent, very fast," said Central University of Venezuela geologist Michael Schmitz, who was formerly affiliated with the country's earthquake-monitoring agency.

Schmitz explained that when the fault shifted, seismic energy stacked up at the front of the rupture as it moved eastward, delivering "a very strong blow to the building's base." That pulse, he said, "abruptly knocked the support out from under the building, leaving it unable to dissipate the energy in the way it was designed to do."

In contrast, buildings on the opposite side of the mountain range, in Caracas, that also have sediment amplification withstood the earthquakes because they were able to sway to dissipate the energy.

Study revealed the quake was particularly devastating

Eduardo Miranda, a Stanford University professor of civil and environmental engineering, and a team of researchers visited Venezuela days after the quake to see if they could determine why the earthquakes had been so devastating.

Without any local instruments or data to determine the intensity of the shaking, Miranda and his team of scientists turned to analyzing video captured by two security cameras near a bowling alley in Caraballeda, the most affected community in La Guaira. The video footage is dramatic: In less than a second, eight buildings collapse simultaneously.

By carefully tracking the motion frame by frame, the team was able to reconstruct how the earthquake produced the motion seen on camera, according to a paper produced by Miranda's team that was shared with AP.

That analysis revealed one of the largest ground motions ever documented in the world and has provided the only quantitative information of the ground motion of the quake near the rupture. Miranda said it would have been difficult for structures meeting safety standards in Japan, which has among the strictest building codes, to have survived what happened June 24.

The paper under peer review for publication in The Seismic Record, the online journal of the Seismological Society of America, determined that buildings in Caraballeda were pushed so far in one direction for so long that they hit their breaking points, Miranda said.

"The number one reason for the large impact in La Guaira is definitely how strong the ground motion was," Miranda said in an interview. "Typically, collapses are the result of a number of factors, but that's an overwhelming main factor of the problems that were there."

Miranda has yet to share the study's results with the Venezuelan government, but his team has made officials aware of the analysis.

"It's clear that they need to raise the level of design," he said.

Experts worry the government may make the same mistakes again

Styrofoam found among the rubble prompted many residents to accuse the government of using substandard materials to reduce costs. Their accusations were also based on well-documented corruption schemes in which officials and contractors colluded to overbill the state, use cheaper materials than reported and pocket the difference.

The government has not provided any information regarding on-site forensic analyses that experts say are crucial to determine the causes and responsibilities, but its cleanup work, including dynamiting damaged buildings, is underway and so is a rebuilding effort.

The government has estimated that more than 17,000 people were displaced by the earthquakes. Thousands of them have since lived in shelters, encampments or sidewalks near their former homes. Some have also been given homes in public housing buildings in Caracas. The government, however, has also promised to rebuild La Guaira, announcing weeks after the earthquake that it had already located land in that state where construction could soon begin.

Experts said they hope the Venezuelan government doesn't simply repeat the mistakes of 15 years ago and instead takes a careful and considered approach to its rebuilding efforts. They also said that the ad-

ditional design and construction work needed to build high-rises capable of resisting earthquakes in the region will likely dissuade the state and some private investors from developing certain areas.

"The question here is: at what cost?" Valdés said. "I would put it another way: how much is a life worth?"

Democrats want a blue wave. New Hampshire is Exhibit A for why that may not happen

By STEVE PEOPLES, HOLLY RAMER and STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

HUDSON, N.H. (AP) — Five weeks before Election Day, Democratic enthusiasm is reaching a fever pitch.

With Republicans struggling to overcome President Donald Trump's low standing, Democrats are on the offensive in Republican strongholds like Texas and Florida, and even eyeing contests in deeper-red Kansas and Mississippi. Many Democratic leaders predict that the House majority is all but theirs, and that the Senate majority, almost unthinkable a year ago, is nearly in their grasp as well.

In the midst of such confidence, however, Democrats are ignoring glaring vulnerabilities that threaten to undermine the unstoppable blue wave they say is coming.

Look no further than swing-state New Hampshire, where Democratic leaders are sounding the alarm about political challenges that could jeopardize Rep. Chris Pappas' campaign for an open Senate seat and undermine the party's ability to win races around the country.

Democrats point to Republicans' overwhelming financial advantage that is allowing them to dominate the airwaves in the closing days of the campaign. At the same time, the Democrats' brand remains deeply unpopular, and they have virtually no margin for error in midterm races that are playing out largely in Republican-leaning states.

New Hampshire Democratic Chairman Ray Buckley says that national Democratic leaders "have consistently been overly optimistic" as they look to expand the midterm map. He's particularly worried about his state's Senate contest, where Republicans are investing far more resources than Democrats.

"There is reason for concern," Buckley said. "We don't want to let this one slip away because they were sending resources to some other unicorns — some other state that's just not possible."

Despite such warnings, there is little sign of concern among senior Democratic officials, who point to Trump's poor standing with voters who are frustrated by the war with Iran and surging costs with Republicans in control of Washington.

"It's nothing we're doing. We're winning because they're losing," said Democratic pollster John Anzalone. "And they're losing dramatically with every action the president has taken."

There is almost no state where Democrats cannot compete in November, he said: "America is the battleground state."

Democrats are short on cash and goodwill

For all the Democrats' confidence, the party's brand remains deeply unpopular and fundraising is lagging.

More than half of voters, 55%, have a "strongly" or "somewhat" unfavorable view of the Democrats, according to a Fox News poll from September. A similar share, 58%, say the same about the Republican Party, while about 6 in 10 voters have a negative view of Trump (62%).

At the same time, about half of registered voters say the Democratic Party is "too far to the left," according to a recent New York Times/Siena poll.

As the election approaches, few Democratic leaders acknowledge there is a problem.

In an interview, Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., pointed the finger at Republicans when asked about issues with the Democratic brand.

"We've made a much better case than them, and that's why it looks like we're going to win a bunch of House seats and probably win back the Senate," Kelly said. "Right now, I think the Republican brand is the one that's damaged."

And yet Democrats are struggling to keep up with Republican fundraising.

Flush with campaign cash, Republicans are dominating the airwaves over the final weeks of the campaign. There isn't a single state that features a top-tier Senate contest in which Democrats are spending

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more than Republicans.

Nationwide, Republicans are spending \$1.63 billion on campaign advertising between Sept. 1 and Election Day compared to \$1.19 billion for Democrats, according to data compiled by AdImpact as of Monday. The Republican advantage, nearly 40% nationwide, is actually larger in some key states.

In Texas, for example, which features competitive races for the Senate, House and governor, Republicans are spending \$262.4 million statewide between Sept. 1 and Election Day compared to \$76.9 million for Democrats, AdImpact found. In Ohio, which also hosts pivotal elections for Senate and governor, Republicans are outspending Democrats \$258.8 million to \$160.4 million. And in Florida, which features competitive races for governor and the House, Republicans are spending \$99.3 million against the Democrats' \$47.9 million.

The Republican advantage isn't as egregious in New Hampshire as some other states, but it is significant. AdImpact finds that Republicans are outspending Democrats in New Hampshire \$41.2 million to \$35.4 million statewide.

Pappas, the Democrat in the New Hampshire Senate race, acknowledged the Republican spending advantage and warned that his state must remain a priority for his national party.

"The majority won't be flipped if we don't hold this seat in New Hampshire, so it's really critical to the overall map," he said during a campaign stop.

Democrats face 'an identity crisis'

Pappas met on Tuesday with small business owners, including Amber Morgan, who owns Fortin Gage Flowers in Nashua. She said the uncertainty created by the Trump administration's tariffs have been hard for her business.

But Morgan, a Democrat, is not surprised that New Hampshire's Senate race is close, given that Republicans are running the well-known former Sen. John E. Sununu. She said the Democratic Party has its faults as well.

"I think that the message for so long has just been, 'We're not Trump,' and we've had a bit of an identity crisis in terms of what we actually stand for," Morgan said.

She is not alone.

Nationwide, the NYT/Siena poll found that about 6 in 10 registered voters who identify as Democrats say their party is divided, while only about 4 in 10 Republicans (37%) say the same about the GOP. Roughly 6 in 10 Republicans (61%) describe their party as united, compared to about 4 in 10 Democrats (40%).

But money remains the Democrats' dominant concern as the Republican spending advantage grows.

Steve Marchand, a Democratic consultant and former New Hampshire gubernatorial candidate, said Sununu has benefited from national money that got redirected from other states that are no longer seen as top targets, while Democrats were slower to invest.

"Democrats, including Pappas, became increasingly frustrated that national Democrats treated it like a fait accompli, like 'you guys have it up there, we're going to other states,'" Marchand said. "And a lot of us Democrats were saying, 'Hey, Sununu is going to be formidable, and New Hampshire is not a right-down-the-ticket kind of state.'"

Fred Osterholtz, a sales engineer at one of the businesses Pappas visited, said he's worried about the huge amounts of money being poured into the race on Sununu's behalf as well. But he was impressed with Pappas' focus.

"I think he's starting to find some of the messages that will resonate," Osterholtz said. "I didn't feel that way six months ago, but with the world stage the way it is — the costs, the inflation — they're latching onto the right things I think."

Republican redistricting in Texas and Florida may not turn out as Trump had hoped

By JESSE BEDAYN and BILL BARROW Associated Press

HARLINGEN, Texas (AP) — Eric Flores, a former federal prosecutor and Army National Guard infantry captain, was one of the Republican Party's prized recruits in this year's midterm elections. With help from a redrawn congressional map in Texas, he seemed primed to dislodge longtime Democratic Rep. Vicente Gonzalez in a region that swung toward Donald Trump in the last presidential election.

Now he's one of several candidates locked in a tougher race than originally envisioned as Republican-run states heeded Trump's call to begin an unusual round of redistricting to help retain control of the U.S. House.

Republicans hoped to pick up as many as nine seats between Texas and Florida. However, even though the districts were redrawn to make them easier to win, the party remains weighed down by dissatisfaction with Trump, the economy, the war with Iran and the president's deportation agenda.

The political landscape remains competitive enough that Vice President JD Vance is traveling to Texas on Wednesday, where he'll appear with Flores, and then visit Florida on Thursday.

House Democrats' national campaign chair, Rep. Suzan DelBene, recently circulated through Florida districts that Republicans were hoping to claim for themselves.

"Republicans arrogantly thought they were going to redistrict seats to pick up more," DelBene said in an interview during her trip. "Instead, what they have is people across the state souring on the Republican agenda."

