

Groton Daily Independent

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Community Calendar

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.

Groton Daily Independent

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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.

Sunday, Oct. 4

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m. and at Zion, 11 a.m.
Third Grade Basketball practice in the GHS Gym, 4 p.m.
United Methodist: Worship with communion at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
Third Grade Girls Basketball, 4 p.m., GHS Old Gym
Sixth Grade Girls Basketball Practice, 4 p.m., Arena
Dance Team Practice, 5:30 p.m., Arena

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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.

Dubai Flight Attack

A Dubai flight to Tel Aviv plummeted yesterday before passengers broke into the cockpit to stabilize and divert the plane. Israeli authorities say an Omani copilot stabbed his Indian captain midair; Israel is investigating a potential motive.

Roughly two hours after FlyDubai flight 1073 took off, passengers near the front of the aircraft heard an altercation and a cry for help. The plane then nosedived, plunging 14,125 feet in 29 seconds. A crew member and at least one other passenger broke into the cockpit to subdue the pilot-assailant and regain control of the plane. Another pilot scheduled to operate a later flight executed an emergency landing in Saudi Arabia. Both pilots were hospitalized with stab wounds. The plane's roughly 180 passengers later boarded a flight to Israel; a few sustained minor injuries.

FTC Scopes AI

The Federal Trade Commission confirmed yesterday that it is investigating OpenAI, Anthropic, and other leading AI companies over potential dangers to consumers. The probe reportedly predates the July discovery that OpenAI agents hacked into AI platform Hugging Face.

The FTC is also expected to subpoena documents from METR, an AI safety watchdog hired by AI companies to investigate rogue agentic behavior. The FTC has not publicly identified the scope of its investigation. The news comes after President Donald Trump hosted the leaders of OpenAI, Anthropic, and other top AI companies Tuesday at the White House. Executives signed an agreement to self-police, emblematic of Trump's stance that existing regulation is sufficient to protect Americans from rogue agentic behavior.

A new poll yesterday found 73% of Americans are concerned about AI safety.

Gene-Edited Bananas

Bananas bred to resist browning could expand to more supermarket shelves after passing a major regulatory review last week in the UK. The innovation could reduce food waste, as browning is responsible for roughly 20% of banana yield losses.

Scientists used CRISPR technology to alter three genes linked to polyphenol oxidase, an enzyme that causes browning. Unlike traditional genetic modification, this gene editing does not introduce DNA from foreign species and could occur naturally. The change was found to extend the shelf life of peeled bananas by up to 24 hours and make them more resistant to bruising. Gene editing has previously been used to increase vitamin D content in tomatoes and develop sweeter strawberries. The modified bananas have received regulatory approval in 10 other countries, including the US, where they are slated to launch commercially this year.

The Cavendish bananas sold in grocery stores today are the result of over 1,000 years of domestication. The earliest varieties were small with large black seeds .

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Chicago White Sox defeats Houston Astros in the team's first MLB Playoffs win since 2005.

... and more from last night's games.

Federal judge approves settlement allowing Paramount to close \$111B deal for Warner Bros. Discovery, ending a legal battle between the studio and 12 states aiming to block the merger.

Collection of paintings, including works by Vincent van Gogh and Claude Monet, is going up for auction on Nov. 18 after over 50 years in private ownership; Sotheby's auction house expects sales could exceed \$450M in total.

Science & Technology

Butterfly flight and wing patterns create optical illusions that confuse predators' sense of speed and direction, making them difficult to catch.

Eating sugar-rich foods while taking antibiotics may increase levels of bacteria linked to hard-to-treat infections, according to a study of patients with blood cancer.

Most common lung cancer can develop resistance to drugs targeting KRAS, a gene involved in about 25% of cases, by transforming into a different type of tumor; finding could reveal new drug targets.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.3%, Dow -0.9%, Nasdaq +0.2%) after new economic data indicates inflation increased 3.4% in August, a minor cooling compared with 3.7% in July.

Carnegie Mellon University will receive a \$3B donation from Ken Griffin, founder and CEO of hedge fund Citadel; it is the largest single donation in the history of US higher education.

Toy maker Mattel's shares fall 4.2% on news CEO Ynon Kreiz is leaving company for a senior position at Paramount Skydance; current Condé Nast CEO Roger Lynch will replace him.

Politics & World Affairs

US military ends its 12-year mission in Iraq after declaring victory over ISIS; Iran claims responsibility for forcing US out.

Iran says it has received the US' counterproposal, is weighing it.

New rules go into effect today for SNAP assistance, impacting an estimated 37 million Americans; changes include eligibility requirements and benefit adjustments due to inflation (More, w/chart)

Supreme Court greenlights execution of Christa Pike, Tennessee's only female inmate on death row, superseding last-minute lower court decision; Pike was convicted of the 1995 murder of 19-year-old classmate Colleen Slemmer.

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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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Girls Soccer

Groton Area

hosts Garretson

Thurs., Oct. 1, 2026



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



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For more info: GDILIVE.COM



Girls Game at 4:30 p.m.

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Democrat for US House unveils proposals to lower tariffs, stabilize Social Security

Republican nominee in South Dakota race blasts 'Biden-era policies'

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota Democratic U.S. House nominee Nikki Gronli announced her top economic priorities Wednesday, including a return to tariff policies predating President Donald Trump, capping insulin costs, giving Medicare more drug-price bargaining power, and requiring higher-income people to contribute more toward Social Security.

Social Security is the federal retirement program funded through a payroll tax on individuals' wages up to the taxable maximum, which is \$184,500 per year. The trust fund that pays people benefits is projected to go into the red in 2032, requiring cuts to the program if Congress takes no action.

Gronli said she wants to eliminate the taxable maximum.

"It will be made solvent by eliminating the income tax cap," Gronli said. "That is long overdue."

Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people 65 and older. Gronli said the program's ability to negotiate drug prices is too limited, driving up costs for taxpayers and patients.

She also called for a \$35 monthly insulin price cap for everyone.

Gronli criticized the Trump administration's higher tariffs, saying they have increased costs for South Dakotans. Tariffs are a tax paid by those importing a foreign good.

"The next Congress must take action and end this added tax on South Dakota families," she said.

Gronli also said she would prioritize more funding for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program, which provides grants to help independent processors expand meat-processing capacity. Additionally, she proposed a heifer tax credit to expand the nation's cattle herd, though she did not offer details of such a program. Cattle numbers have been low in recent years while beef imports have risen.

Gronli was the state director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program under former President Joe Biden, and she previously served as vice chair of the state Democratic Party.

Gronli said her priorities differ from her opponent, Republican Marty Jackley. He is the state's attorney general and formerly served as U.S. attorney for South Dakota.

"He's made it clear that he supports the policies harming South Dakota," Gronli said during a press conference on Wednesday in downtown Sioux Falls. "He's made it clear he's fine with the chaos and corruption in Washington, D.C., and Congress."

Gronli told South Dakota Searchlight she was referring to things such as the non-Congress-approved war in Iran, Trump's tariff policies and challenging of mail-in voting, and his administration sometimes ignoring court decisions.

Jackley for Congress campaign spokesperson Jason Glodt responded with a written statement.

"Marty Jackley is the only candidate in this race who has a proven record fighting government corruption," he wrote. "Marty has been prosecuting fraud for over a decade, passed government accountability legislation, and he will take that same fight to Washington to protect taxpayers."

He agreed the two candidates differ.

"Gronli served in the Biden administration and is advocating for Biden-era policies that will result in bigger government and higher taxes," Glodt wrote. "Marty Jackley has a proven record fighting for less government, government accountability, and lower taxes."

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South Dakota's lone U.S. House seat will be open because Republican U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson ran for governor and lost in the June primary election.

The general election is Nov. 3, advance voting is underway, and the voter registration deadline is Oct. 19.

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

COMMENTARY

A power boom in eastern South Dakota raises questions about what comes next

by Brad Johnson

Eastern South Dakota could soon host the largest transmission project in the state's history. South Dakota's first 765-kilovolt line would run through Grant, Deuel and Brookings counties.

The larger story is what could follow it.

South Dakota's largest existing transmission lines operate at 345 kilovolts. The proposed 765-kilovolt line is the electrical equivalent of replacing a rural highway with a six-lane interstate.

One line this large can move more electricity in either direction with lower losses and less land than several smaller corridors.

The line would begin at Big Stone South near Big Stone City, travel south to a substation near White and turn east toward Lakefield, Minnesota. From there, the regional network reaches toward Iowa, Rochester and the Twin Cities.

Big Stone South already connects to Ellendale, North Dakota. Approved and proposed projects would extend that network toward Jamestown and Fargo and toward Alexandria, Minnesota.

The northbound Big Stone South-Hankinson-Bison line is part of a joint effort by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, known as MISO, and the Southwest Power Pool, the neighboring grid operator.

Essentially, eastern South Dakota is becoming a bridge between two enormous regional power systems.

The focal point is Big Stone South, a switching station near the Big Stone coal plant. The station could remain important whether the plant operates for decades or eventually closes. The grid is being built around a hub, not one generator.

Utilities say the network is needed as older plants retire, electricity comes from more scattered sources, and extreme weather increases the value of alternative routes.

MISO is overseeing a \$21.8 billion rebuilding of the Upper Midwest transmission system.

MISO says utilities are experiencing an unprecedented surge of requests from data centers, advanced manufacturing and other electricity-hungry industries. Many want power within 18 to 36 months.

South Dakota's 765-kilovolt line isn't expected to enter service until 2034 but could influence where power generation and industry locate for decades.

At Ellendale, Applied Digital is developing an artificial-intelligence campus whose initial 400-megawatt demand and potential 1,000-megawatt expansion would approach three times the generating capacity of the 475-megawatt Big Stone coal plant.

Producing that much electricity from wind over a year would require the output of roughly 875 turbines — more than the roughly 720 now operating or approved across northeastern South Dakota's wind corridor.

Wind couldn't provide that electricity every hour. Storage, natural gas or other dependable generation would also be needed.

Other large data centers are proposed near Fargo, Sioux Falls and across Minnesota, including Google's Project Skyway near Rochester.

Neither Ellendale nor the Minnesota project caused the 765-kilovolt line, according to the utilities. That's one of the most interesting parts of the story.

Engineers concluded this exceptionally large transmission network was needed before much of the data-

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center boom entered their forecasts.

Now those customers are arriving.

Google and Xcel Energy, for example, have proposed wind, solar and battery storage to help serve the Minnesota development.

The Northern Border natural-gas pipeline also crosses northeastern South Dakota. The Astoria gas plant in Deuel County was built where that pipeline intersects the Big Stone South-to-Brookings transmission corridor.

Eastern South Dakota has wind, a major natural-gas pipeline, increasingly powerful transmission lines and access to two regional grids. Now some of the largest electricity customers ever contemplated on the Northern Plains are looking for places to plug in.

None of that guarantees another gas plant, more wind farms, batteries, data centers or factories.

But anyone who has watched development follow a highway interchange understands the principle. Once an interstate arrives in the neighborhood, the neighborhood seldom remains the same.

Electricity works much the same way.

Natural-gas developers need fuel and transmission. Wind, solar and battery developers need the grid. Large industries need enormous quantities of dependable electricity. A 765-kilovolt electrical interstate changes what is possible.