Mike Marinella, House Republicans' campaign spokesman, said the party can still capitalize this year "with a more favorable map, historic fundraising and spending advantages, stronger candidates and a common-sense agenda."

House seats are up for grabs in Texas

Republicans won 25 of Texas' 38 seats in the U.S. House as Trump returned to power two years ago. Partially using that election as a baseline, the redrawn map was intended to help Republicans win up to 30 seats.

Key to this plan was the Rio Grande Valley, a heavily Latino region on the southern tip of Texas, which had shifted toward Trump.

Texas' 34th Congressional District, where Flores is running, includes some of the valley, and it opted for Trump by 10 points over Democrat Kamala Harris. But Flores said he expected his race to be close, which he credits to his opponent's five terms in office.

Flores received Trump's endorsement, still pinned to his X account, and spoke at his unusual midterm convention in Dallas. But he also removed from his website a promise to "SUPPORT PRESIDENT TRUMP'S AGENDA" as he looked toward general election voters and widening his base of support.

"If I tell them the red meat issues or I tell them, you know, oh, Republican, Democrat, or anything like that, you lose them," he told The Associated Press. "I just sell them myself, sell them what I stand for."

Republicans in Washington acknowledge that inflation, Trump's tariffs and the war in Iran have made their path harder. Latino voters' discontent with Trump's immigration agenda further scrambles their efforts.

Republicans are also facing the potential loss of an incumbent who represents a redrawn district. Rep. Monica De La Cruz, who is running for a third term, faces a strong challenge from musician Bobby Pulido. A Latin Grammy winner whose top song on Spotify has 619 million streams, Pulido doesn't face the usual first-time candidates' challenge of establishing name ID.

"I want a picture!" Eloise Ibarra, 42, exclaimed as Pulido walked through the crowd at a high school football game. Ibarra later said she'd "probably" vote for Pulido after sitting out the last presidential race.

"I don't really like his policies," she said about Trump. "It's very expensive, I go to the grocery store and buy \$50 worth of stuff and it's like five items."

Democrats argue that Republicans miscalculated this year.

"I think Republicans counted on Hispanics, and they counted on rural Texas, to deliver votes for them, and these are the two places that are hurting the most," said Terri Burke of the Texas Democratic Party.

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Speaking of redistricting, she said, "this is really no longer such a slam dunk for the Republicans anywhere."

Democrats see opportunity in Florida

Republicans already had 20 out of 28 seats in Florida, and they wanted to boost that to 24 with their new congressional map. But much like in Texas, their plan was based on 2024 results, when voters, including many Latinos, were dissatisfied with Democratic President Joe Biden on the economy and immigration.

Republicans targeted Rep. Kathy Castor in metro Tampa and Rep. Darren Soto in the Orlando area, while putting south Florida Reps. Jared Moskowitz and Debbie Wasserman Schultz into the same district.

Moskowitz shifted to a nearby Republican-leaning district, and Wasserman Schultz ran for another term in a separate, heavily Democratic district. Castor and Soto face longer odds in their redrawn districts, though DelBene believes they have a shot in the current environment.

The new map didn't stop Pia Dandiya, an Ivy League-educated school principal whose parents immigrated from India, from mounting her first House campaign for Congress.

She's running in Florida's 22nd Congressional District, where Trump won by double digits in 2024 and where Republicans had hoped to pit Moskowitz against Wasserman Schultz.

But Dandiya notes that Biden outpaced Trump in the same collection of precincts in 2020, and she calls herself "a happy road warrior" as she travels 150-plus miles between campaign stops.

"The way this district has been drawn just shows yet again that we are living in a world where elected officials are choosing voters instead of voters choosing elected officials, and it should never be that way," she said. DelBene and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee tapped her as one of their "Red to Blue" priority candidates.

Dandiya said voters' current circumstances matter more than how they voted two years ago.

"Cost of living is not an issue that is exclusively impacting Democrats. It is an issue that is ubiquitous," she said, adding that she hears the same concerns even in her district's more conservative communities.

British police find no explosives but questions remain after arrests near a US-run military base

By SYLVIA HUI and ALASTAIR GRANT Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A surprise decision by the U.K.'s counterterrorism police to release five suspects on bail during an investigation into a suspected bomb plot at a U.S.-operated air force base in England has deepened questions and uncertainty about the incident.

Police confirmed Tuesday that no explosives were found in three vans linked to the suspects, and said the decision to grant bail was grounded in "experience and strategy."

U.S. President Donald Trump told reporters on Monday he was surprised that the five young British men who were arrested Sunday on suspicion of explosives and terrorism offenses near the RAF Fairford base were freed a day later.

"I wouldn't have done that," Trump said.

The base has been used by American bombers during decades of conflicts in the Middle East, including this year's war with Iran. Counterterror detectives have said they were investigating "multiple lines of inquiry," including whether the suspects had a link to Iran. Iran has denied involvement.

The head of U.K. Counter Terrorism Policing, Laurence Taylor, stressed that the suspects — all British nationals in their 20s — face stringent conditions and "absolutely remain under investigation."

"Now I understand why this development was surprising to some, but I would like to reiterate that this is an investigative decision, and one which is grounded in experience and strategy," he said.

Taylor said people's concerns about the incident were being "heightened by the international commentary that we are seeing."

In an interview with Fox News, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the case "clearly involves the hands of a foreign actor," but did not name a specific country or give more details.

"I know a lot of people are disturbed by the news that some of these people have been released on bail,

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as some of the people are being investigated," he added.

Police found no explosives in suspicious vehicles

A police cordon remained in place around three vans found close to the Fairford base on Tuesday, as armed police and counterterrorism officers continued to examine the scene.

A local farmer said she called police after seeing the vans blocking a road near the air base as she drove home in the early hours of Sunday. She said she came across a group of men, some with their faces covered, nearby, and that the men ran away when they saw her vehicle.

Earlier, army bomb-disposal experts used a robot to examine the vans. Taylor said "a quantity of petrol was recovered" from the vans, but no explosives.

Officials hint at possible Iran role

Taylor, the counterterror police chief, said lines of inquiry include whether the suspected offenses were committed by "proxies or individuals, either knowingly or unknowingly, working on behalf of a foreign state."

Investigators haven't concluded whether the incident was state-backed or what the motive was, but authorities have strongly hinted that Iran is possibly involved. They are also investigating a possible link to Russia or non-state militant groups. RAF Fairford has also been the focus of protests by anti-war campaigners.

Defense Secretary Wes Streeting said the U.K. "shouldn't be cowed by saber rattling from Iran," adding that "the Iranian regime is one that wishes harm to our country, our allies, and the freedom and democracy that we enjoy."

The Iranian embassy denied the country's involvement in the suspected plot.

Iran and allied militant groups have been accused of plotting or carrying out attacks on U.S., British and Jewish targets in the past, allegedly acting through local proxies while denying responsibility.

The air base houses the headquarters of the U.S. Air Force's 501st Combat Support Wing and is a forward operating location for the U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command. Fairford was used during the 1990 Gulf War, the 2003 Iraq war and the U.S.-Israeli bombardment of Iran this year.

British officials have said the number of national security cases involving activity by hostile states, including Iran, increased by 50% in the six months to December 2025.

Questions about possible security or intelligence failures

It was unclear whether the arrested men had been on the security services' radars. Local residents described seeing heightened security around RAF Fairford in recent days, with heavy vehicles parked across entrance gates.

Trump said the suspects were detained following cooperation between the U.S. and Britain, and had been "under view" for some time. Police, however, said the arrests were triggered by a late-night call about the suspicious vehicles near the base.

The farmer who called the police, who didn't want to be named, alleged that her call to police may have foiled the suspected plot. She added that several hours passed between her call and when police "suddenly decided to evacuate people" in the area.

"But meanwhile, those vans were right in the middle of the village next to everyone's houses and no one did anything," she said.

Streeting, the defense secretary, said Monday that the farmer only had a "partial picture" of the operation.

Local lawmaker Roz Savage said there was "anger and anxiety" from residents, especially those who were evacuated from their homes and still haven't been able to return.

"I have so many questions right now, more questions than answers," she said in a video message on X. "This should not have been allowed to happen."

Trump says top tech firms have signed accord to 'self-police' AI development

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, WILL WEISSERT and MEG KINNARD Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday said that he and a large group of leaders of artificial intelligence companies had signed a voluntary accord that will include internal and external reviews during a meeting at the White House aimed at addressing Americans' fears about the technology.

"I think I'm seeing tremendous self-policing. And they understand that they have to self-police," Trump told reporters during an impromptu press conference outside the West Wing.

Trump and House Speaker Mike Johnson met with leading executives from top tech firms that are spending hundreds of billions of dollars to build out AI infrastructure, including data centers in communities across the country, which have sparked grassroots, bipartisan opposition.

The accord was signed by Trump, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, OpenAI President Greg Brockman, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, and Elon Musk, founder of xAI, which is now part of SpaceX.

The accord, which Trump posted on his social media site, Truth Social, late Tuesday, opened the door to future regulation but focused on four voluntary steps for the companies to take.

The accord said the companies would implement "robust internal controls," partner with an "independent external auditor" to assess whether the controls were working, and establish a committee within each company's board of directors to evaluate reports from internal and external auditors.

"Over time, it may make sense to codify these steps into laws and regulations," the accord said.

Trump repeatedly praised the business executives for developing a technology that he said would produce "unbelievable growth." Investment in data centers and the accompanying computer equipment has accelerated the economy and boosted the stock market, which has swelled investment accounts for higher-income Americans and lifted their spending.

Yet there were some notes of caution Tuesday. Amodei, who has been one of the most outspoken voic-
escalling for a slowdown in AI development, said, "The technology has very real risks."

"And, you know, the mechanism, how we address those risks is still under discussion," Amodei said.

Putting faith in 'self-policing' AI

Trump suggested that about 10 people would be named to a committee to "watch over the whole enterprise" and said the accord would be "morally binding." He also said he would name someone to oversee the agreement in coming days after consulting with industry.

Some of the actions outlined in the accord are measures these companies are already taking in some form or have previously committed to doing.

The intention of the accord balances the latitude needed for innovation with regulation, said Shri Narayanan, a university professor of electrical and computer engineering at the University of Southern California. That innovation is not just limited to improving the capabilities of these AI models, Narayanan said, but also to efforts to improve model safety and security.