That could mean landowner income, construction activity, investment and additional tax base. It could also sharpen conflicts over agricultural land, rural housing, lighting, traffic and demands on local government.

For most of our history, South Dakota's place in the power system has been defined by what we produced: Missouri River hydropower, coal-generated electricity, wind and some solar.

Something different is taking shape now.

An electrical interstate, a natural-gas pipeline, immense new customers and several forms of power generation are converging in the same rural corridor.

The new transmission line won't determine what comes next. Farmers will still own much of the land. Counties will still make land-use decisions. Developers will still have to decide whether projects make economic sense.

But like a new highway interchange, the line creates opportunities that didn't exist before — and intensifies competition over how the surrounding land should be used.

The towers may be only the first visible sign.

Brad Johnson is a certified general real estate appraiser and longtime journalist. He is past president of South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, a member of the National Wildlife Federation's board of directors, and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources. He lives in Rapid City and Watertown.

Anti-abortion groups worry Hyde Amendment's 50-year run could end with new congressional majority

Federal abortion funding ban has lasted since 1976, but researchers say clinics bear the costs

BY KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS

In the early months of 2022, Democrats in Congress came close to passing an appropriations bill that did not include a provision barring federal funding for abortions — maybe the closest it had ever come in more than 40 years.

But those who wanted the Hyde Amendment included won the battle in the end. Three months later, the U.S. Supreme Court made its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* to allow states to regulate abortion access. That year, the 50-year precedent of a constitutional right to abortion ended, and the 50-year precedent of no federal tax funding to pay for abortions endures.

The Hyde Amendment was first passed Sept. 30, 1976, three years after the *Roe* decision. The clause

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— which isn't a constitutional amendment — is named for Republican U.S. Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois. It marked one of the first legislative victories for anti-abortion groups after Roe v. Wade guaranteed abortion access up to fetal viability.

In the decades since, it has been added to every appropriations bill passed by Congress, restricting federal Medicaid dollars from paying for abortion care except in limited cases of rape, incest and to prevent a pregnant patient's death. The result has left countless people without a way to pay for the procedure, which advocates for abortion access say causes more abortions to happen later in pregnancy and unnecessarily endangers patients' health.

Abortion opponents say the Hyde Amendment has prevented 2.7 million abortions. An estimated 300,000 abortions per year were covered by federal dollars prior to the Hyde Amendment. While there aren't any major organizations that have published how much the federal government has saved by not funding abortion care, advocates say it costs the government more not to fund it because of the extra costs added to medical care and public assistance programs.

As more polls and strategists indicate Democrats could take over congressional majorities in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate in January, some anti-abortion advocates fear such a change could be the most serious threat to Hyde's future since the party nearly repealed the amendment in 2022.

"If there becomes a pro-abortion majority in Congress, then Hyde is going to be one of the first things to go, probably, especially because it's been in the spotlight more recently," said Gavin Oxley, spokesperson for Americans United for Life, a national anti-abortion organization.

Advocates from each side of the issue have pushed for Congress to either codify Hyde into law or codify its repeal, but neither side has been successful. Because of filibuster rules that are usually used in the U.S. Senate on controversial pieces of legislation, legislation would likely need 60 votes to pass, a tall order in a highly polarized environment.

Oxley said anti-abortion advocates aren't worried just about Democrats, though. During negotiations over legislation that would have extended subsidies for premiums under the Affordable Care Act, President Donald Trump told congressional Republicans in January that they needed to be "a little flexible" on including the Hyde Amendment. The bill never came to fruition and the subsidies expired, but the incident worried anti-abortion groups such as Oxley's.

"If we get a pro-abortion majority (in Congress), then I would be concerned," Oxley said. "There are some Republicans who may not be as committed to protecting Hyde."

Anti-abortion groups tout polls showing strong support for keeping federal dollars from funding abortion care, but few nonpartisan polls have been conducted on the issue, and no major nonpartisan polls have surfaced in the years since 2022, when 13 states implemented near-total abortion bans. A 2016 Politico poll conducted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found 58% of likely voters opposed using Medicaid to fund abortions.

When other polls commissioned by pro-abortion rights organizations have framed the question with language specific to how Hyde works, which is that a pregnant patient covered by Medicaid can have pregnancy care and childbirth covered but not the cost of an abortion, support for repealing the Hyde amendment goes up. A 2015 poll found that 62% of voters said Medicaid should cover abortion services.

Effects extend beyond abortion procedures

Amanda Jean Stevenson, associate professor of sociology and director of population at the University of Colorado, Boulder, said many scholars have tracked the fallout of the Hyde Amendment since its inception, but it's difficult to trace pregnancy complications or deaths back to Hyde.

Many abortion rights advocates point to the case of Rosie Jimenez, a 27-year-old Texas woman who was denied care at a clinic in 1977 because of her Medicaid status and instead sought care from an unlicensed midwife. She died from an infection after spending a week in intensive care. Her daughter, Monique, was 4 years old at the time and now advocates for policy change.

"It's very easy for some people to say (Rosie Jimenez's death) was caused by the Hyde Amendment," Stevenson said. Had Medicaid benefits covered the abortion, "she probably would've had that option for

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safer care.”

Jimenez’s case happened a few months after Hyde was first included in an appropriations bill, but it didn’t change its inclusion in future bills. Many scholars have documented the effects of low-income patients being denied coverage for abortions, but it hasn’t resulted in policy change, Stevenson said.

“People set out to find out about the impact of it, they find that it has a big adverse impact, and that doesn’t matter. It doesn’t change the policy or people’s opinion of it, it doesn’t change anything, really,” she said. “Evidence continues to be generated, and it continues to be ignored.”

Marlene Gerber Fried, co-founder and the former president of the National Network of Abortion Funds, said it would be nice to think that a change in Congress would bring about the end of Hyde, but she’s heard optimism of that kind before. When former Democratic President Bill Clinton took office in 1993, abortion-rights advocates also expected change.

In the years since, Fried said, the Hyde Amendment has been a “fault line” in the abortion rights space, even as some abortion rights advocates think they are gaining ground with public opinion.

“It’s not that they were against public funding, they just thought it wasn’t going to get to a win,” Fried said.

Researchers say Hyde doesn’t just affect the direct costs of abortion procedures. River Robbins, a doctoral candidate in applied medical anthropology and adjunct instructor at the University of South Florida, said his dissertation research has shown not having access to federal funding affects other services available at individual clinics. Independent clinics provide 58% of all abortions nationwide, according to data from the Abortion Care Network.

Many clinics serve low-income communities and people of color, including patients who need interpreters or other language or disability services. While hospital networks have access to funding that helps them provide those services, such money is not available to clinics that primarily exist to provide abortion care.

Hyde won’t be the end of funding challenges, advocates say

Now that access to abortion is extremely limited in more than a dozen states, even fewer people can rely on Medicaid to cover abortion costs. Those who can’t access abortion care at home often must travel to another state, where their local Medicaid program dollars won’t apply. That has put extra burdens on local and regional abortion funds and other philanthropic organizations to fill the funding gaps. Sometimes health clinics just take a loss rather than denying someone an abortion.

“We know that our providers don’t turn folks away, and sometimes that comes at great cost to their clinics and their ability to operate,” said Kelsey Ryland, policy counsel for the National Abortion Federation.

Chelsea Souder, co-owner of Hope Clinic in Illinois, said she hopes the Hyde Amendment will be permanently repealed in the near future, but that even if it is, there will still be many gaps in funding for abortion care.

Even in states with access, including some of the most accessible states in the country like Illinois, state Medicaid coverage is often inadequate to cover costs by itself, especially for those who need care later in pregnancy. Souder said 85% of her clinic’s revenue does not come from patients who pay out of pocket or with Medicaid — it comes from abortion funds or donors, which she said is not sustainable.

“Making abortion actually accessible and affordable is where the focus has to be,” Souder said.

According to health policy institute KFF, 21 states allow their state Medicaid program to cover abortion costs, and some have expanded those policies since Roe fell. But reimbursement rates for providers continue to be low, regardless of where the clinic is located, and they are exceedingly low for abortions later in a pregnancy.

Dr. Diane Horvath, chief medical officer at Partners in Abortion Care in Maryland, said the clinic ran an experiment of accepting all state Medicaid patients for a year and a half, starting in 2024. Despite strong state support for abortion access at any stage in pregnancy, the low reimbursement rates for care beyond the second trimester resulted in a loss to the clinic of \$1.2 million during that time. That includes cost increases for supplies and labor, since the clinic hasn’t increased prices for patients.

“For most of these patients, we lose at least \$4,000 a patient,” Horvath said. “A hospital might be able to recover more and spread loss over different departments, but I don’t have another clinic, I don’t have

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another place I can draw funds from.”

Stateline reporter Kelcie Moseley-Morris can be reached at kmoseley@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.

Kelcie Moseley-Morris covers reproductive rights for Stateline. Based in Idaho, she has covered the effects of abortion bans nationwide, as well as reproductive health issues.

US Senate Dems block bill curbing congressional stock trading, calling it too weak

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans did not gain any support Wednesday from Democrats as they attempted to advance a bill that mashed together two hot-button midterm issues: requiring voter ID in federal elections and limiting stock trading for members of Congress.

The Republican-led bill, titled the Stop Insider Trading Act, failed 53-47 when lawmakers stayed solidly within party lines for the procedural vote. Most legislation requires 60 votes, or three-fifths of the Senate, to advance.

The House-passed measure attached a voter ID requirement onto a base bill prohibiting members of Congress and their spouses and close family members from purchasing certain stocks, and requiring a public notice and waiting period prior to selling stocks.

House lawmakers approved the legislative package by a 232-192 margin.

While 13 House Democrats supported the bill, sponsored by Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Wis., despite plenty of criticism, Senate Democrats did not bite.

“The Senate GOP let their counterparts in the House take out all of the ban’s teeth and fill it with poison pills so it could never pass. This bill has no reform, no accountability, no substance,” Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said on the Senate floor prior to the vote Wednesday.

House and Senate Democrats panned the legislation for being a weaker version of other bipartisan bills aimed at stopping members of Congress from potentially profiting off insider knowledge while trading stocks. The issue has drawn support from both parties over the past several years.

“Under (the) Republican bill, members would still get to own and sell stocks. And most importantly, this bill doesn’t do anything – anything – to stop Donald Trump from trading stocks. I guess Republicans forgot that Trump has made nearly 30,000 stock trades in the past year and raked in billions – more than all of Congress combined,” Schumer continued.

The New York Democrat also said the measure “would make voting more difficult in every state than it is now” and described it as “some of the most twisted, radical schemes Trump has ever dreamed up to rig our election.”

ID for voting

Under the measure, a voter would be required to present a current state-issued driver’s license or identification card, passport, valid military or veteran ID, or tribal government-issued ID card to be able to vote.

If a voter doesn’t have one of the listed physical forms of identification, state election officials could issue a provisional ballot. The voter would then have three days to provide the accepted ID or an affidavit that the voter doesn’t have one because of religious objections to being photographed.

Additionally, state officials would be prohibited from accepting absentee ballots unless the voter attaches a copy of a valid ID, the last four digits of their Social Security number with an affidavit that they cannot obtain a photo ID, or a notarized statement that the voter personally completed their ballot.

‘Commonsense legislation’

Senate Republicans pushed for the bill ahead of the vote, including Nebraska Republican Sen. Pete Ricketts, who posted Monday on X, “This bill would ban congressional insider trading. We need to pass this commonsense legislation and restore integrity to Congress.”

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Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, pointed to a Department of Justice indictment announced Wednesday to argue in support of the legislation.

Quoting a post on social media about DOJ allegations that 10 noncitizens voted in a previous election, Lee wrote: "Every Senate Democrat just voted against legislation that would stop this."

While the DOJ has alleged instances of isolated election-related crimes, widespread voter fraud has never been credibly proven.

A database published in 2024 by the right-leaning Heritage Foundation surveying millions of votes cast in seven states over decades found reported cases of fraud to be less than 1%, according to an analysis of the results by the progressive Brookings Institution.

A comprehensive body of research has found the practice to be exceedingly rare.

South Dakota's votes

FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

Majority Leader John Thune and Sen. Mike Rounds, Republicans from South Dakota, each voted in favor of a bill requiring voter ID in federal elections and limiting stock trading for members of Congress. The bill failed on a vote of 53-47, lacking the 60 votes needed to advance.

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

Justice Department indicts 10 noncitizens in quest to prove Trump claims of election fraud

BY JACOB FISCHLER

A federal grand jury indicted 10 noncitizens for unlawfully voting in Minnesota, U.S. Attorney General Todd Blanche said Wednesday, highlighting the administration's effort to keep election security a top issue, in line with President Donald Trump's longstanding unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud.

The indictments, which include nine counts of unlawful voting and nine counts of falsely claiming citizenship to register to vote, bring the number of noncitizens charged nationwide with election-related crimes since Trump re-took office last year to 90. The census reports 154 million people voted in the 2024 election.

Blanche said at a news conference at Justice Department headquarters in Washington, D.C., that the indictments show how seriously the administration takes election security.

"We have talked repeatedly about the importance of election integrity, and we're certainly not going to stop talking about that now," he said. "Voter fraud erodes the public's trust in our electoral system, and it's vital to our democratic process that we do everything that we can to restore that trust."

Blanche's participation in a press conference, alongside fellow Cabinet member Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, underlined the administration's continuing focus on noncitizen voting, though numerous studies have shown it to be rare. Trump has for years amplified debunked conspiracy theories centered on election fraud.

Mullin made that connection explicit Wednesday, saying the indictments confirmed Trump's accusations.

"The president said it for a long time, and the Democrats were sitting there denying it and saying, 'There's no fraud. That wasn't taking place. There's no fraud. There's nothing, nothing here. Don't look over here,'" he said. "We're realizing there's actually a lot. And we believe that some of these states probably even knew about it, chose not to look into it. Well, we are."

But the allegations of illegal voting in Minnesota in the 2022 and 2024 general elections and 2026 primaries made virtually no difference to election results.

The seven alleged illegal votes in the 2024 presidential election, for example, would account for only .0002% of votes cast in that election in Minnesota.

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

Trump TV ads paid for with \$20M in Homeland Security funds, Dems find

BY JONATHAN SHORMAN

President Donald Trump is tapping \$20 million in Homeland Security funding to pay for TV ads that heavily feature him ahead of the midterm elections, Democrats said Tuesday as the promos critics call propaganda come under bipartisan attack.

The Trump administration recently moved the funds into a U.S. Customs and Border Protection budget line intended for "commemorative events" related to border security, according to federal records. Congressional Democrats said the dollars appear to be funding the ad campaign.

The ads face mounting criticism as Republicans confront an angry electorate that, according to polling, appears likely to place Democrats in control of the House and possibly the Senate. Yet the messaging reflects Trump's strategy of centering the election on himself and telling supporters to vote as if he was on the ballot, as he urged during the GOP midterm convention.

The three ads released so far feature stylized imagery of Trump and include "Paid for by the U.S. Government" disclosures. One is nearly identical to a 2024 Trump campaign ad. Some \$2 million in ads have aired on cable and broadcast stations over the past week.

"This is the final battle," Trump says in a voiceover in one black-and-white ad that shows him walking silently toward the camera. Another ad uses the song "Love Me" by the artist JMSN. Attorneys for the performer have sent a cease-and-desist letter to the administration demanding the ad be taken down.

Both Dems and Republicans object

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, slammed the ads as indistinguishable from Trump's 2024 campaign ads, yet funded by taxpayers. "It's an absolute violation of what democracy is supposed to look like. Americans sat down to watch football, not to be force fed Trump's propaganda on their own dime," Schumer said Monday on the Senate floor.

Some GOP senators have also split with the Trump administration over the ads. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, a South Dakota Republican, told reporters that while he liked the ads' message, tax dollars shouldn't pay for them. Sen. John Kennedy of Louisiana and Sen. John Cornyn of Texas have also pushed back, among others.

"I don't think any public official, including President Trump or (former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi) Noem or John Kennedy, should spend public money on private ads for themselves," Kennedy told "Face the Nation" on CBS.

\$20 million materializes

On Tuesday, Sens. Patty Murray of Washington, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Christopher Murphy of Connecticut, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee, in a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said his department appeared to have dedicated \$20 million to the ads that had been provided to Customs and Border Protection, a sub-agency of DHS, in the "One Big Beautiful Bill" Act last year.

House Democratic Reps. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut and Henry Cuellar of Texas in their own statement also cited federal apportionment changes by the Office of Management and Budget recorded by OpenOMB, a non-governmental database that tracks apportionments.

OpenOMB shows that on Sept. 19, \$20 million was moved into a fund that pays for border security commemorative events and that previously held just \$500,000.

The following day, Homeland Security awarded a \$20 million contract to LMD Agency, Inc., a Maryland-based marketing firm, for a "national media campaign," according to federal contract data.

Republican blocks resolution on ads

Sen. Maggie Hassan, a New Hampshire Democrat, sought unanimous consent in the Senate on Tuesday to pass a resolution stating that the federal government shouldn't pay for the ads.

"The Department of Homeland Security should be working to tackle the enormous national security

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threats we face like stopping fentanyl, not bankrolling a vanity project for the president,” Hassan said.

Sen. Cynthia Lummis, a Wyoming Republican, objected, saying the heart of the ads is about defending American values from communism and socialism. Lummis said if that message has Hassan concerned, it says “more about her side of the aisle than it does about” the ads. The action by Lummis halted action on the resolution.

Administration defends ads

The White House and Homeland Security didn’t deny that the government fund was being used to pay for the ads, in response to questions from States Newsroom.

The White House said in an unsigned statement that the ads — which it calls public service announcements — are educational and intended to remind Americans “to love their country and understand what makes it worth defending, at home, at our borders, and abroad.”

Homeland Security referred States Newsroom to a White House webpage that also defends the ads. The page says they aren’t campaign ads, noting that Trump isn’t on the ballot and that the messages include no call to action.

Government ethics and legal experts say that explanation misses the point.

“There’s a distinction between providing people with information about government programs and engaging in communication that merely aggrandizes government officials. And what we have here is purely aggrandizing Donald Trump,” Samuel Bagenstos, who served as general counsel to the Office of Management and Budget during the first year and a half of President Joe Biden’s administration, said in an interview.

Bagenstos, who is now a professor at the University of Michigan Law School, said that if the issue was simply whether the ads violate the Hatch Act, a federal law that limits federal employees — but not the president — from engaging in partisan politics on the job, the question of the ads’ legality could be more complicated.

But the most important legal issue with the ads, he said, isn’t the Hatch Act but whether the messages violate prohibitions on using government funds for propaganda.

During his time in government service, which also included a stint as general counsel to the Department of Health and Human Services during the Biden administration, Bagenstos said agencies were constantly communicating with the public, and there’s always a question of how far officials can go. But he said these kind of issues were reviewed carefully, often in ways that annoyed communications staff who wanted to put out messages immediately.

“But if something like this had crossed my desk, I would have said, ‘You can’t pay for this ad. It is clearly illegal,’” Bagenstos said, adding that the ads are the kind of thing he would have considered resigning over. “It’s that clear a violation of law and it’s really corrosive to democracy,” he said.

Similarity to franking?

Members of Congress and state-level officials regularly release slick official communications that sometimes echo campaign messaging. But that practice, known as “franking,” comes with clear restrictions, including a U.S. House prohibition on mass mailings 60 days before an election.

In sending franked mail, members of Congress are barred from sending mail that “solicits political support” for the lawmaker or any person or political party, Margaret Dylus-Yukins, senior legal counsel for ethics at the Campaign Legal Center, wrote in an email.

The Trump ads, by contrast, don’t pertain to any policymaking process or function of government, and while the White House has said the messages remind Americans to love their country, there’s no apparent connection to any federal program or service, Dylus-Yukins wrote.

Instead, she wrote that their inflammatory language, widespread distribution and touting of Trump’s term in office, as well as their close proximity to the midterms, “all suggest that these advertisements were produced with the intent to solicit political support for President Trump’s political allies ahead of the midterm election.”

“These advertisements therefore appear to be in violation of the Hatch Act and raise serious concerns about the use of taxpayer funds to possibly sway the upcoming election’s outcome,” Dylus-Yukins wrote.

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No lawsuit yet

As of Tuesday afternoon the ads didn't appear to face a legal challenge.

The watchdog group Democracy Forward said Monday it was launching an investigation into the ads and had filed records requests for communications regarding the ads and financial paperwork related to them.

Bagenstos suggested the courts may not be the best avenue to fight the ads. Instead, he said, Congress needs to assert itself and retaliate against inappropriate spending.

"In our separation of powers system, what our framers expected was that Congress would stand up for its power first," Bagenstos said.