Other experts are skeptical of putting "so much faith in self-policing," like Robin Jia, an assistant professor of computer science at the University of Southern California. Jia said it's crucial to ensure the leading labs' intentions are "well-aligned with the broader interest of the American public." He pointed to the recent disclosures of hacking incidents and said: "As the models get better, the consequences of such things are only going to get greater."

Some also took issue with the accord's vague, broad language. Alex Pascal, executive director of the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society, said: "The only way to reduce the risks and harms of AI to Americans is through robust legal liability, regulation and fundamentally changing the race dynamics that are driving unsafe decision-making by frontier AI developers whose costs are borne by the American people."

Trump unveils chatbot to help Americans navigate government services

Huang sat to Trump's right during a White House luncheon meeting, according to a seating chart the

president posted on Truth Social. Musk sat to Trump's left.

Earlier Tuesday, Trump promised that the U.S. government wouldn't limit the development of artificial intelligence or support calls for "guardrails" or other restrictions.

"I will never stifle the growth of a technology that will be bigger than the industrial revolution," Trump said at the unveiling of an AI chatbot, America.gov, intended to help Americans navigate government services. "We can't stifle it, and we're leading by a lot."

The unveiling of the AI government chatbot occurred at a daylong event in Washington during which multiple Trump administration officials celebrated a "Golden Age" fueled by what Trump insists on calling "super intelligence," rather than artificial intelligence. Secretary of State Marco Rubio highlighted that the chatbot at America.gov could soon be used to apply for a first-time passport fully online, without the in-person visit to a processing center currently required.

Trump thinks data centers are going to become 'very popular'

Trump also said the executives had agreed to assuage the bipartisan opposition to data centers cropping up in local communities across the country by providing more financial support to local schools or taking steps to reduce energy costs.

"You're going to see, data centers are going to be very popular," Trump said. If the opposition continued, Trump suggested, "they'll be forced to go overseas or other locations."

Also Tuesday, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said in a television interview that the company is increasingly focused on safety. The day before, his company halted the rollout of a new model over safety concerns.

"We are pacing our progress, which includes sometimes not training a model," he said on CNBC. "We have to do these in a way where we can make very confident safety cases and claims, so that people don't have a bunch of anxiety."

For his part, Trump on Tuesday portrayed the race to develop AI as largely a global competition between the United States and China. He said there would be a winner and a loser, with no "second place."

The two countries agreed last week to establish a channel for handling AI-related incidents during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Washington. But Trump underscored Tuesday that he didn't want to cooperate too much with China: "I didn't want to do anything, because we're leading. Why would I want to do anything?"

Ex-Trump prosecutor Smith forcefully defends investigations as Republicans assail his team's tactics

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former special counsel Jack Smith forcefully defended his prosecutions of President Donald Trump and his investigative tactics, pushing back against repeated Republican criticism in a congressional hearing Tuesday that featured a senator's bungled attempt to accuse him of lying about a basketball game.

The hearing offered a forum for Republicans to try to paint Smith as a political operative and assail him anew for what they contend were politicized prosecutions that unfolded during the 2024 presidential race. Democrats rallied in his defense, eliciting testimony on the legal and factual basis for the criminal cases against the then-candidate and decrying the Trump administration's firing of prosecutors involved in the investigations.

Smith, for his part, defended his work in an hours-long Senate Judiciary Committee hearing — the latest congressional effort to revisit federal cases that accused Trump of conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 race and of hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

"Anybody who has worked with me and knows me during the course of my career knows that I would not let politics play a role. And I would just add that if you knew the people I worked with, they would not either," Smith said. He lamented what he called an unprecedented assault on the rule of law by the Trump administration, along with terminations of his team that he said had deprived the government of crucial expertise and made the country less safe.

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"That has never happened in my career. I have never seen anything remotely like it in any Republican or Democratic administration," he said.

An effort to accuse Smith of perjury backfires

The testimony did nothing to appease Smith's Republican critics, including Sen. Eric Schmitt, who called Smith a "dirtbag" and a "villain" as he addressed him.

The Missouri senator was also at the center of the hearing's most memorable moment and gaffe, when he asked Smith whether he recalled attending a professional basketball game in Atlanta in February 2024, around the time Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis was facing scrutiny for her romantic relationship with Nathan Wade, the special state prosecutor she hired for the county's election-interference case against Trump.

Smith appeared perplexed by the question, which tried to make an unsubstantiated link between federal and state prosecutions of Trump.

"I do not have a recollection of going to Atlanta," Smith said. "I definitely did not go to a Hawks game. I'm sure of that."

At that point, staffers held up posterboard displaying text messages that, according to Schmitt, purported to show communications about Smith's attendance at an NBA game between the hometown Atlanta Hawks and the Golden State Warriors.

"I think you've already perjured yourself," Schmitt said.

The confusion appeared resolved minutes later when Smith volunteered that he indeed had gone to a basketball game in February 2024 — an Iowa Hawkeyes women's matchup at the University of Maryland that had nothing to do with the Atlanta Hawks.

"Could it then be that the University of Iowa is the Hawkeyes? Could that be it?" Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota said as she chided Schmitt. "That might be the confusion over the names of the team. But perhaps you should have looked at it more carefully."

The hearing focused heavily on subpoenas for lawmakers' phone records

Smith was pressed by Republican senators about his access to the phone records of GOP lawmakers as he investigated Trump's efforts to reverse his loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Prosecutors issued subpoenas for toll records of numerous Republican members of Congress who were contacted by Trump or his aides on Jan. 6, 2021, the day supporters of the president rioted inside the U.S. Capitol. Smith has said such subpoenas are common in investigations and were necessary in this instance to understand the "scope of the conspiracy" between Trump and his Republican allies.

The subpoenas, he said Tuesday, provided corroborating evidence that Trump and his alleged co-conspirators sought to exploit the violence of the day by invoking it to try to further delay the congressional certification of Biden's win.

"They were taking the fact that law enforcement officers had been brutally assaulted at this institution and using that to seek to delay the proceedings further in violation of the law," Smith said.

Toll records reveal the date, time and duration of phone calls between two parties but not the content of the communications.

There is no legal prohibition against obtaining the toll records of members of Congress, and Democrats noted that the first Trump administration Justice Department had sought records for representatives of their party during an investigation.

Nonetheless, the revelation that Smith's team secretly obtained the records has animated Republican lawmakers, who consider it proof of overreach by the Biden administration Justice Department and the hard-charging prosecutor it picked as special counsel. Smith pointed out that he had consulted with the Justice Department's Public Integrity Section.

In July, the Republican chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, referred Smith to the Justice Department for potential prosecution on allegations he lied at a previous hearing about the records collection — something Smith and his attorneys vigorously dispute.

"I stand by my testimony before the House of Representatives," Smith said Tuesday. "I will not be silenced

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by the continued threats of prosecution from the president or others.”

Smith faced biting personal criticism from Republicans

Smith was appointed by then-Attorney General Merrick Garland to lead investigations into Trump’s efforts to reverse his election loss and Trump’s retention of classified documents. Smith abandoned the prosecutions after Trump’s 2024 win, citing Justice Department opinions that sitting presidents cannot be federally indicted.

Smith has remained a top target of retribution for Trump. Republicans on the committee followed that lead, confronting him in a hearing that frequently devolved into partisan sniping and name-calling. They sought to cast the prosecutions as a political fishing expedition, accusing Smith of bending procedures in pursuit of Trump.

“The Smith election case ultimately wasn’t just about Trump,” said Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, the committee chairman. “It was about partisan agents and prosecutors mapping out the Republican apparatus.”

During one tense exchange, Republican Sen. John Kennedy grew exasperated as he asked whether the Biden White House instructed the Justice Department to prosecute Trump. Smith said he had “no idea about that,” and that the decision to prosecute Trump was his own.

In an effort to depict Smith as evasive, Kennedy asked him if he believed in the tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny. Smith said no.

“You make me want to throw up in my mouth,” Kennedy said.

Democrats, by contrast, used the hearing to affirm the legitimacy of the Trump investigations and produce testimony on the scope of criminal conduct that Smith says he and his team found.

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the committee’s top Democrat, accused Republicans of spreading “baseless conspiracy theories” about Smith’s investigations in an effort to “whitewash” the history of Trump’s election loss and the subsequent Capitol attack.

“The aspersions cast on Mr. Smith, nonstop, are petty, personal and political. They are nothing but a smoke screen to distract from the president’s own clear, unlawful conduct,” Durbin said.

Federal prosecutors charge Venezuelan man shot by ICE agent in Texas with assaulting an officer

By ANNA WILDER and SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Federal prosecutors on Tuesday announced an assault charge against a Venezuelan delivery driver who was shot in his car by a federal immigration agent in Texas, accusing the man of striking an officer with his side mirror while trying to drive away.

Wilber Rafael Garces Perez, 28, was charged with one count of assaulting, resisting and impeding a federal officer, according to a criminal complaint. Garces Perez, whose attorney has said he still has a bullet lodged in his back from the Sept. 20 shooting, made an initial court appearance in an Austin federal court on Tuesday, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Western District of Texas.

A nine-page affidavit from a Department of Homeland Security agent amounts to the government’s fullest public account to date of the shooting in the Texas capital, which has set off protests and outrage from Democrats over the Trump administration’s immigration crackdown. The document includes photos taken from body-worn cameras but no video was released, and the complaint did not say whether the agent allegedly struck by the side mirror sustained any injuries.

The accusations against Garces Perez are reminiscent of previous claims made by immigration agents after high-profile shootings, in which officers have similarly accused drivers of weaponizing their vehicles. In a handful of cases, those allegations have been undermined or walked back after the release of body-worn camera footage, and have renewed scrutiny about the DHS’s reliance on vehicular stops to execute arrests.

Garces Perez was in the custody of U.S. Marshals after being removed from a federal detention center in South Texas, according to court documents filed by federal prosecutors. Separately, Garces Perez’s at-

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torneys have filed a lawsuit seeking to stop his removal from the U.S.

During the federal court hearing Tuesday, Garces Perez was in "extremely bad medical condition," his lawyer Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch said, describing him as light-headed, nauseated and confused about what was happening. For the nine days since he has been incarcerated, Lincoln-Goldfinch said, Garces Perez has not stopped pleading for surgery to remove the bullet, which is preventing him from moving his arm without pain. DHS did not immediately respond to questions on Tuesday afternoon about Garces Perez's medical treatment.

If convicted, Garces Perez faces up to 20 years in prison.