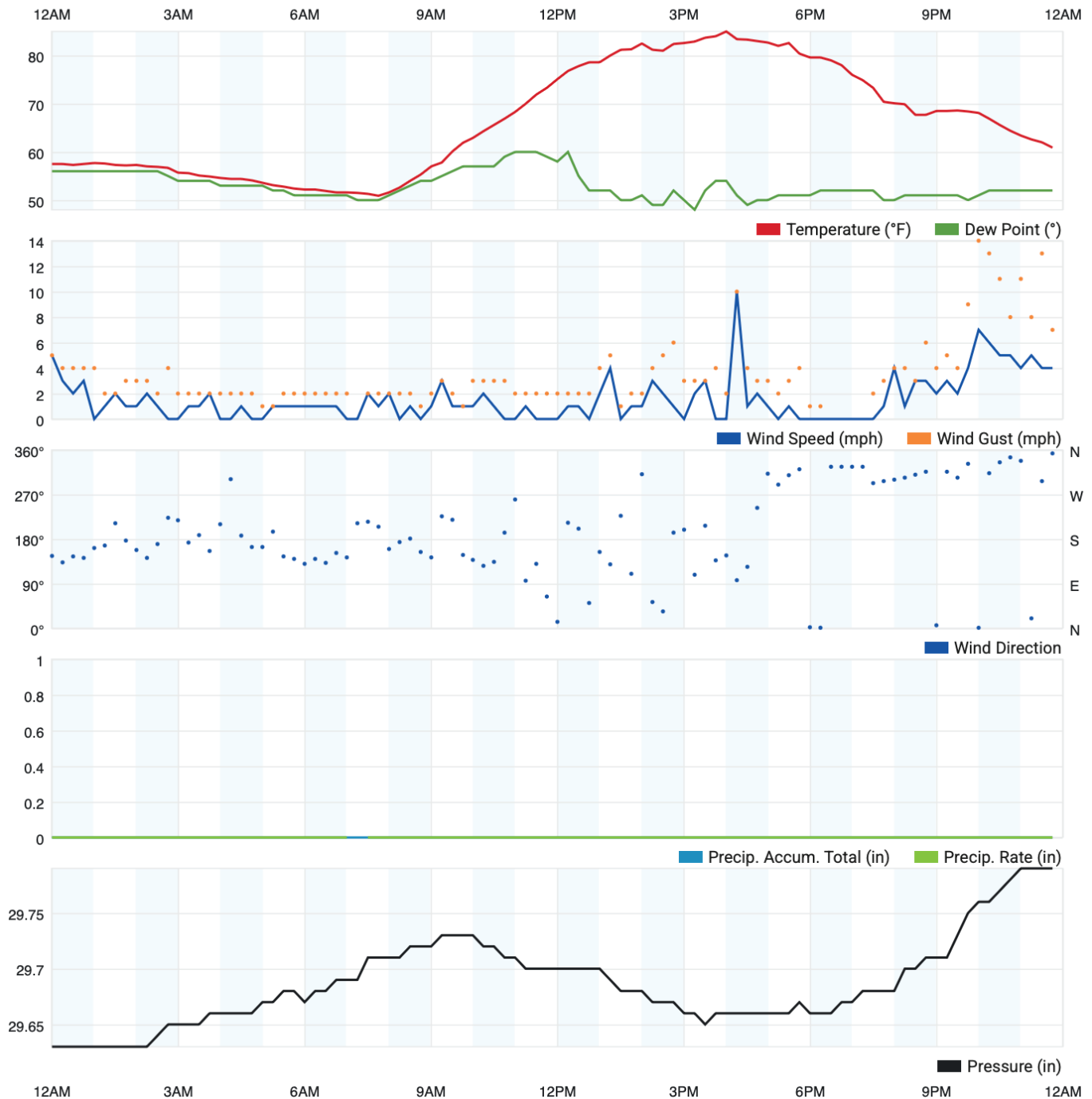
Jonathan Shorman covers democracy for States Newsroom. Based in Kansas City, his coverage area includes elections and voting rights, fights over state and federal power, civil liberties and more. An alumnus of the University of Kansas, he previously covered politics for The Kansas City Star.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 30, 2026



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Today



High: 63 °F

Becoming
Sunny

Tonight



Low: 40 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 61 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Friday Night



Low: 48 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Saturday



High: 71 °F

Mostly Sunny

**Cool, Seasonable Start
to October**

59-64°

Decreasing clouds today. Northwest
wind gusts 15 to 25 mph.



weather.gov/aberndeen
October 1, 2026

3:02 AM

In the wake of a cold front, the first day of October will see cooler, more seasonable temperatures in the upper 50s to lower 60s today. Breezy northwest winds will gust 15 to 25 mph.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 4:02 PM

Low Temp: 51 °F at 7:50 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 10:05 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 2023

Record Low: 21 in 1974

Average High: 68

Average Low: 40

Average Precip in Oct.: 0.08

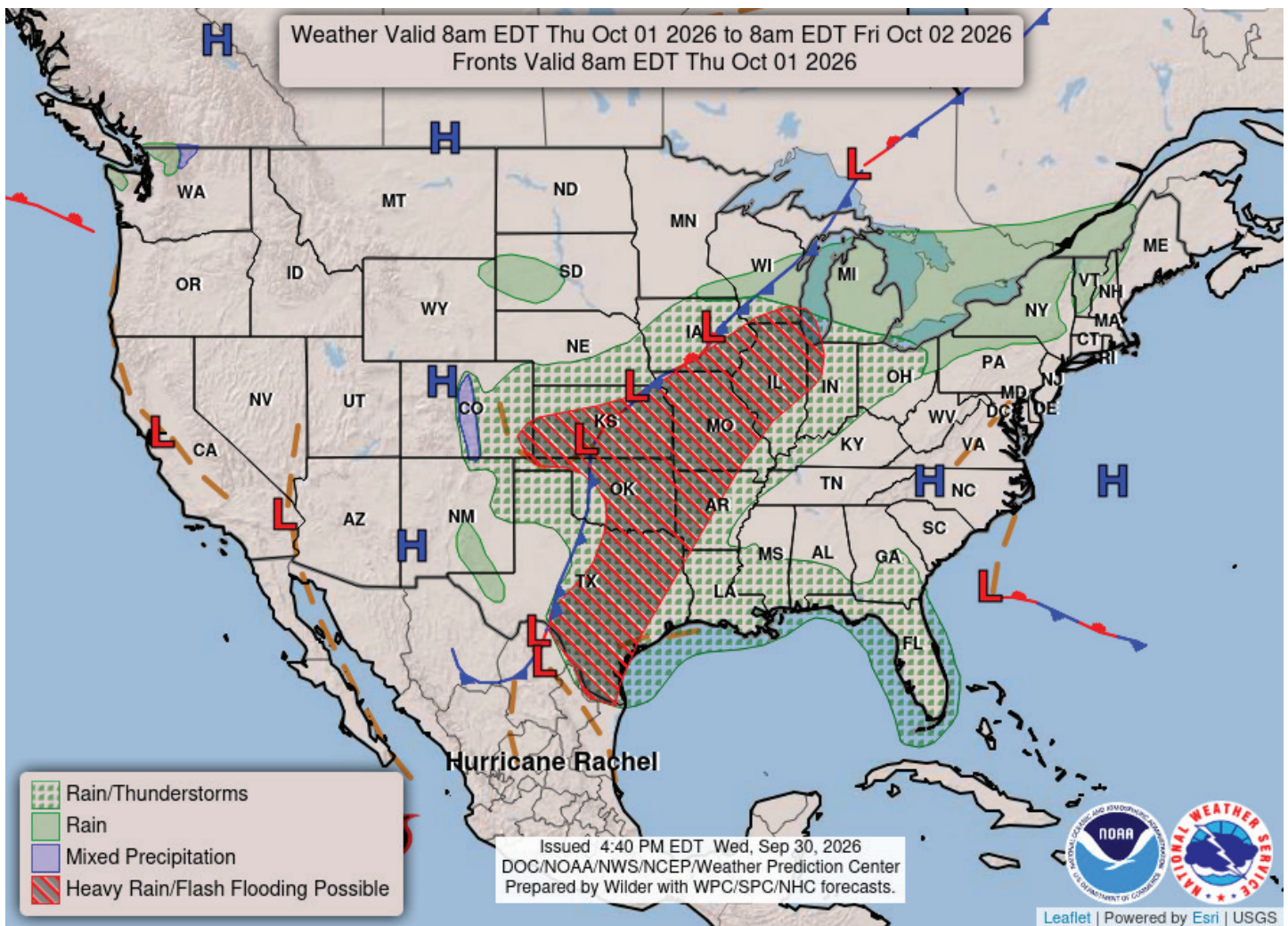
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 18.41

Precip Year to Date: 22.08

Sunset Tonight: 7:13 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:31 am



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Today in Weather History

October 1, 1971: A rare October tornado developed in Sully County during the evening hours. The brief tornado damaged a ranch home and large barn, 6 miles west-northwest of Onida.

October 1, 1999: A narrow band of heavy snow fell across portions of South Dakota. Snowfall amounts of 4 to 8" were typical in the relatively narrow band, breaking many daily records.

October 1, 2012: Drought continued to intensify and expand across central and northeast South Dakota through October, resulting in severe to exceptional drought conditions. Many locations continued the trend of recording well below-average precipitation totals for the month. The exceptional drought conditions expanded into Stanley, Jones, and southern Lyman counties. Extreme drought conditions spread into southern Dewey, Sully, Hughes, Lyman, Jones, Southwest Hyde, Hamlin, Codington, Grant, and Deuel counties. Severe drought conditions spread into Corson, Dewey, northwest Hyde, Hand, Faulk, Edmunds, McPherson, Brown, eastern Clark, and southern Roberts Counties.

1752 — The second severe hurricane in two weeks hit the Carolinas. The Onslow County Courthouse was destroyed along with all its records, and Beacon Island disappeared. (David Ludlum)

1890: The weather service is first identified as a civilian agency when Congress, at the request of President Benjamin Harrison, passes an act transferring the Signal Service's meteorological responsibilities to the newly-created U.S. Weather Bureau in the Department of Agriculture.

1893: On this day, the village of Caminadaville, Louisiana, was destroyed by a massive hurricane. Caminadaville was a vibrant fishing community in the late 19th century, located on Cheniere Caminada, adjacent to Grand Isle in coastal Jefferson Parish in Louisiana. It took five days for the news of this devastating hurricane to reach New Orleans.

1938: Grannis and Okay, Arkansas set an all-time high-temperature record for October for Arkansas with 105 degrees.

1945: While investigating a Category 1 typhoon over the South China Sea, the typhoon hunter plane was lost. This marks the first of only a few instances of the Hurricane/Typhoon plane was lost during their flight into the storm.

1958: NASA officially begins operations on October 1st, 1958.

1977: While an F3 tornado traveled less than one-mile through Montfort Heights or the greater Cincinnati area, it destroyed 12 homes and damaged 15 others. There were 17 injuries.

1987 — A blast of cold arctic air hit the north central U.S. An afternoon thunderstorm slickened the streets of Duluth MN with hail and snow, and later in the afternoon, strong northerly winds reached 70 mph. Unseasonably warm weather continued in the Pacific northwest. Afternoon highs of 90 degrees at Olympia WA, 92 degrees at Portland OR, and 89 degrees at Seattle WA, were records for the month of October. For Seattle WA it marked the twenty-first daily record high for the year, a record total in itself. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather across central Oklahoma and the eastern half of Texas. Thunderstorms in Texas produced softball size hail northwest of Nocona, and baseball size hail at Troy and Park Springs. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the southeastern U.S. through the daytime and evening hours. Severe thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, with seven of those tornadoes in Georgia. A tornado southwest of Moultrie, GA, killed two persons and injured a dozen others. Tornadoes also injured one person north of Graceville, FL, and two persons at Bartow, GA. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

When Compromise Creeps In

Sin has a way of pulling us further than we planned, but no believer is beyond the reach of God's grace.

1 Kings 11:1-13: 1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,

2 from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love.

3 He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

4 For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

6 Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.

7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.

8 Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

9 Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.

11 So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.

12 "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

13 "However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

There are many sins that we know to avoid—murder, adultery, stealing—but others can quietly creep into our life almost unnoticed. One of the most subtle is compromise.

King Solomon is a cautionary example. God gave him extraordinary wisdom and entrusted him with building the temple. Yet over time, Solomon's heart drifted. He followed his own desires, married foreign women, and was gradually drawn into idolatry. It wasn't a sudden fall but a gradual drift, one small choice at a time (1 Kings 11:3-4).