Affidavit says agent was struck in torso by side mirror

According to an affidavit signed by a DHS agent, officers first saw Garces Perez's car parked outside of a restaurant with its emergency flashers on. They decided to pull him over after conducting a database check that showed the car was registered to Garces Perez who had a final order of removal from the U.S.

The agents said that they turned on their lights to execute the stop, but in the same filing, Garces Perez told investigators that an unmarked SUV followed him and then abruptly cut him off on the side of the road.

Garces Perez, who was making a DoorDash delivery, provided his driver's license through a crack in the window, but ignored agents' requests to step out of the car, the complaint said. Garces Perez told investigators that he declined to exit because he had asked for officers to wait to apprehend him until his wife could come retrieve his car. Court documents describe the interaction as initially conversational, with a tone that was "pleasant and not aggressive."

About a minute later, according to court records, Garces Perez "abruptly" closed the window and drove off. One of the officers, who is referred to only by his initials, was struck in his torso with the driver's side view mirror when Garces Perez tried to drive away, the documents say.

Officer who fired wasn't wearing body camera

The unnamed officer who shot Garces Perez wasn't wearing a body camera. The other officer involved in the chase was wearing a camera, but only caught up to the chase after Garces Perez had been shot, according to the affidavit.

ICE has previously said its field officers nationwide will have body-worn cameras by the end of September.

The affidavit included screenshots from previously unreleased body-worn camera footage of the officer's initial interactions with ICE agents. The first of three photos appears to show the officer standing in front of Garces Perez's driver's door mirror; the second shows the officer resting his hands on the hood and side of Garces Perez's car, with the mirror close to or touching the officer's abdomen; and the third appears to show the car pulling away.

Lincoln-Goldfinch called on DHS to release the full body-worn camera footage, rather than screenshots that she said could be misleading.

"This is an example of the government playing games with my client's life and safety," she said.

The Austin Police Department last week released video from its officers. But that footage did not show the shooting or the moment that Garces Perez allegedly tried driving away.

Conflicting accounts of lead-up to shooting

The affidavit includes Garces Perez providing his account to federal investigators, which paints a contrasting picture of the lead-up to the shooting than what federal prosecutors described.

According to the affidavit, Garces Perez said that a law enforcement SUV struck his car after a brief chase and caused it to spin before an agent opened fire, shooting him in the back. By contrast, U.S. Attorney Justin R. Simmons said in a statement that Garces Perez tried to strike an officer with his car, "causing the officer to fire his pistol."

Garces Perez entered the U.S. in 2024 using CBP One, a program begun under President Joe Biden that allowed migrants to make appointments with U.S. authorities to be considered for asylum. President Trump ended the program on his first day in office.

Garces Perez was an asylum seeker and had a valid work permit, according to his lawyer. She said a judge issued a deportation order after Garces Perez missed an immigration court hearing because the notice was sent to a former address.

Others have faced charges following ICE shootings

The shooting occurred amid a surge in ICE enforcement across the U.S. during President Donald Trump's second term. ICE reported more than 50,000 monthly arrests in July and August — a first for the agency.

Immigration officers have come under intense scrutiny for shootings that have occurred since Trump took office in January 2025 — at least 10 of which have been fatal. On a few occasions, federal law enforcement has charged the person shot by immigration officers with assault.

A woman shot several times by Border Patrol officers in Chicago and a man shot in the leg by an ICE agent in Minneapolis were both accused of assaulting officers, but in both cases the charges were dropped. The ICE officer in Minneapolis has since been charged with lying about getting assaulted before shooting the man in the leg.

Florida executes 77-year-old man convicted of a deadly hammer attack on a woman

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

STARKE, Fla. (AP) — A 77-year-old Florida man was put to death Tuesday for a deadly hammer attack on a woman decades ago, becoming the 16th person executed this year in the nation's busiest death chamber.

Curtis Wilkie Beasley was pronounced dead at 6:12 p.m. following a three-drug injection at Florida State Prison near Starke. He was convicted of first-degree murder, robbery and grand theft auto in the 1995 killing of Carolyn Monfort at her home south of Orlando.

The death chamber curtain opened at 6 p.m. with Beasley already strapped to a gurney with an IV in his arm. A spiritual adviser sat at his feet, remaining there throughout the execution.

When a warden asked whether he wished to make a final statement, Beasley said, "I want to apologize for all the mistakes I made."

The execution began immediately afterward. Beasley breathed heavily as the drugs began flowing. His labored breathing eventually subsided, and the warden checked Beasley's eyes and shouted his name, but he did not respond.

A medic entered the chamber at 6:11 p.m. and declared Beasley dead soon afterward.

No relatives issued any public statements afterward and it was not apparent whether any of the victim's family had witnessed the execution.

Last week, the Florida Supreme Court rejected arguments that executing a man of Beasley's age who was suffering from cognitive decline would constitute cruel and unusual punishment. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to intervene Tuesday. Beasley was the seventh Florida prisoner over 70 to be executed this year.

Beasley also was the 29th person — all of them men — executed in the U.S. this year. On Wednesday Tennessee plans to execute a woman for the first time in 200 years. Christa Pike, 50, is scheduled to receive a lethal injection for killing a classmate in a jealous rage when both were teenagers.

Arrested while working under a fake name

Court records show Beasley had been staying at Monfort's home in Dundee in August 1995 while he was pressure-washing and painting nearby apartments owned by her son-in-law. Monfort's daughter went to the woman's home after being unable to reach her for two days and found her body in a blood-splattered laundry room.

Monfort had suffered multiple blunt-force injuries to the head. Investigators found a bloody hammer head wrapped in a towel nearby.

Authorities began searching for Beasley after a witness reported seeing him driving what turned out to be Monfort's car. Investigators determined that he had traveled to Miami and later moved to Alabama, where he was arrested while working under a false name for an electrical company. In 1998, Beasley was convicted and sentenced to death.

Florida has conducted more than half of all U.S. executions this year

Florida is approaching last year's total of 19 executions, a record in the state since the death penalty was

reinstated in 1976. In July, Florida executed two prisoners in one day, the first state in nearly a decade to do so.

Two more executions are scheduled this year although Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who leaves office in January, has temporarily paused the next one.

William Lee Thompson, 74, is scheduled to be executed Oct. 13 for raping and fatally beating a woman at a Florida motel in 1976. After a doctor recently determined Thompson might have dementia, DeSantis ordered a panel of three psychiatrists to examine him and advise if he is competent to be executed.

DeSantis issued similar stays in 2023 and 2025 though both executions proceeded after evaluations.

William Reaves, 77, is scheduled to be executed on Oct. 20. He was convicted of fatally shooting a deputy outside a convenience store in 1986.

All Florida executions are carried out via injections of a sedative, a paralytic and a drug that stops the heart, according to the Department of Corrections.

Altman unveils 'always-on' AI agent after OpenAI shelves model over safety concerns

By KAITLYN HUAMANI AP Technology Writer

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman introduced a "remarkably capable, always-on" artificial intelligence agent at an appearance Tuesday, a day after the company halted the rollout of a more advanced model over safety concerns.

At the company's annual developer conference, Altman made a slew of product announcements and updates, including OpenAI's new agents, called Dots. The agents, designed to complete ongoing tasks proactively on behalf of users, are a competitor of Meta's personal agent Muse, which exploded in popularity after Meta's own conference last week.

Dot agents will be "like an AI helper that always has your back, inspired by the cool versions of what we all watched in movies growing up," Altman said.

On Monday, OpenAI said it was holding off on releasing the other model because of concerns raised by its researchers. That followed broader calls within the industry to decelerate the pace of the technology's advance to let safety measures catch up.

Altman avoided making references to concerns around the shelved model during his keynote address, but said during a question-and-answer session that the company was investing more in safety, security and monitoring of AI agents.

The AI boom should be considered more like a period of renaissance than an industrial revolution, he said. "The best version of AI is not about making people cogs in a giant machine, ever whirring faster and faster. There are some parts of life that we cannot and should not automate," Altman said. "AI should be about giving people more power over their own lives, more tools to create, learn, discover, expand knowledge."

The company also announced the release of GPT-6.1 Sol, an upgraded version of its model GPT-6 Sol, and a premium speed tier called "Ultrafast," among other launches and updates.

Open AI's announcements came just before leaders from six of the leading AI companies, including OpenAI, signed a voluntary accord with President Donald Trump Tuesday to "self-police" development. The accord said the companies would implement "robust internal controls," partner with an "independent external auditor" to assess whether the controls were working, and set up a committee among each company's board of directors to evaluate reports from internal and external auditors.

While many in Silicon Valley have called for the government to help establish guardrails for the technology, Trump has pushed back against the idea of greater government oversight of AI.

While Altman didn't attend, OpenAI president and co-founder Greg Brockman was at the White House, along with Dario Amodei of Anthropic, Amazon chief Jeff Bezos, Nvidia's Jensen Huang, Tesla and SpaceX's Elon Musk and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella.

Military academies won't give tenure to civilian faculty, Hegseth says

By ANNIE MA and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Defense Department will no longer appoint civilians as tenured college faculty at the United States' military service academies, according to a memo signed Tuesday by Secretary Pete Hegseth.

The memo describes the decision to stop granting tenure to civilian faculty as part of an effort to refocus the military academies on warfighting.

"To ensure our educational institutions remain firmly focused on this warfighting mission, we must address the structural mechanisms that have allowed civilian academic norms to dilute our focus on lethality," the memo said.

The tenure designation generally comes with a career-long academic appointment at a college. Advocates say the job security is a crucial component of academic freedom. Hegseth's directive apparently would not remove the designation from faculty members who are currently tenured.

The U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Air Force Academy all did not immediately respond to questions, and officials at the Pentagon did not offer further details on the plan when reached for comment.

The percentage of faculty who are civilians varies by military academy. It is highest at the United States Naval Academy, where roughly half of the 600 faculty members are civilians. The academies hire civilian faculty to offer expertise in topics and disciplines that military officers don't study as part of their careers, such as English and the humanities.

Hegseth's decision follows broader conservative attacks on tenured faculty appointments in higher education. Those efforts to rein in tenure are often presented as bids to rein in academics with liberal views.

Civilian faculty members often have more teaching experience and credentials than their military counterparts at the service academies, said Eric Merriam, a legal studies and political science professor at the University of Central Florida and a former professor at the Air Force Academy.

The academies have long served a dual role — training the next generation of officers, while providing a traditional, prestigious, four-year college experience, Merriam said. The schools offer a broad, liberal arts education, in recognition that senior leadership must be critical thinkers who can understand different points of view.