That's how compromise often works. We tell ourselves one step away from obedience isn't that serious and we can always course-correct later. But small concessions have a way of building on each other until we find ourselves far from where we intended to be. It's a pattern most of us recognize—one that's easier to fall into than we'd like to admit.

The good news is that no Christ-follower is beyond the reach of grace. God invites us to come to Him honestly: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Whatever compromises have taken root, His forgiveness is available today.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.30.26

13 18 22 23 51 2

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 21 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.29.26

10 15 16 27 64 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$321,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 6 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.30.26

16 23 38 39 48 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$6,050,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 21 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.30.26

8 11 19 21 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$74,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 36 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.30.26

10 16 27 42 57 14

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 5 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.30.26

4 6 23 33 44 13

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$440,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 5 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Presidents rarely visit Indian Country. Trump's planned Choctaw Nation rally will be the latest

By SAVANNAH PETERS Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — President Donald Trump is holding a campaign rally on the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma on Thursday, putting him in the company of just a handful of U.S. presidents who have visited tribal nations while in office.

The rally is part of Trump's recent campaign push through deep red states, where he has been stumping for Republican candidates and promoting his agenda ahead of November's midterm elections.

The Choctaw Nation is renting its venue for the rally but not sponsoring the event, it said.

"We hope his visit provides an opportunity to learn more about what we do as a sovereign nation for our members and for all people in southeast Oklahoma," Choctaw Nation Principal Chief Gary Batton said in a statement.

Tribal delegations have been meeting with presidents in Washington since the Early Republic, but presidential visits to reservations have been few and far between. The purpose and tone of those visits has changed dramatically as the relationship between the U.S. and tribal nations has evolved.

Early visits promoted assimilation

What was likely the first visit to a reservation by a sitting U.S. president occurred by happenstance. While traveling to Yellowstone National Park in the summer of 1883, President Chester A. Arthur met with Shoshone and Arapaho leaders on the Wind River Reservation and complimented the tribes' "practice of industrial pursuits," according to an account by Lt. Gen. Philip Sheridan at the time.

While there, Arthur's delegation pressed Shoshone Chief Washakie and Arapaho Chief Black Coal to consent to breaking up the reservation they shared into private parcels — a move aimed at dismantling tribal sovereignty and solving what Arthur termed the "Indian problem." Both chiefs refused.

Other early presidential visits to tribal land similarly reflected an era when the U.S. tried to undermine tribal sovereignty and assimilate Native people into white society. Theodore Roosevelt's 1903 trek to Havasupai land at the bottom of the Grand Canyon preceded the forced removal of that tribe to make way for a national park.

During his 1927 visit to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, President Calvin Coolidge promoted assimilationist boarding schools.

Recent presidential visits have focused on tribal sovereignty

President Bill Clinton made Pine Ridge a stop on his 1999 "New Markets Tour," billing the visit as the first by a sitting president to tribal land since President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1934 trip to the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. Clinton acknowledged the federal government failed to meet its obligations to hundreds of tribal nations and called for investment in Pine Ridge's economy.

"We have tried to have a more respectful, more proper relationship with the tribal governments of this country, to promote more genuine independence, but also to give more genuine support," Clinton said.

In 2014, President Barack Obama met with Dakota youths and attended a powwow on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, speaking about expanding economic and educational opportunities in Indian Country and promoting tribes' inherent right to govern themselves. The following year, Obama spent time in the Iñupiaq village of Kotzebue in Alaska, highlighting the impacts of climate change on Arctic communities.

President Joe Biden made a somber apology

In 2024, President Joe Biden traveled to the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona to formally apologize for the federal government's role in separating Indigenous children from their families and forcing them to attend boarding schools run by the U.S. and churches. A probe by Biden's administration found that in addition to being stripped of their languages and cultures, many of those children experienced physi-

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cal, emotional and sexual abuse. At least 970 died, and federal officials acknowledged the true number is likely higher.

Speaking alongside boarding school survivors and their descendants, Biden called that 150-year era a "blot on American history."

"It's a sin on our soul," Biden said. "Quite frankly, there's no excuse that this apology took 50 years to make."

The visit marked a rare acknowledgement of the assimilationist policies that shaped some of the earliest presidential encounters with tribal nations.

Former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem files for divorce from her husband of 34 years

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has filed for divorce from her husband of 34 years.

Noem, who was tasked with leading President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown from January 2025 to March 2026 and previously served as South Dakota's governor, is seeking a divorce from Bryon Noem in their home state. The two married in May 1992 and have three children.

The filing, submitted to the court in April but posted online on Monday, comes after questions arose earlier this year about the nature of Kristi Noem's relationship with a top adviser. The complaint, filed in Hamlin County, South Dakota, notes "irreconcilable differences" as grounds for the divorce.

Kristi Noem's attorney, Michael Sabers, confirmed that she has filed for divorce and said she will reserve further comments for the legal process.

Tim Bottum, Bryon Noem's attorney, said his client is "saddened that the marriage is ending" and will welcome the opportunity to share his perspective if court proceedings become necessary.

"Bryon's priority is to protect the family and move forward as loving parents and grandparents," Bottom said in a statement.

A day before Noem was ousted from her post in Trump's cabinet, members of Congress questioned her about an alleged extramarital affair with Corey Lewandowski, a special government employee and one of her lead advisers at the time. He was Trump's first campaign manager in 2016 and appeared to play an outsized role in Noem's department, even though his position was supposed to have a limit on days worked.

Noem denied the allegations that they were having an affair, dismissing them as "tabloid garbage."

Once a close ally to Trump, Noem became a liability for the Republican president as questions arose over her conduct following the shooting deaths of two protesters in Minneapolis at the hands of immigration officers. Noem characterized both Renee Good and Alex Pretti as aggressors, contradicting videos from the scene and descriptions of their deaths from bystanders. She also faced criticism from fellow Republicans for her spending at her department.

Trump nominated Markwayne Mullin, then a U.S. senator from Oklahoma, in Noem's place and made her a special envoy for The Shield of the Americas, a new security initiative focused on the Western Hemisphere.

Tennessee governor halts executions after Christa Gail Pike survives lethal injection attempt

By KIM CHANDLER and KRISTIN M. HALL Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee officials were unable to put Christa Gail Pike to death Wednesday for a 1995 murder after administering two doses of a lethal drug. A death penalty expert said it was an unprecedented failure, and Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee halted the one remaining execution for the rest of the year.

Pike, 50, was alive and loudly snoring after the attempted lethal injection and taken by ambulance from the prison, her attorneys said. She was being treated at a hospital, but they said they hadn't been told

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about her condition.

She had been scheduled for execution at 10 a.m. Wednesday for the killing she committed at age 18 and would have been the first woman executed in Tennessee in more than 200 years. An appeals court stopped the lethal injection just an hour before it was to start and hours later the U.S. Supreme Court overturned that stay.

Officials gave Pike two doses of pentobarbital, her attorneys said in court filings late Wednesday.

Gov. Bill Lee said in a statement that he has ordered "a comprehensive, third-party review to determine exactly what occurred" and that the remaining scheduled execution will not take place this year.

"Carrying out a lawfully imposed sentence is among the State's most serious responsibilities, and the people of Tennessee expect it to be done in a manner that is not only legal and constitutional, but is effective," he said.

The Tennessee Department of Correction said in a statement that it "followed every step of the State's lawful, established execution protocol approved by the Attorney General's Office."

The state's execution protocol calls for a secondary set of drug syringes to be administered "if the inmate is not deceased" after the first set. It does not spell out what happens if the subject is alive after the second set.

Robin M. Maher, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, said what Pike experienced is "singular and unparalleled."

Seven other people have survived medical problems due to an execution team's failure to access a vein to administer lethal injection drugs, but no one has stayed alive after receiving the drugs used in such executions, she said.

Media witnesses detail the execution process

Media witnesses observing from a separate room said officials raised curtains to the execution chamber at 7:27 p.m., showing Pike strapped to a gurney.

"I'm going to leave this world the way I spent most of my life and that is in love," she said in her "last" words. She described herself as at peace.

But Pike remained awake and at one point raised her head and asked prison officials if her arm was supposed to feel that way. It was not clear what she was referencing.

By 8:26 p.m., execution witnesses reported that the second dose of pentobarbital had been administered.

Pike continued to be heard snoring behind the closed curtain until the microphone was cut off at 8:53 p.m. At that time there was an announcement to escort media witnesses out of the area.

Lawyers for Pike filed an emergency motion late Wednesday to the Tennessee Supreme Court seeking to immediately halt and stay the execution, saying she was in "unnecessary agony" and it was violating her right to be executed free of cruel and unusual punishment. They also filed motions in the Sixth Circuit court and a district court.

It was the second time this year that Tennessee has been unable to carry out an execution: In May state officials called off the lethal injection of Tony Carruthers, who was convicted of kidnapping and killing three people in 1994, after executioners tried and failed for over an hour to place an IV to administer pentobarbital.

Pike and her boyfriend were convicted of the fatal stabbing and beating in 1995 of 19-year-old Colleen Slemmer, their classmate at a job training facility in Knoxville. The case garnered widespread attention in part because of a pentagram that was carved on Slemmer's body, and other elements of the crime stoked fears of Satan worship during the "satanic panic" of the 1980s and 1990s.

Stay of execution was swiftly appealed

Pike was initially scheduled to be put to death in the morning, and witnesses had gathered at the Riverbend Maximum Security Institution in Nashville when the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals voted 2-1 to issue a stay. That court said a delay was needed to consider whether Pike's allegations of childhood sexual abuse were fully considered at her sentencing.

The attorney general's office appealed to the Supreme Court, saying that halting the execution at the

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last moment traumatized Slemmer's family and rewarded "abusive delay tactics" by Pike's attorneys.

Later in the day, the high court cleared the way for the execution to proceed. The conservative majority did not explain their order, while the three liberal members signed a dissent that said Pike's claims deserved a closer look.

Pike did not deny committing the killing, but her supporters argued that the state should consider her age at the time, her mental illness and her allegations of severe sexual abuse.

Case renewed debate on the death penalty for teens

As the execution date drew near, debate renewed over the death penalty for young offenders.

Assistant Federal Defender Stephen Ferrell said Pike's death sentence is an outlier because other 18-year-olds in Tennessee have had such sentences vacated.

After the killing, Pike was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. In her clemency petition, she said she only wanted to fight Slemmer but killed her in a frenzied attack when she couldn't "put the brakes on."

"I was a mentally ill 18-year-old kid. It took me numerous years to even realize the gravity of what I'd done," Pike said in a statement.

Victim's mother says she is waiting for death sentence

Slemmer's mother had traveled to Nashville in the hopes of witnessing the execution of her daughter's killer. She told The Associated Press on Saturday that she had waited decades to see Pike's sentence carried out.

"Every time I think about it, I think about Colleen feeling that pain and trying to get up and run," May Martinez told The Associated Press in a telephone interview on Saturday.

Martinez could not be immediately reached by telephone for comment after the execution was halted.

The killing rocked the city of Knoxville. Prosecutors said Pike, fearing Slemmer was trying to steal her boyfriend, lured her to a wooded area on Jan. 12, 1995. Pike cut Slemmer with a box cutter and beat her with a large chunk of asphalt. Shipp, Pike's boyfriend, has admitted that he was the one who carved a pentagram, a star-shaped symbol associated with Satan, into her body.

Shipp was 17 when the crime happened and received a sentence of life in prison with the possibility of parole. Pike was the only one sentenced to death.

Executions of women are rare in the US

Since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976, 18 women have been put to death, representing about 1% of all executions, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

Pike would have been the 30th person executed in the U.S. this year after Florida carried out an execution on Tuesday.

Tennessee announced in 2024 that it was switching from a three-drug series for lethal injections to the single drug pentobarbital. That came more than two years after the state abruptly halted the execution of Oscar Smith and acknowledged that it had failed to ensure its lethal injection drugs were tested properly.

Attacker's motive remains unknown after FlyDubai flight to Israel escapes disaster

By MELANIE LIDMAN, SAMY MAGDY and CARA ANNA Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The motive of the Omani copilot who stabbed his captain on a flight to Israel, causing the plane to plummet dangerously and forcing it to land in Saudi Arabia, remained unknown on Thursday as investigators across the region raced to learn more.

Israeli passengers who were on the FlyDubai aircraft carrying 174 people from the United Arab Emirates to Tel Aviv have described how the bloodied Indian captain managed to open the cockpit door to let them in before they grappled with the copilot and stabilized a descent so sharp that the plane's rudder was torn away.

"We felt helpless, suspended in midair, and I didn't know who to turn to. But it was all instinct to survive," one of the responders, Asaf Rajuan, said in a new statement shared by Israel's presidency.

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A regional official briefed on the investigation said the suspect, an Omani citizen, was under arrest and confirmed that Saudi authorities were working with countries, including Israel, to try to determine a motive. He said the UAE, the United States and Oman also were involved. The official did not describe the extent of Israeli involvement.

"All possible scenarios, from terrorism to mental disorders, are being looked into. Nothing is ruled out for now," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the probe.

Israeli investigators will join the interrogation of the copilot

Israeli intelligence and security officials were investigating the copilot in Saudi Arabia, according to another regional official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Saudi Arabia does not have formal diplomatic ties with Israel, but there is longstanding security and intelligence cooperation through alternative channels.

Video shot inside the plane by Shota Musayev, a dentist who treated the captain, shows the copilot on his knees, with his hands tied behind his back. The copilot's name still has not been released.

The UAE government said its investigation team had begun its work into the motive and "whether it was linked to any terrorist purpose," adding that UAE law applies to crimes committed on board.

Capt. Smit Machchhar, widely praised as one of the heroes of the flight, was reportedly in stable condition, the Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia said overnight. The condition of the copilot was not clear.

Asked if there is any indication of Iranian involvement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Fox News "it's too early to say." The prime minister told CNN that Israel had received no specific warning.

U.S. President Donald Trump told reporters at the White House that he and Netanyahu discussed the incident "at length" by phone and it seemed as though the copilot "was perhaps a terrorist or perhaps a whack job."

Netanyahu said he also spoke with the UAE's president, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who agreed that Israel would join the interrogation of the suspect.

Netanyahu had warned in recent days of unspecified, heightened security threats. The country is a week away from the anniversary of the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, which has triggered the war in Gaza.

Israel's foreign ministry said the people on board were from Israel, India and the UAE. The U.S. State Department said four passengers had American citizenship.

FlyDubai has said its flights to and from Israel would be suspended.

School where captain trained calls the safe landing 'miraculous'

In the chaos that unfolded about two and a half hours after leaving Dubai, the flight descended from 33,000 feet to 17,000 feet (around 10,000 meters to 5,100 meters) in about a minute, before making an erratic circle close to the Jordanian border and landing Tabuk about an hour later, according to Flightradar24, which identified the aircraft as a Boeing 737 Max 8.

The head of the New Zealand flight school where the Indian captain trained, Philip Kean, called it "miraculous in the way that the airplane was never, ever kind of designed for that sort of dive and survive that, the airplane actually didn't break up completely."

Already, Trump was praising the U.S.-based Boeing for producing a plane "that was able to withstand G Forces and Strain far beyond what it was designed."

During the frantic search for a place to land, a person who heard the flight's communications with air traffic control described the plane being turned away by Saudi Arabia and Jordan before eventually landing in Tabuk, while passengers screamed in the background. The pilot's voice was trembling as he called "mayday" and said a hijacking was taking place.

The air control operators gave no reason for the refusals. The person who heard the communications spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Swiss glaciers lose over 5% of ice volume in 2026 as heat waves, low winter snow accelerate thaw

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

ZURICH, Switzerland (AP) — Glaciers in Switzerland — the home to the most in the Alps — lost 5.5% of their ice volume this year, the second-biggest percentage drop on record due to heat waves and low winter snowfall, experts report.

"Alpine glaciers have no chance of surviving in the long term under such conditions," the GLAMOS Swiss glacier monitoring service and Swiss Academy of Sciences said in a statement released Thursday.

The trend has worsened in recent years: Over the past five years alone, the volume of ice in Switzerland has declined by nearly a fifth, the experts say.

The report testifies to the latest concerns that global warming is wreaking havoc on Europe, the world's fastest-warming continent.

"The warming that we are experiencing now can be attributed 100% to anthropogenic climate change. It's as simple as that," said Matthias Huss, who heads GLAMOS. "Without human emissions or fossil fuels we wouldn't have any warming at the moment."

This year's ice volume loss continues trend

The record retreat of glacier ice in Switzerland came in 2022, when summer heat, low winter snowfall and an unusual smattering of reddish dust blown in from the Sahara darkened the glaciers and caused them to absorb more heat.

Huss said the snow cover in winter was important for two reasons.

"On the one hand, it protects the bare ice from melting. The longer you have snow, the longer you avoid the loss of old ice," said Huss in an interview at the Federal Polytechnic Institute ETHZ, where he is a glaciology professor.

"On the other hand, the snow is important also for generating new food for the glacier. The more snow you have, the higher the potential to keep some of the snow at high elevation and to form new ice," Huss added.

The great thaw in Europe's legendary Alps is not alone: Experts say global warming helped to destabilize a Himalayan slope that collapsed in August and unleashed catastrophic and deadly flooding across Nepal. Satellites have shown vast shrinkage of glaciers in places like Greenland and Antarctica over the last half-century or so.

Percentage drop rises as overall ice volume falls

In Switzerland, in absolute terms, volume lost has been less than that in 2003, but the percentage decline this year is greater. That's because the total volume today is roughly a third of that 23 years ago. Back then, the relative loss was 3.5% of total ice volume in Swiss glaciers.

Such accelerated ice melt has had an impact in Switzerland — the loss of 2.2 trillion liters (581 billion gallons) from July to September amounts to four times the annual consumption of water in the country of about 9.1 million people. Switzerland gets more than half of its electricity from hydropower.

But the impact of accelerated glacier melt ripples far beyond: Switzerland is the water tower of Europe, and feeds some of the continent's most important rivers: the Danube, Po, Rhine and Rhone.

The experts say the "extreme melting" faced by Switzerland's glaciers this year included a decline in the average thickness of individual glaciers between 2-1/2 and 4 meters (about 8-13 feet) — and a reduction of up to 10 meters (33 feet) on the tongue of some glaciers.

It is 'almost too late' to save Switzerland's glaciers

The expert teams have fanned out to assess runoff and crevices caused by the running water through the glaciers, in part by dumping red dye into the streams to track the water flows.

The Allalin, Clarident, Rhone and Aletsch glaciers — Aletsch being the largest in the Alps — were among the glaciers to experience their biggest melt on record this year.

"We just need to stabilize the climate by reducing CO2 emissions and this will help the glaciers," said Huss, of GLAMOS, though he added that it is "almost too late" to save those in the Swiss Alps.

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"For the ice in the polar regions like the ice sheets, there it's not yet too late," he said. "There, we can make a difference and we need to make a difference in order to limit sea level rise, for example, a factor that is a fundamental threat to billions of people living along the coast."

Inside Ken Paxton's jet-setting lifestyle: California wineries, European hot spots and ski resorts

BRIAN SLODYSKO and JESSE BEDAYN The Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — When Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton launched his campaign for Senate last year, he skipped the local pageantry.

Instead, records show, the conservative firebrand announced his bid on Fox News, cleared his calendar and booked a hotel in Augusta, Georgia, during the storied Masters golf tournament, a trip that cost to Texas taxpayers at least \$25,000.

The trip reflected a transformation that has unfolded over Paxton's 11 tumultuous years as Texas' top law enforcement official: His focus has increasingly extended beyond state lines. As he steadily built a national political profile and became a star in President Donald Trump's MAGA universe, Paxton traveled frequently and spent less time in Texas, according to an Associated Press review of state and campaign records.

Since assuming office in 2015, Paxton left about 730 workdays blank on his official calendars and took over 275 out-of-state trips to places such as the California wine country, Caribbean resorts and European tourism hot spots. The travel cost Texas taxpayers a minimum of \$1.9 million to cover expenses charged by his security detail, records show. It is unclear how Paxton has financed much of his portion of the travel.

The pattern became more pronounced as Paxton became a ubiquitous presence in conservative media and filed a stream of partisan lawsuits to oppose Democratic President Joe Biden's agenda, endearing himself to Trump. Early in his tenure, his official calendars were packed with job-related duties. In 2021, more than 90 workdays were blank — a number that reached to 112 in 2024, the last full year the AP had records for.

Texas does not require the attorney general to report his day-to-day whereabouts, and other state records do not often reveal the length or purpose of the out-of-state travel. Texas, however, keeps records for the monthly expenses incurred by his security detail. Those records show reimbursements for travel outside Texas spiked from about \$30,000 in 2015 to nearly \$400,000 in 2024.

"There is clearly a pattern of behavior here that may make some voters question how seriously Ken Paxton has taken the job," said Joshua Blank, the director of research for the Texas Politics Project at the University of Texas at Austin. "At the same time, Ken Paxton has been accused of a lot of things and those accusations have not hurt him in any significant way yet."

Paxton's travel has been an issue in campaign

Paxton's record as attorney general and his travel have become an issue in the Senate campaign, a race that could prove pivotal in deciding party control of the chamber.

His Democratic opponent in the November election, James Talarico, criticized Paxton for spending July 4 in Great Britain and accused him of focusing more on his standing in Trump's political movement than on issues facing Texans. In a recent social media post, Talarico chided Paxton for misspelling the name of a Texas town. "It's Cypress, not 'Cyprus,'" Talarico wrote on Sept. 20. "But for all the time you spend on luxury vacations in Europe, it's no surprise you don't know Texas."

The travel has also served as an uncomfortable reminder of Paxton's complicated personal life.

Last year, his primary opponent, Sen. John Cornyn, posted a photo online of Paxton attending the 2024 Kentucky Derby with a group that included a woman who he has since been spotted traveling alone with.

"Quite the unforgettable day for Crooked Ken and Tracy Duhon!" Cornyn wrote, adding, "If you know you know."

Numerous publications have reported that Paxton and Duhon, a Christian influencer and author, have an alleged romantic relationship, though both have declined to comment on the situation.