Hegseth's actions signal a shift toward a narrower focus, Merriam said.

"It does seem to me as though it's a retrenchment," he said. "It's a retreat from what I think was positive progress in ensuring that these elite educational academies actually have elite education as part of the program."

In Hegseth's memo Tuesday, tenure was described as a factor that contributed to "academic stagnation, faculty complacency, and institutional inability to adapt to emerging needs. Additionally, it contributes to curriculum that drifts from the mission of educating our warfighters to the research priorities of the tenured academics."

Traditionally, tenured professors can be terminated only under extreme circumstances, such as professional misconduct or a financial emergency. Advocates say it's especially important to maintain tenure as controversy grows over scholarly discussions about history, race, gender and sexuality.

The decision Tuesday is part of a broader push from Hegseth to remake the military's education apparatus. Earlier this year, the Pentagon severed longstanding ties with prestigious universities that had been a pipeline for military leadership, forging new relationships with Christian schools and public universities.

The Pentagon has also attempted to reorient the K-12 schools it operates for military families. It introduced a course centered on Western civilization and Christianity, part of an effort to redirect the education system toward patriotic values and classical learning.

Former 'American Idol' singer Caleb Flynn convicted of fatally shooting his wife

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

A former Ohio music pastor who once appeared on "American Idol" was convicted of murder Tuesday in the killing of his wife while he was having an affair.

Prosecutors said Caleb Flynn, 40, staged a home invasion in February after shooting his wife, Ashley Flynn, a 37-year-old schoolteacher and volleyball coach.

Flynn, who claimed his wife was killed by a burglar, could get up to life in prison without the chance of parole when he's sentenced on Monday.

Flynn closed his eyes, shook his head to the side and fought to maintain his composure as the judge read the guilty verdicts on charges of murder, felonious assault and tampering with evidence. He began sobbing while the judge dismissed the jury. His attorney called the verdicts "disappointing" and said he expects to file an appeal.

Flynn appeared on "American Idol" in 2013, telling TV viewers about how his wife had encouraged him to chase his dreams on the singing competition. He sang before judges Mariah Carey, Randy Jackson and Nicki Minaj but did not advance to the main competition in Hollywood.

Prosecutors told jurors during closing arguments Tuesday that Flynn wanted out of his marriage when he shot his wife at their home in Tipp City, a suburb north of Dayton. Flynn and the couple's two daughters were home when police arrived.

The night before the fatal shooting, he sent a text to his lover saying: "I choose you. I'm free. Actions will come tomorrow," said Matthew Joseph, an assistant Miami County prosecutor.

Flynn didn't want to lose his daughters, his high-paying job at his wife's family business or his position in the church, prosecutors said.

"He wanted to keep his mistress and have his daughters all to himself," Joseph said.

Prosecutors didn't find the gun used to kill Ashley Flynn, but they said his fingerprints and DNA were all over the scene. They also said his devices showed that he was moving about the house even though he told investigators he was sleeping when his wife was shot.

During the trial, the woman who said she was having an affair with Flynn testified that he said he hated his wife and had thoughts of killing her.

Flynn's attorney told the jury Tuesday that investigators never found evidence that Flynn fired a gun that day.

"His being unfaithful doesn't equal murder," said Patrick Mulligan. "The issue here isn't, 'Was he a good husband?'"

Text messages Flynn sent to his lover complaining about his wife were meant to make her feel good, Mulligan said.

Alleigha Botner testified she met Flynn in 2022 while she was a 20-year-old intern at his church and had an affair with him for more than a year. Botner read some of her text messages with Flynn.

About six months before the killing, Flynn wrote: "I was up until 4 a.m. last night crying, literally trying to think of ways to kill her and not to jail."

Supreme Court lets quick deportations to third countries resume for now while it weighs Trump policy

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Tuesday let President Donald Trump's administration continue swiftly deporting people to countries other than their own for now, while the justices consider whether the policy is legal.

The apparent 6-3 order temporarily lifts lower court requirements for migrants to get a chance to object before being sent to countries to which they have no ties.

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The Supreme Court will hear arguments in December.

Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson would have kept the lower court order in place.

The Trump administration said last week the lower court order forced the cancellation of a deportation flight carrying about 70 people bound for three countries.

The conservative majority has sided with the administration before on the core Trump administration policy, allowing deportation flights to temporarily continue last year.

The court said it will consider several questions: whether the policy is lawful, whether lower courts had the authority to consider the case and issue a sweeping block, as well as other questions the government deems appropriate.

The order "has now allowed the administration to resume sending people to third countries where they may face persecution, torture, imprisonment, or other grave danger," said Trina Realmuto, executive director of the National Immigration Litigation Alliance and one of the lawyers representing immigrants in the case.

"But today's order does not decide that the government's policy is lawful," she said in a statement. "The Court will hear that question on an expedited schedule."

Under a series of often-secret agreements, the Trump administration has deported some 25,000 people to more than two dozen countries, from Liberia to Guyana. The vast majority have been sent to Mexico.

Trump's Republican administration has said that it sends people with final deportation orders to third countries when they can't be returned to their homelands or their native countries won't accept them, including those who have criminal convictions. Those governments provide assurances that people won't be persecuted or tortured, federal attorneys said.

Attorney General Todd Blanche called the policy "an entirely lawful and critical tool for immigration enforcement" in a social media post.

Some migrants, though, have found themselves imprisoned in countries they'd never heard of before their arrivals. Others also face serious safety risks and are left with little choice except to return to the home countries they were fleeing. Many have no criminal convictions and have been found to be at risk of torture or persecution, attorneys for the immigrants said.

The case comes amid a sweeping immigration crackdown by the Trump administration, which has pledged to deport millions of people who are living in the United States illegally.

New York Gov. Hochul pushes for investigation into Cornell's handling of a 2024 gang rape allegation

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul on Tuesday called for an investigation into Cornell University's response to a 2024 gang rape allegation in which a woman says she was sexually assaulted by seven students after being plied with alcohol and drugs.

The woman filed a lawsuit this month saying she was sexually assaulted at the Chi Phi fraternity house on Cornell's campus in October 2024. Her suit says the assault occurred after she was pressured into snorting ketamine, smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol, to the point where she was incapable of consenting to sex.

The woman reported the incident to Cornell's campus police department, but the local district attorney's office opted not to prosecute anyone at the time. It reopened the criminal investigation Monday as public outrage built over the woman's allegations.

Hochul calls for an outside law firm to investigate Cornell's response

Hochul, a Democrat, said she supported Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten's decision to reopen his investigation, but said bigger questions remain about Cornell's reporting, response, and prevention systems, as well as its campus culture. The governor called for an outside law firm to be hired to independently investigate the university's response.

"The allegations in this case are nothing short of horrifying," Hochul said in a statement. "For any student

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to come forward after an experience like this takes extraordinary courage. No student should ever be left wondering whether the institutions meant to protect them will listen and act."

An email seeking comment was sent to Cornell on Tuesday.

Prosecutor defends decision not to bring charges

In several media interviews on Tuesday, Van Houten argued that while the male students involved did things that were "morally wrong," the woman's initial account of the incident to police didn't include allegations that she was drugged, incapacitated beyond the ability to consent, or forced into sex.

"She went to the police because she knew it wasn't right," Van Houten told CNN.

Van Houten has not released the victim's sworn statement to police, but instead released a summary with some of her direct quotes included. He also defended his office's decision not to do additional investigation after the woman, who was identified in court filings by the pseudonym Jane Doe, initially spoke to police.

"There were no question marks. There was no additional need to find information because we had all of the information that the police collected from Jane Doe through her very detailed, very comprehensive statement that she provided," Van Houten said.

Van Houten's office did not talk directly to the victim, but the district attorney had told the police that he would sit down with her to explain the law.

Cornell supports reopening investigation

Shortly after the woman first made her allegations in 2024, Cornell publicly disclosed that it was investigating "serious and deeply disturbing allegations of drug abuse and sexual violence at the Chi Phi fraternity house." It also announced that the fraternity and several students had been suspended, and that parallel police and school investigations were underway.

On Monday, the university said in a statement that it supported the decision to reopen the criminal investigation, adding that its own investigation had led to some students being disciplined or expelled. The Chi Phi chapter remains barred from campus. Cornell has declined to release more information on discipline for individual students, citing privacy rules.

The woman's complaint accuses the university of not preventing the alleged assaults and of failing to properly address sexual violence on campus. It includes a photo that it says shows a group chat between frat members discussing the night's events.

Van Houten called the photo a "red herring," saying that it had no bearing on the legal analysis of the case.

"We received it, but it was not relevant to the assessment of whether Jane Doe consented or whether there was any evidence of lack of consent on her part as defined by the penal law," he said.

FACT FOCUS: The poverty rate is at an all-time low, but there are other factors to consider

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

President Donald Trump is adding to the economic numbers he touts, claiming the lowest poverty numbers in history.

In part, he is correct. His comments, made Sunday and again Monday, are supported by the Census Bureau's latest annual poverty report, released earlier this month, which found that the poverty rate in 2025 was the lowest it's been since tracking began nearly 70 years ago.

But another measure of poverty, widely regarded among experts as more comprehensive, is not at an all-time low. Plus, the 2025 poverty rate only reflects the first few months of Trump's second administration.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

TRUMP, on Monday: "We have the best poverty numbers in history. We have the best poverty, meaning the lowest. We have the best poverty numbers."

THE FACTS: This is missing context. The poverty rate in 2025 was 10.2%, according to a report released this month by the Census Bureau. That's the lowest rate on record since 1959, when the agency started tracking it. However, it was determined using a survey conducted in March of that year — only three

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months after Trump reentered the White House. The supplemental poverty measure, which, unlike the poverty rate, accounts for factors such as non-cash benefits like food aid and household expenses, was at 13.1% in 2025. It reached an all-time low of 7.7% in 2021, under former President Joe Biden.

"What he said is factually correct, but it's a misleading characterization of the state of poverty," said Steven Durlauf, a professor of public policy at the University of Chicago who studies poverty, inequality and economic growth.

In addition to what is known as the official poverty rate, the Census Bureau also examines the numbers using the supplemental poverty measure, or SPM. It accounts for resources such as SNAP benefits and Medicaid, as well as expenses such as housing and medical costs. The official poverty rate compares pretax cash income to a national poverty threshold, taking into account the size and makeup of a family.

The SPM, which has been tracked by the Census Bureau since 2009, is not a replacement for the traditional poverty rate, though it is considered more accurate by experts because of the additional factors it reflects.

"You want to have the most comprehensive vision of what the resources are that they have and what the costs are," Durlauf said. "What it is trying to do is look more systematically at what the resources are available to a family and accounting for differences in the flows of both directions."

Durlauf added that one reason the SPM was so low in 2021 was a temporary increase in the child tax credit under the American Rescue Plan, a COVID-era initiative. The credit expired in December 2021.

The official poverty rate fell because incomes have risen. The median U.S. household income went up 2.6% in 2025 from the previous year, after adjusting for inflation, to \$87,460, according to the Census Bureau. That's a record high, topping the 2019 household income of \$85,320. Even though there are more people living below the poverty line than there have been in past years, the official poverty rate is lower because of population growth. There were 34.51 million people living below the poverty line in 2025, compared with an all-time low of 22.97 million in 1973. But while the 2025 number is larger, the U.S. population was 11.54 million higher, which drove down the rate.

Both the official poverty rate and the SPM are calculated using the Current Population Survey's March supplement. This means that the 2025 rates are a snapshot of poverty from March of that year and don't reflect the current economy. Trump began his second administration in January 2025, just three months prior.

"Unless he managed to make something really dramatically happen in six weeks, it's really reflective of Biden, to the extent that we think that it's actually driven by the presidency or not," said Natasha Pilkauskas, an associate faculty director at the University of Michigan's Poverty Solutions initiative.

Asked for comment on Trump's claims, the White House directed The Associated Press to a Census Bureau press release about three of its most recent reports, including the one on poverty. The Census Bureau did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Iran's currency hits a new record low as war erodes the country's economic stability

By AAMER MADHANI and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

Iran's currency fell to a new record low on Tuesday, with traders in Tehran exchanging more than 2.5 million rials to the U.S. dollar in a stark reflection of how the war in the Middle East has steadily eroded the Iranian economy.

The latest decline came just 27 days after the rial hit its previous record low of 2.2 million to the dollar on Sept. 2. The currency has repeatedly reached new lows since the war began in February.

The Iranian economy has been under duress for years in the face of international sanctions. But a U.S. naval blockade on Iranian oil and new sanctions imposed since the start of the war have sent it into free fall.

Meanwhile, Iran's top diplomat said indirect negotiations with the United States aimed at reopening the critical Strait of Hormuz have become "more serious," while the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' chief spokesman Gen. Hossein Mohebbi on Tuesday called on Americans to take to the streets and protest the conflict.

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Iran's top diplomat raises the prospect of new talks

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Iranian media late on Monday that the "current focus is solely on the Strait of Hormuz," the chokepoint of the war.

Araghchi made the comments shortly before departing New York — where he attended last week's gathering of world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly — and after meeting with Pakistani and Qatari mediators.

Araghchi said the Qatari intermediaries were expected to soon engage with the U.S. side.

"They are set to raise the matter with the American side once more, after which the final U.S. response will be conveyed to us," Araghchi said. "If there is a response, the Qataris will convey it to us and a decision will be made in Tehran on that basis."

Officials, including from the U.S., have confirmed to The Associated Press that mediators are working with Iran and the U.S. on trying to broker a deal to end the fighting and open the strait.

The mediation efforts continue even after U.S. President Donald Trump earlier this week spurned an Iranian proposal to reopen the strait in seven days if the U.S. agreed to lift its blockade of Iranian ports, release frozen Iranian assets and waive sanctions on Iranian oil sales, among other conditions.

Tensions in the Strait of Hormuz were underscored by a report Tuesday that a cargo vessel was struck by an "unknown projectile" while moving through the strait on Monday. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said it had received a delayed report from a third party.

The strike caused a fire on board that was extinguished, UKMTO said, and all crew members were reported safe, UKMTO said. The vessel, which wasn't identified, continued on its way, the report said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

US targets Iran's military supply chain with new sanctions

The Trump administration said Tuesday that 10 individuals and entities based in Iran, Hong Kong and Pakistan now face sanctions over accusations of procuring weapons and weapon components for Iran's defense ministry as it fights its now seven-month war against the U.S.

The United States is targeting people and companies around the globe that it accuses of being financial facilitators or enablers of Iran's military supply chain, pushing ahead with economic warfare against Tehran at a time when renewed diplomacy between the two countries remains uncertain.

The latest action by the Treasury Department is part of the administration's "Operation Economic Out-cast" campaign, aimed at severing "critical financial lifelines" for the already heavily sanctioned Iranian government.

"Treasury will not tolerate any support to the regime and will continue to identify, expose, and isolate Iran's enablers," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

Iran sends a provocative message to the US public

The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps on Tuesday made an appeal to everyday Americans to push their government to end the U.S. war against Iran, a provocative message that comes just weeks before critical midterm elections in the United States.

Mohebbi, the Guard spokesman, read a letter during a news conference in Iran's capital, Tehran, appealing to Americans to pressure their government and claiming that the only way for the war to end is for Washington to admit defeat and leave the Mideast.

Mohebbi's remarks come as Trump's Republican Party faces fierce headwinds as it looks to maintain control of Congress. But polling shows the war has darkened the American electorate's mood ahead of the Nov. 3 election in which elevated gasoline prices, a byproduct of the conflict, loom large.

Mohebbi also accused the U.S. of using Iran's nuclear program as a ruse to "plunder Iran's wealth" and to turn the country "back into a colony."

He added that the U.S. and others failed in their belief that military and economic action would get Tehran to submit and that Washington "has no choice but to acknowledge defeat and leave the region."

"This is how the war will end," he said.

Trump and his top aides are insistent that Iran's economy cannot sustain a conflict much longer and have

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expressed confidence that Tehran will be forced to capitulate.

The U.S. president predicted soon after launching the war that the conflict would last a matter of weeks. More recently, he's said that the war will likely end after the November elections in the U.S.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a Monday appearance on Fox News said Iran was heading toward an economic "cataclysm." Administration officials say that a combination of new sanctions and a U.S. naval blockade aimed at preventing Iranian oil from going to market are having the intended effect.

"And so when you're denying them money through oil sales and sanctions, you're not just punishing them," Rubio said. "You are preventing them from getting access to money that they will use to try and kill Americans and others around the world and their own people and build weapons and threaten the world and ultimately break out to a nuclear weapon program."

Major Saudi pipeline is once again operating

In a separate development, a crucial oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia that was shuttered by the kingdom earlier this month after coming under attack is once again operating, according to a Saudi government official.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said operations are near pre-attack levels and that the pipeline should be running at full capacity within a few weeks.

The kingdom relies on the East-West Pipeline, which runs the breadth of the country, to move its crude from oil processing facilities on the Gulf to ports on its western, Red Sea coast. From there it can be put on tankers for export.

Saudi Arabia blamed an Iran-backed militia in Iraq for the drone attack that forced the temporary shut-down of the 1,200-kilometer (745-mile) pipeline.

Satellite imagery indicated tankers on Sunday loaded some 12.5 million barrels of oil at the Yanbu export terminal, which is supplied by the East-West Pipeline, and the nearby terminal at Al Muajjiz, the data and analytical firm Kpler said in a report.

Woman accused of shooting at Rihanna's home is mentally fit for trial, judge says

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A woman accused of spraying bullets at Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky's home, hitting a trailer the celebrity couple was inside and a nursery their kids were in, was found mentally competent by a judge on Tuesday to stand trial.

Ivanna Lisette Ortiz, 36, of Orlando, Florida, has pleaded not guilty to trying to murder Rihanna and to more than a dozen other felony charges stemming from the shooting in March. No one was injured, but bullets tore through an Airstream trailer that the singing superstar and A\$AP Rocky were in. Shots also struck the wall of a nursery where their small children were at the time.

"Criminal proceedings are reinstated," Judge Maria Cavalluzzi said at a very brief hearing in Los Angeles County court after months of psychiatric evaluations.

Ortiz appeared behind glass in a custody area of the courtroom, wearing yellow jail clothes and handcuffs. She didn't speak during the hearing. She could get life in prison if convicted of all the charges.

There was no direct discussion of the mental evaluations in court, and case documents that include such details have been sealed. Ortiz has been returned to the regular criminal court process, which had been suspended shortly after it began. She was ordered to appear at a hearing Wednesday.

Attorneys for both sides declined comment outside court after the hearing.

Police and prosecutors allege that Ortiz drove a Tesla up to the Beverly Hills-area property of Rihanna and her rapper partner on March 8, pointed an AR-15 style rifle out the window and fired at least 20 rounds toward the property and a neighboring house.

Investigators found bullet holes in the trailer and on the exterior wall of the home's second-floor nursery, where the three kids were with their nanny.

Investigators said that after her arrest later that day, Ortiz said: "I wasn't attempting murder."

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Ortiz is charged with 10 counts of assault with a semiautomatic firearm, one for each of the people on the two properties. She's also charged with three counts of shooting at an occupied vehicle or dwelling.

Ortiz had no prior police record, authorities said. Public records show she had been a licensed speech pathologist for more than a decade.

Authorities have not discussed a motive or described any connection between Ortiz and Rihanna. Her lawyers have not offered comment on her beyond her not guilty plea and procedural issues.

A nine-time Grammy Award winner, Rihanna has had 14 No. 1 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, including "We Found Love," "Work," "Umbrella" and "Disturbia."

Trump touts America.gov, but its government-sourced AI answers undercut many of his statements

By MEG KINNARD, CHRIS RUGABER and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has lauded its revamped website America.gov as a way to simplify Americans' access to information and services scattered across a plethora of agency sites, but President Donald Trump probably won't like some of the answers his new site says are sourced from government information.

Asking the site — which says it's sourced via artificial intelligence from "official government sources" — questions about who won the 2020 election or about the name of the federal department that operates out of the Pentagon yields answers contrary to those Trump himself frequently proclaims.

As Trump was still speaking at Tuesday's launch event, however, the site began modifying its answers. Asked again about the 2020 election, it replied that it couldn't answer "political questions," a response it also gave to inquiries about whether Trump had been impeached or convicted of felony charges.

The Associated Press asked about:

The 2020 presidential election

"Official federal sources do not show that widespread fraud changed the 2020 presidential election outcome. Isolated election crimes did occur and have been prosecuted."