Paxton's wife, Texas state Sen. Angela Paxton, filed for divorce last year on "biblical grounds" and ac-

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cused the attorney general of infidelity. Duhon, who was not named in the Paxtons' divorce filings, did not respond to a request for comment.

Paxton's campaign would not make him available for an interview and declined to comment for this story. Madison Cercy, a Paxton spokeswoman, directed all questions to the Texas Attorney General's office, which did not directly respond to a detailed list of questions about Paxton's travel, including how he pays for it.

In an unsigned statement, Paxton's office said that calendar entries do not "capture someone's full work-day, including hours of calls, negotiations, case strategy, and briefings with his team that fill every day."

Paxton's office said he has helped secure large legal settlements from drugmakers and tech companies, which requires routine travel. His office added that Paxton, like other high-profile state officials, travels with a security detail because he faces threats "stemming from his courageous work ... fighting on behalf of the people of Texas."

"Attorney General Paxton leads an agency of more than 4,000 employees and is briefed daily on the most pressing matters across the office," the statement reads. "His schedule is built to be immediately responsive to the most pressing issues in order to best serve Texans."

Paxton has been an 'activist' attorney general

Since taking office more than a decade ago, the former state lawmaker and probate lawyer has been under a cloud of scrutiny. Paxton was investigated by the FBI but never charged. Without admitting guilt, he paid restitution to settle a felony securities fraud case brought by state prosecutors. And he was impeached — but later acquitted — by fellow Republicans on accusations of abusing his office and accepting bribes.

He has survived politically thanks to a deep-well of support from his Christian conservative base and a close affiliation with Trump. He cemented the bond early in his tenure by turning his office into an operating base for the conservative movement and pursuing litigation to further its goals.

Paxton, for example, spearheaded a failed effort to overturn Trump's 2020 presidential election loss to Biden. After Biden took office, Paxton sued the Democratic administration more than 100 times, a feat he has boasted about on the campaign trail.

Paxton did not invent the "activist" model for attorneys general but marshaled it in a way that enhanced his political brand, said Brandon Rottinghaus, a professor of political science at the University of Houston.

"The culture war litigation became a central function of his office rather than a peripheral one," said Rottinghaus. Paxton, he added, "learned that litigation itself generated political capital."

Tom Phillips, a former Republican chief justice on the Texas Supreme Court, said Paxton's politicization of the office was a factor in his decision to endorse the Democratic candidate, state Sen. Nathan Johnson, in the race to succeed him as attorney general. "The office of attorney general should be conducted in a nonpartisan fashion. Not to advance their own political agenda," said Phillips.

The Rise of a MAGA star

Paxton's evolution into a national political figure can be seen in his official calendars, according to records. Early in his tenure, his schedule was packed with the typical duties of a state attorney general.

For example, during his first year in office, he routinely met with state lawmakers, greeted constituents, delivered speeches and huddled with deputies for strategy meetings.

Over the last five years, the calendars contained few listings of such activities, appearing to confirm what two former deputies told impeachment investigators in 2023: He often skipped meetings and was indifferent to many of his job's day-to-day duties, which were delegated to his top deputies.

"I didn't have a whole lot of contact with Attorney General Paxton," Mark Penley, a former deputy attorney general, told impeachment investigators in 2023. "He was gone a lot, he was traveling, he was out."

Over a two-year period ending in 2024, Paxton flew to the Caribbean, Israel, India, Taiwan, South Africa, made three trips to Europe and hit five different ski towns in the Rockies, including numerous visits to Park City, Utah, among other destinations, records show.

In the summer of 2022, a year in which he was running for reelection, Paxton embarked on a multistop European tour that included visits to Italy, Albania, Greece and Malta, as previously reported by the Dallas Morning News. Paxton also stopped at an Idaho resort town and at Trump's Bedminster golf club in New Jersey, where he held a fundraiser. His travel that year cost the public roughly \$230,000 to reimburse

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members of his security detail, records show.

While the number of blank days included in Paxton's calendars trended upward during his tenure, other patterns emerged, too.

In 2022, for example, Paxton's calendar contained just 79 blank days, but included 96 days in which the only listed activities were interviews he scheduled with conservative media outlets.

The following year his schedule contained more conservative media interviews — 122 — than the 98 events related to the day-to-day operations of his office, records show.

Visiting the Golden State

Texas conservatives, including Paxton, have treated California as a punching bag. "Don't California My Texas" is a favorite phrase of Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who uses it as a pejorative shorthand for the liberal values commonly associated with the west coast state.

Paxton recently took a swipe at the state while attacking his November opponent. "California already has two senators. It doesn't need a third. But that's exactly what James Talarico would be," Paxton said earlier this month when Republicans gathered in Texas for a midterm election summit convened by Trump.

That kind of disdain has not stopped Paxton from spending time in California, where he spent a portion of his youth. Records show Paxton has taken over 25 trips to the state, costing Texas taxpayers over \$175,000.

"I like places in California, even though I don't like to admit that I go to California. But it's beautiful," Paxton said on the "Swimming with the Sharks" podcast last November.

He has shown a particular fondness for northern California's wine country, which he visited at least five times, records show.

In 2019, Paxton used \$11,000 from his campaign fund to pay for lodging at a boutique Napa Valley hotel, vineyard tours and stops at two wineries, which he described in campaign finance reports as a fundraising expense. The trip cost taxpayers \$8,100 in security costs, records show.

Another wine country visit in 2024 cost the public over \$14,000, records show. During the trip, Paxton ventured near Yosemite National Park, records show, where his campaign paid for meals, including \$436 dropped at Mammoth Rock Restaurant, a French-inspired brasserie that offers "elevated" classics such as escargot and duck confit.

It's unclear how Paxton has financed most of his jet-setting lifestyle. He tapped his campaign fund to cover expenses in some instances. His Senate campaign and his office did not offer comment on the matter.

Though he was not wealthy when first elected to the legislature in 2002, Paxton's net worth has soared in recent years. A financial disclosure he recently filed with the Senate indicates he has millions of dollars in assets.

But the documents offer an incomplete picture. As attorney general, Paxton makes about \$153,000 a year and has said he is not obligated to disclose assets held in a trust. His net worth has fluctuated in the periodic reports he has filed with the Senate, which give values in ranges but do not provide precise dollar figures. A document filed last year indicated he had substantial debts and may have a negative net worth. A disclosure Paxton filed in August indicated he may be worth more than \$20 million, much of it related to his growing real estate portfolio.

Palm Beach Regular

Since Trump's first election in 2016, Paxton could often be found in Washington, visiting more than 31 times. After Trump began plotting his political comeback following his 2020 election loss, Paxton made regular pilgrimages to Palm Beach, home to Trump's private club, Mar-A-Lago.

In early 2021, when Trump was in political exile for his role in the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, Paxton played a game of golf with him. That same year Paxton paid nearly \$50,000 to hold a fundraiser for himself at Mar-A-Lago and flew into West Palm Beach aboard a private jet, according to campaign finance disclosures.

He's since made 11 more visits to the area, records show, in addition to 28 other visits to Florida cities, including two stops at Disney World.

California helicopter crash kills 2 people and leaves 2 hospitalized and 1 missing, report says

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A medical helicopter crashed off Catalina Island near Los Angeles, killing two people and leaving two hospitalized on Wednesday night, authorities said.

L.A. County Fire Engineer Jonathan Torres confirmed the two deaths and said two people were transported to local hospitals, while a fifth person remained missing, KTLA-TV reported.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn said in a post on X that she was told the helicopter crashed shortly after takeoff from Catalina.

Authorities received reports of the crash shortly before 8 p.m. and responded along with the U.S. Coast Guard, KTLA reported.

One person was transported to a Los Angeles hospital and their condition was not immediately known, the station reported.

Authorities said the helicopter was submerged in 240 feet (73 meters) of water off Catalina, which is located about 22 miles (35 kilometers) off the mainland of Los Angeles County.

The helicopter was believed to be owned by REACH Air Medical Services of Sacramento, California, KTLA said.

Pilot stabs fellow pilot on flight to Israel before passengers intervene to stop attack

By SAMY MAGDY, MELANIE LIDMAN, ISAAC SCHARF and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — A copilot stabbed a captain in an apparent attempt to crash a jetliner as it was flying 174 people to Israel on Wednesday. But passengers burst into the cockpit and wrestled with the attacker even as the plane descended sharply, witnesses and Israel's government said.

The plane made an emergency landing in Saudi Arabia. The shaken passengers from the FlyDubai flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv landed Wednesday evening in Israel on another flight, as onlookers cheered. Israel's emergency services said they treated three passengers with minor injuries.

It was not clear what motivated the attack, which led Israel to scramble warplanes amid concerns about a possible hijacking. In a CNN interview aired on Wednesday evening, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the attacker was an Omani national and was being interrogated in Saudi Arabia, where he was arrested.

Aviation experts were surprised the plane did not crash after a descent so extreme that most of the rudder was ripped off the tail.

"We're going to die," passenger Naama Bershadski recalled thinking as she closed her eyes and prayed.

A video shared by Netanyahu's office showed passenger Yaniv Hayoun, who grappled with the attacker, wearing a bloodied shirt and hugging the prime minister, who told Hayoun: "I look at you and I see a lion. I see a great hero."

President Donald Trump told reporters at the White House that he and Netanyahu discussed the incident "at length" by telephone and that it seemed as though the copilot "was perhaps a terrorist or perhaps a whack job. And, he stabbed the pilot."

Responders said they knew they had seconds to act

Hayoun, who Netanyahu identified as a plumber, said he and others pushed their way into the cockpit, where he saw the alleged attacker seemingly trying to destroy the controls.

"The door apparently wasn't locked, and we managed to open it," Hayoun told journalists at the airport. "What made it difficult for us was the (other) pilot himself. He had been stabbed and was on the other side of the door."

Hayoun told Netanyahu that as people wrestled with the attacker, he grabbed the controls and pulled them the way he had seen on television shows. Then other crew members took over. FlyDubai said the aircraft was secured by on-duty crew "who diverted and landed the aircraft safely."

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Another responder, dentist Shota Musayev, told journalists they realized they had just seconds to take control of the plane before a "critical event." They also feared another attacker might be on the plane, so "we spread a few more people inside the plane so that if something happened, we would be able to simply take control."

Musayev then attended to the wounded pilot: "He was just praying the whole time and was in contact with me, and I was afraid we would really lose him."

Video footage on social media reviewed by The Associated Press showed two men on the plane's floor, bloodied and wounded.

Netanyahu identified the captain as Smit Machchhar, an Indian citizen, and noted his "extraordinary bravery." The Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia said Machchhar was hospitalized in stable condition.

"Despite being stabbed and seriously injured, he fought back, resisted, opened the cockpit door, and enabled passengers and crew to overpower the attacker — preventing a catastrophic midair disaster," Netanyahu said on X. "He saved the lives of 174 people, including Israeli citizens and other nationals."

Israel's foreign ministry said the people on board were from Israel, India and the United Arab Emirates. The U.S. State Department said four passengers had American citizenship.

FlyDubai said its flights to and from Israel would be suspended while an investigation takes place. Netanyahu said that he spoke with the UAE's president, who agreed that Israel would join the interrogation of the suspect.