Since Trump, a Republican, lost the 2020 election to Democrat Joe Biden, he has repeatedly falsely claimed that victory was "stolen" from him and asserted that widespread fraud occurred. Repeated audits and recounts found no significant fraud in the presidential election, and Trump's own administration said the election was clean.

Trump running for president in 2028

"The 22nd Amendment says that no person shall be elected President more than twice. Donald J. Trump has already been elected twice (2016 and 2024). I am not giving legal advice."

Trump has frequently suggested he wants to seek a third term, posting about mounting another campaign, donning 2028 caps and discussing ways to make it happen — even as he's acknowledged the Constitution prohibits it. He had only been back in the White House for a couple of months when he told NBC News, "There are methods which you could" use to seek a third term.

The Pentagon

"The Pentagon is the headquarters of the Department of Defense."

Last year, Trump signed an executive order aimed at rebranding the Department of Defense as the Department of War, complaining that the Department of Defense's name was "woke."

Human action as cause of climate change

"Federal climate-science pages say recent warming is largely from human greenhouse-gas emissions, mainly burning fossil fuels. Earth's climate has also changed for natural reasons over long periods."

Trump, who has called climate change a "hoax," previously issued an executive order that directed the Environmental Protection Agency to submit a report on "the legality and continuing applicability" of the endangerment finding. Conservatives and some congressional Republicans have long sought to undo what they consider overly restrictive and economically damaging rules to limit greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

Presidential salaries

The chatbot said that "some presidents have declined to keep that pay," mentioning Trump but listing George Washington, Herbert Hoover and John F. Kennedy as refusing their salaries before Trump.

During his remarks Tuesday, Trump, a real estate mogul who took in about \$1.2 billion from various crypto holdings last year, said he was the first U.S. president to forgo a salary, something that he has said before.

Americans' view of the economy sinks to the lowest level since 2014, Conference Board survey says

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans' confidence in the economy sank to the lowest level in more than a decade this month as prices remain elevated and wages stagnate amid the ongoing Iran war.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index tumbled 6.7 points to 81.9 in September, down from 88.6 in August. That's the lowest reading in the board's survey since April 2014 and below the lowest level reached during the pandemic.

Respondents' views of their present situation fell by 7.9 points to 109.3. Their short-term outlook also slid, falling 5.9 points to 63.6.

Americans remain flustered by the economy after five years of elevated inflation, potentially posing a risk to President Donald Trump and Republicans in the midterm elections, which are a little more than a month away.

Write-in responses to the board's survey, collected from September 1-23, were mostly pessimistic this month, with frequent references to the high cost of gas, goods and services.

"The Consumer Confidence Index deteriorated notably in September, following two prior months of softening," said Dana Peterson, the Conference Board's chief economist, adding that consumers' views of current business conditions became negative for the first time since September 2024.

Trump has continued to blame high prices on his predecessor, Democrat Joe Biden, yet inflation has risen since Trump's inauguration last year.

Earlier this month, the government reported that consumer inflation accelerated last month and gas prices spiked as fighting in the Middle East dragged on. The consumer price index rose 3.4% last month compared with a year ago, the Labor Department said Friday, just like July. But inflation quickened month to month as costs jumped 0.4% from July, quadrupling the 0.1% registered in the previous month.

The Federal Reserve two weeks ago raised its benchmark interest rate for the first time since 2023 in an effort to quell stubbornly high inflation, and the central bank signaled another rate hike could occur later this year.

The quarter-point increase lifted the Fed's key rate to about 3.9% and, over time, could result in higher borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans and credit cards.

Gasoline prices — which currently average \$4.46 for a gallon of regular — are not all that is rising. Prices for appliances, car repairs, and wireless phone services also jumped in August.

The most recent measure of the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge — the personal consumption expenditures price index — was up 3.7% in June from a year earlier. That was down from May's 4.1% year-over-year increase but up from 2.8% before the Iran war began on Feb. 28. It was 2.5% when Trump was inaugurated in January 2025.

The government issues its August PCE data Wednesday.

Consumers' views of the current labor market also worsened in September, but remained in positive territory, the board said. Respondents broadly said they expected their household incomes to rise, but not as much as in previous months.

The U.S. labor market bounced back in August as employers added a surprising 162,000 jobs, ending a summer of lackluster hiring. The unemployment rate remained at a low 4.1%, but some of that can be attributed to significant numbers of people giving up on their search for employment in previous months.

Inflation has dominated conversations this year in business and households, and meager pay raises have

made rising prices more painful for many. Average hourly wages rose 3.1% last month from a year earlier, the weakest year-over-year increase since May 2021.

The government issues its September jobs report on Friday.

Antisemitism allegations against her running mate cloud Le Pen's presidential campaign in France

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, her National Rally party and its allies closed ranks Tuesday behind her running mate in next year's presidential election, Jordan Bardella, in the face of media accusations that he made antisemitic remarks as a young party member.

The 31-year-old Bardella, who Le Pen says will be her prime minister if she wins the presidency in May, vigorously denied authorship of the comments about supposed Jewish banking monopolies and other antisemitic conspiracy theories that investigative website Mediapart attributed to him and published Monday.

It said they were written more than a decade ago. They included years when Bardella, now the National Rally president, was a teenage member of the party's predecessor, the National Front. It was founded by Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who repeatedly denied the Holocaust and was convicted multiple times of hate speech before his death in 2025.

Allegations of antisemitism touch a particular nerve at the National Rally because Le Pen has worked for years to distance herself from her father's sulfurous legacy. To win the presidency, she must overcome obstacles that blocked his presidential ambitions. His associations with people who collaborated with France's Nazi occupiers in World War II and his multiple convictions for antisemitism, discrimination and inciting racial violence made him anathema to many voters.

Sitting side by side, Marine Le Pen, Bardella and their ally Eric Ciotti on Tuesday used a previously scheduled gathering of their lawmakers to demonstrate unity.

They described Mediapart's allegations as the opening salvo of a supposed effort to undermine the National Rally and Le Pen as she campaigns to succeed President Emmanuel Macron, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a third consecutive term.

It's "the beginnings of an all-out war, of attempts to destabilize the presidential campaign, which — I'm telling you — will target us one after another," Bardella said.

"We have both put on our Kevlar suits, because this is heavy stuff coming down on us," Le Pen said. "This manipulation is about as subtle as a charcuterie convention."

"We are not going to let them do this to us!" she added. To applause from their lawmakers, she expressed "absolute confidence" in Bardella, who is particularly popular with young voters and has large followings on social media.

Mediapart said the comments it attributed to Bardella were drawn from private written exchanges but did not specify whether they were emails or another format. It said it independently authenticated the exchanges but did not detail how or say how it obtained them. Specializing in investigative journalism, Mediapart has become a leading news provider in France since its launch in 2008, claiming more than a quarter-million subscribers.

Bardella said he has launched a libel action against Mediapart's allegations, describing them as "a dirty-tricks operation."

"These remarks are completely delusional. They are not mine," he told broadcaster CNews.

At this early stage before the two-round election in April and May, Le Pen is widely regarded as a front-runner in the race to succeed Macron. Her campaign has been relatively free of major bumps since an appeals court in July cleared her path for a fourth run at the presidency, with a ruling that shortened a ban on seeking public office handed down to Le Pen for embezzling public funds.

Bardella, Le Pen's protégé, had been waiting in the wings to take her place as the party candidate if the original five-year ban had been upheld. On Tuesday, he described the antisemitism allegations as a plot that he alleged had been cooked up to thwart his chances had that scenario played out.

National Rally has courted Jewish voters by positioning itself as a bulwark against Islamic extremism in France and with Le Pen's sustained effort to dissociate herself from her father's legacy. In a process that researchers and critics of the party dubbed "de-demonization," she expelled him in 2015 from the National Front and rebranded it in 2018.

Yonathan Arfi, who heads a French Jewish umbrella group, CRIF, said Bardella's alleged comments, if substantiated, would represent "a stinging repudiation" of the sanitization strategy.

"How could a political figure who made such repugnant antisemitic remarks subsequently have risen to such positions of responsibility within a party that claims to have changed and to be fighting hatred of Jews?" Arfi posted on X.

Russia's ballistic missile and jet-propelled drone blitz keeps Kyiv on edge

By SUSIE BLANN and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia fired ballistic missiles and dozens of jet-powered drones at Kyiv, Ukraine's air force said Tuesday, as Moscow seeks to make Ukraine buckle under the pressure of day-and-night bombardment of its capital and other cities.

Russia has used new jet-powered drones that fly too fast and too high for Ukrainian ground-based air defenses to shoot down.

Ukraine is scrambling to keep pace by developing faster interceptor drones in the latest example of how the war has driven military innovation, but making and deploying new weapons takes months.

Russia's ballistic missiles have also penetrated Ukraine's defenses as the country is desperately short of U.S.-made Patriot air defense interceptor missiles needed to stop Moscow's ballistic attacks.

Patriot stockpiles are low, largely because of the Iran war, and Ukraine has received only small numbers of them this year despite President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's pleading. Ukraine said its air defenses shot down two ballistic missiles overnight, which suggested that Kyiv might have recently received more Patriots.

"Russia's terror against Ukraine is intensifying by the day," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on X. "This is Russia's deliberate escalation instead of accepting Ukraine's offers to cease fire, negotiate and end the war."

Moscow says it wants a comprehensive peace settlement, including a Ukrainian surrender of land — a demand unacceptable to Kyiv — before agreeing to a ceasefire.

U.S. efforts to broker peace over the past year have made no significant progress. Kremlin negotiator Kirill Dmitriev was in Washington on Monday for talks with American officials about ending the war and possible U.S.-Russia energy initiatives once it's over, according to a U.S. official familiar with the visit who spoke on condition of anonymity Tuesday because the official wasn't authorized to speak publicly. The official described the conversation as constructive.

Air defense needs are mounting with the approach of the bitter winter months, which in the years since Russia's full-scale invasion began on Feb. 24, 2022, have brought an escalation of strikes on Ukraine's power grid. That strategy denies Ukrainian civilians heating and running water, among other things.

Ukraine is working to scale up production of domestic interceptor systems able to counter Russian jet-powered drones, with new systems already being tested and deployed with some combat units, Ihor Klymenko, head of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, said Tuesday.

The work is urgent, as Kyiv has been under almost constant attack with more than 235 air raid alerts since Aug. 27, lasting a combined 261 hours, Klymenko said.

F-16 jets have been able to shoot down the jet-propelled drones, although at a much greater expense. Ukraine is due to receive three of the fighter jets from Belgium by the end of the year, Zelenskyy announced Tuesday.

The unrelenting attacks have disrupted everyday life in Kyiv. The National University of Kyiv is switching to remote learning for the coming weeks because of fears for the safety of staff and students.

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The Russian Defense Ministry said its forces hit data processing centers in Kyiv that Moscow says are used by the Ukrainian military, which is increasingly deploying artificial intelligence on the battlefield.

Other Russian targets included facilities in the Ukrainian capital and the Kyiv region where drones and cruise missiles were stored, as well as an electrical substation, a drone manufacturing facility, and port infrastructure facilities in the southern Odesa region, the ministry said.

Ukrainian authorities said the barrage hit apartment buildings, houses and public transportation in Kyiv, wounding one person.

Meanwhile, in the northern Ukrainian city of Sumy, teachers and students evacuated from their school just before four powerful glide bombs struck during classes, Zelenskyy said. The bombs also hit a residential area where two people were killed, he said.

In southern Odesa, the attack wounded eight people overnight and damaged residential buildings, civilian infrastructure, a school, an animal shelter and port infrastructure, local officials said.

In the face of the Russian blitz, Ukraine's long-range drones have targeted Russian missile and drone manufacturing plants and launch sites. Ukraine also has hit Russian oil refineries, causing fuel shortages. The two armies are largely deadlocked on the long front line in eastern and southern Ukraine.

Zelenskyy says Moscow intends to increase recruitment for another battlefield push.

He said late Monday that another 10,000 North Korean troops are heading to Russia, adding to the 8,000 he said are already there.

Russia and North Korea have made no secret of their military cooperation.

Dutch police arrest a suspected ShinyHunters member; court orders 90-day detention

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch police said Tuesday that they have arrested a suspected member of the ShinyHunters hacker group that has been held responsible for a string of serious data breaches, and accused the man of trying to arrange two murders.

Police said they arrested a 24-year-old man from Amsterdam on Sept. 15 who is "suspected of playing a role in the hacker group ShinyHunters. The man is also suspected of attempted solicitation of two murders."

Police said the suspicion of trying to arrange two murders was linked to information found on the suspect's laptop but "is not related to the investigation into ShinyHunters."

ShinyHunters last week claimed to have breached the FBI's jobs website. The hacker group said it had stolen "very sensitive data" belonging to thousands of agents and applicants and that it had compromised the bureau's jobs website.

FBI Director Kash Patel took to X to highlight the arrest in the Netherlands.

"This morning @FBI and our partners the Dutch National Police are announcing the arrest of one of the alleged leaders of ShinyHunters - a global cybercrime and threat actor group linked to cyberattacks in the United States, the Netherlands, and around the world," he said.

"In coordination with FBI investigators the Dutch High-Tech Crime Unit arrested the suspect under Dutch law," he added. "As we speak FBI teams are actively working with partners to obtain and execute more leads in the ongoing investigation based on this arrest."

The Dutch police statement announcing the arrest did not mention the FBI hack or coordination with American law enforcement.

Dutch detectives seized data storage devices during their probe and were investigating their contents and said they did not rule out more arrests.

"Arresting cybercrime suspects is a key intervention in our broad-based fight against this type of crime," said Stan Duijf, the Dutch police official responsible for tackling cybercrime. "The ShinyHunters group is responsible for a large number of victims, both in the Netherlands and abroad. It is gratifying that we have been able to arrest a suspect in the investigation into this group."

A court in Rotterdam on Tuesday ordered the suspect held for a further 90 days.

Last Wednesday, the FBI said it was "actively and aggressively investigating" a claimed hack of the FBI-Jobs.gov portal. A message that circulated online from ShinyHunters claimed responsibility.

"We have compromised the FBI. We hold very sensitive data on almost ALL FBI Agents and individuals who filed an application with the FBI for a job," said the ShinyHunters message, which was directed to Patel and Brett Leatherman, the assistant director in charge of the bureau's cyber division. The claims could not immediately be verified.

In its message, ShinyHunters said it would give the bureau one week to correct or remove what it said were false allegations contained in an FBI public advisory from May that described the organization as a "cyber criminal group specializing in large-scale data breaches and extortion."

Takeaways from the AP's analysis on the fundamental flaws in the national flood insurance program

By MICHAEL PHILLIS and M.K. WILDEMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's flood insurance program struggles to balance affordability, flood protection and cost to taxpayers, leaving millions vulnerable at a time when climate change is driving flood risk higher.

Nationwide, just 2.4% of properties are covered by 4.5 million federal flood insurance policies, an Associated Press analysis shows — but 8.4% are at severe or extreme risk of flooding.

The problem is especially bad in eastern Kentucky — where in some ZIP codes, no more than 5% of properties are covered by flood insurance, even though hundreds or thousands of buildings are at extreme risk of flooding, according to figures from the federal government and data provided exclusively to the AP by the risk analysis group First Street.

It's not just Appalachia — coastal areas, including parts of southern Louisiana, stand out, too. Areas at high risk of flooding and where few people are insured tend to be poorer, experts said, as are areas where FEMA's flood maps don't properly convey the severity of the risk or mandate that enough people buy coverage.

Here are the takeaways from the AP story:

The National Flood Insurance Program was set up in 1968

Congress set up the National Flood Insurance Program in 1968. It offers flood insurance in participating communities that agree to take steps to manage flood risk, such as restricting construction in high-risk areas. Homeowners insurance doesn't cover floods.

Policies are available to renters and businesses, but most are purchased by homeowners covering up to \$250,000 for their property and \$100,000 for belongings. FEMA flood maps determine who is in a high-risk area where flood insurance must be attached to a federally backed mortgage.

Experts say flood maps need to be updated

FEMA's flood maps don't do a good job of capturing the extent of severe flood risk. Millions think their homes are safer than they really are and aren't forced to buy insurance when they probably should.

Consider the horrific 2022 floods in eastern Kentucky, when more than a foot of rain fell over parts of the state, killing more than 40 people.

Where the flood struck, just 2.1% of properties were insured then, a rate that remains about the same today, the AP analysis shows, even though about 47% are at severe or extreme risk of flooding. That's a gap of 45 percentage points — more than 7 times the national average.

FEMA's flood maps didn't catch all that risk during the 2022 flood, with only 18% of the buildings that were affected falling within a high-risk zone.

Flood maps, which are commonly out of date, don't consider some types of flood risk, such as flooding from inland heavy rains.

The places with the biggest insurance gaps are those where heavy precipitation flooding occurs away from large water bodies, said Jeremy Porter, the chief economist at First Street.

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"That's the Appalachian region, further inland, and then in the Midwest and Northeast in particular, extreme precipitation is the way climate change is manifesting itself," he said.

Most buyers face rising costs for flood insurance

The typical cost of a flood insurance policy is \$1,100 per year, up roughly 90% in the last five years, the AP's estimates show.

Lake Charles resident Dan Charlson said he dropped his policy when the math no longer worked. His insurance shot up over time from roughly \$900 to \$4,000 — an amount he expected to keep climbing.

"I'm looking at what it costs to fix the house, and the fact that I only flooded once in 50 years. So, it's a risk analysis," he said.

The costs have been driven up chiefly by efforts to modernize pricing.

A couple of years ago, the federal government introduced Risk Rating 2.0, a much more accurate way of aligning a property's flood risk with the price of coverage.

But more accurately priced flood insurance meant much higher prices overall for most buyers. A government watchdog report found that Gulf Coast states had been the most underpriced and required the largest increases under the new pricing structure.

FEMA said in a statement that stronger building codes, smarter zoning and competitive private insurance options are needed rather than shifting all flood risk and cost to the federal government. Risk Rating 2.0's accuracy gives policyholders a better sense of their true risk. The agency can't address affordability without action from Congress, and it can't make private insurance companies enter the market.

FEMA is working on a better system to map flood risk, called Future of Flood Risk Data. The timeline for that work isn't clear.

Proposals to overhaul the program have stalled, including adding options to make it more affordable to low-income buyers.

"Everybody agrees it's broken, but no one can agree how to fix it," said Jeffrey Schlegelmilch of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University.

Today in History: September 30, Berlin Airlift concludes

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Sept. 30, the 273rd day of 2026. There are 92 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 30, 1949, the Berlin Airlift came to an end after delivering more than 2.3 million tons of cargo to blockaded residents of West Berlin over 15 months.

Also on this date:

In 1777, the Continental Congress — forced to flee by advancing British forces — moved to York, Pennsylvania, after briefly meeting in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

In 1791, Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute" premiered in Vienna, Austria.

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated the Boulder Dam (now the Hoover Dam) on the Colorado River at the Arizona-Nevada border.

In 1938, addressing the public after cosigning the Munich Agreement, which allowed Nazi annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain proclaimed, "I believe it is peace for our time."

In 1947, the World Series was broadcast on television for the first time, as the New York Yankees defeated the Brooklyn Dodgers 5-3 in Game 1; the Yankees would go on to win the Series four games to three.

In 1954, the first nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Nautilus, was commissioned by the U.S. Navy.

In 1955, actor James Dean was killed at age 24 in a two-car collision near Cholame, California.

In 1972, Pittsburgh Pirates star Roberto Clemente connected for his 3,000th and final hit, a double against Jon Matlack of the New York Mets at Three Rivers Stadium.

In 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed treaties to illegally annex more occupied Ukrainian territory in a sharp escalation of his seven-month invasion.

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Today's Birthdays: Actor Angie Dickinson is 95. Singer Johnny Mathis is 91. Actor Len Cariou is 87. Singer Marilyn McCoo is 83. Actor Barry Williams is 72. Singer Patrice Rushen is 72. Actor Fran Drescher is 69. Country musician Marty Stuart is 68. Actor Crystal Bernard is 65. Actor Eric Stoltz is 65. Rapper-producer Marley Marl is 64. Country musician Eddie Montgomery (Montgomery Gentry) is 63. Rock singer Trey Anastasio (Phish) is 62. Actor Monica Bellucci is 62. Actor Tony Hale is 56. Actor Jenna Elfman is 55. Actor Marion Cotillard is 51. Tennis Hall of Famer Martina Hingis is 46. Olympic gold medal gymnast Dominique Moceanu is 45. Actor Lacey Chabert is 44. Actor Kieran Culkin is 44. Singer-rapper T-Pain is 42. Racing driver Max Verstappen is 29. Actor-dancer Maddie Ziegler is 24.