The incident came at a busy travel time as the Jewish High Holy Days with school and work breaks wrap up. In addition, national elections will be held on Oct. 27 and many Israelis plan to fly back to vote, since Israel doesn't permit absentee voting from abroad.

Netanyahu had warned in recent days of unspecified, heightened security threats. The country is a week away from the anniversary of the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, which has triggered a series of wars.

Aviation experts marvel that the plane didn't crash

In the chaos about two and a half hours after leaving Dubai, the flight descended from 33,000 feet to 17,000 feet (around 10,000 meters to 5,100 meters) in about a minute, before making an erratic circle close to the Jordanian border and landing in Tabuk about an hour later, according to Flightradar24, which identified the aircraft as a Boeing 737 Max 8.

According to a statement by Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Tabuk, the plane landed there at 9:45 a.m., an hour after making a distress call.

"Suddenly the aircraft started to fall down, like, a massive turbulence, like a massive G force, for 20 or 30 seconds," passenger Almog Italie said.

Former United Airlines pilot and aviation safety expert Steve Arroyo said he was surprised that the plane was able to land safely after most of the rudder was ripped off the tail during the extreme descent.

"That was a serious descent and strong aerodynamic forces on that rudder for that to happen. I'm just amazed the aircraft didn't come apart," Arroyo said.

Another aviation safety expert, Jeff Guzzetti, said that given the rate of descent, it may not have been possible for the plane to level out if it had fallen below 10,000 feet.

"It is remarkable they were able to pull out of that dive. What saved them is there was enough altitude left for them to recover," said Guzzetti, who used to investigate crashes for the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration in the U.S.

A panicked mayday call as the flight sought place to land

A person who heard the flight's communications with air traffic control described the plane being turned away by Saudi Arabia and Jordan before eventually landing in Tabuk, while passengers screamed in the background.

The person said the pilot's voice was trembling as he called "mayday" and said a hijacking was taking place and ambulances would be needed. But Saudi Arabia initially denied clearance to land and directed him to Jordan. The plane was told to wait for clearance from the Jordanian military and then turned away.

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The pilot then returned to Saudi Arabia and said he had to land in Tabuk. The air control operators gave no reason for the refusals. The person who heard the communications spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said he spoke with his counterpart in the UAE and they agreed to work together "against extremist elements seeking to harm security and undermine stability in the region." The general Civil Aviation Authority of the UAE said it was investigating a security incident.

An official confirmed that Israel had scrambled warplanes, fearing a hijacking. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the incident was under investigation.

Israelis have made emergency landings in Saudi Arabia before

Israelis were targeted in a string of hijackings and airplane attacks by Palestinian militants in the 1960s and 1970s. Israel has not experienced a hijacking in decades but maintains some of the strictest airport security in the world, including on Israel-bound flights.

The emergency landing in Saudi Arabia was not the first for a plane carrying Israelis home. The kingdom does not have formal diplomatic ties with Israel, but ended its longstanding ban on Israeli flights overflying its territory in 2022.

Since then, Saudi Arabia has coordinated emergency landings for Israeli passengers, including in 2023 when a plane experienced an electrical malfunction.

The UAE has become a popular vacation destination for Israeli tourists since the countries normalized ties in 2020. FlyDubai is the lower-cost sister carrier of Emirates airlines.

What to know about the terrifying FlyDubai flight bound for Israel

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

One pilot stabbed another and attempted to crash a flight from the United Arab Emirates to Israel.

Passengers, many of them Israelis, feared for their lives as the FlyDubai aircraft lost half its altitude in about a minute.

As Israel scrambled fighter jets out of concern for a possible hijacking, a passenger and crew member burst into the cockpit to subdue the attacker, enabling other crew members to gain control of the aircraft, which landed safely in Saudi Arabia.

It was not clear what motivated Wednesday's attack.

The terrifying flight occurred just days before the anniversary of the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that launched the war in Gaza. It has rekindled anxieties about airline security and focused attention on an unsettling question: Are pilots a significant threat to the flying public's safety?

Here's what we know — and don't know — about what happened on FlyDubai flight FZ1073:

A fight, an alert and a rapid descent

The distress call came at 8:44 a.m. local time, about two and a half hours after the flight with about 170 passengers left Dubai and headed to Tel Aviv.

The captain and first officer had been fighting in the cockpit after one stabbed the other and tried to crash the aircraft, according to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The aircraft swiftly lost altitude — dropping from 33,000 feet to 17,000 feet (around 10,000 meters to 5,100 meters) in the span of about a minute. It then circled close to the Jordanian border before landing in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, about an hour later.

A person who heard the flight's communications with air traffic control described the plane being turned away by Saudi Arabia and Jordan before eventually landing in Tabuk, while passengers screamed in the background. The person who heard the communications spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Aviation experts said they were surprised that the plane did not crash after a descent so extreme that most of the rudder was ripped off the tail.

Both pilots suffered injuries that required hospital treatment, according to a statement from Tabuk's Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz International Airport. Netanyahu said Saudi Arabia had arrested one of the pilots.

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A plane carrying passengers from the flight landed Wednesday evening in Israel.

Passengers and crew wrest control

A passenger and a crew member managed to enter the cockpit, enabling other crew members to fly the plane to a safe landing, according to Netanyahu, who cited a passenger he had spoken to.

The cockpit door on all aircraft is locked during flight for security reasons — a measure that became the industry standard after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, in which hijackers broke into the cockpits of four domestic flights in the United States.

Netanyahu said on X that the pilot who had been stabbed opened the cockpit door, which “enabled passengers and crew to overpower the attacker — preventing a catastrophic midair disaster.”

What security checks do pilots undergo?

One question surrounding this incident is how anyone on the aircraft — especially a pilot — was able to get a knife onboard. It’s unclear how big the knife was that was used in the attack or if it was a knife.

In an interview with Fox News Channel’s Sean Hannity that aired Wednesday night, Netanyahu said the attacker might have hit the captain with an axe. Airlines are generally required to carry crash axes in the cockpit for use in an emergency to break open a window to escape or break open a panel to access a fire.

Pilots undergo rigorous screening, including passing through metal detectors, at checkpoints at all airports. It’s also standard for airlines to vet their pilots’ background for criminal and employment history, their physical and mental health, as well as having them undergo intelligence and security screening.

Israel has some of the most stringent airline security measures worldwide. Passengers on Israel-bound flights regularly are taken aside for questioning and baggage searches after passing through normal airport security. It’s unclear whether the pilots of the FlyDubai flight had been screened as vigorously.

There have been extremely rare occasions when airline security protocols fail. In 2015, the co-pilot of Germanwings Flight 9525 locked the captain out of the cockpit and deliberately set the plane on a collision course with a mountainside, killing all 150 people aboard.

Cockpit struggles have been blamed in past crashes

On Oct. 31, 1999, EgyptAir Flight 990 went down off the Massachusetts island of Nantucket killing 217 aboard, and investigators at the time said the evidence pointed to it being intentionally crashed into the ocean by its co-pilot after a struggle in the cockpit.

In its final report adopted in 2002, the National Transportation Safety Board said the co-pilot was heard on the cockpit voice recorder saying “I rely on God” as the plane was going down, while the captain repeatedly urged him to “pull up with me.”

The evidence led the NTSB to conclude that the crash was not the result of a mechanical failure but was “the result of pilot inputs, including opposing pilot inputs where the relief first officer was commanding nose-down and the captain was commanding nose-up movement.”

Ex-fraternity leader at Arizona university gets jail time after pledge died of alcohol poisoning

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — A former Northern Arizona University fraternity leader was sentenced to two months in jail Wednesday for his role in a hazing that led to the death of a pledge.

Carter Eslick, 20, also received three years of supervised probation during a sentencing hearing in Coconino County Superior Court. Eslick had pleaded guilty to a felony hazing charge in the Jan. 31 death of Colin Daniel Martinez, 18, at an off-campus house.

An autopsy found Martinez died of alcohol poisoning with a blood-alcohol content of 0.425% — more than five times the state’s legal limit for drivers 21 and over.

Martinez was among four Delta Tau Delta pledges who shared two bottles of vodka to ensure they vomited, according to court documents. Witnesses reported adjusting Martinez’s sleeping position and checking his pulse and breathing to look for signs of alcohol poisoning throughout the night, the documents said.

Martinez’s parents appeared remotely in court, still grieving their son, and said they want accountability

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and reform within Greek life, Phoenix television station azfamily.com reported.

Eslick was the fraternity's pledge master at the time and was responsible for welcoming new members. He apologized Wednesday to Martinez's family and said he takes "full responsibility for the hand I played in that ritual."

Coconino County Attorney Ammon Barker said no sentence can undo the harm to the Martinez family. "My hope is that this case helps people understand the serious dangers of hazing and encourages them to speak up and intervene before another family experiences this kind of loss," Barker said in a statement.

Judge Stacy Krueger said Eslick knew what he did was dangerous and was troubled that no one spoke out against it.

Eslick could face additional jail time if he doesn't meet the conditions of probation, which include creating and delivering 305 anti-hazing presentations and keeping the court updated on his progress. He also can't use alcohol or drugs unless prescribed.

The university suspended the fraternity after Martinez's death, and the national organization later closed the NAU chapter.

Trump and Vance hit the campaign trail in deep-red areas where GOP candidates seek a boost

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance will both hit the campaign trail on Thursday, but they will be heading to heavily Republican areas to shore up lagging enthusiasm in their party ahead of next month's midterm elections.

Trump's travel on Thursday to Texas and Oklahoma kicks off what the president said will be a 32-day campaign blitz leading up to Nov. 3.

His visit comes as Vance at the same time will be stumping in Florida, putting the Republican Party's highest-ranking officials in areas where GOP candidates once expected to have glide paths to victory but are now facing tougher races.

Republicans have expressed growing pessimism about their chances in the election, which will determine control of Congress, as the president has repeatedly dismissed concerns about high costs and gas prices and his unpopular war in Iran drags on.

According to Trump, his party's headwinds are merely a matter of poor public relations about a job he says is well done.

"We're not getting the word out," he told reporters on Wednesday. "I mean, we're just not getting it."

That's why, he said, he will be traveling all over and trying to persuade GOP voters to pretend his name is on the ballot.

"I'm going out because nobody's selling it," Trump said.

Democrats say Trump, Republicans are desperate

Delanie Bomar, a spokesperson for the Republican National Committee, said in a statement that "the president is barnstorming the country, energizing our base, and supercharging Republican candidates in battleground districts and beyond. We have the resources to spend, and Republicans are full steam ahead to protect and expand our majorities."

The Democratic National Committee said, "Trump and Vance are desperately trying to rally their base as the midterm elections approach and Republicans face defeat."

"Donald Trump and JD Vance started a deadly and costly war with Iran that sent the economy spiraling and pushed prices even higher, and now — in the final stretch to the midterms — they're desperately pleading with voters to 'give (them) another chance,'" said DNC Deputy Communications Director Kendall Witmer.

In Oklahoma, Trump will campaign with Republican Mike Mazzei, who is running against Democratic state House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson in the race for governor.

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Democratic Governors Association spokesperson Kevin Donohoe said Trump's campaign rally shows that Republicans "are in full-on panic mode."

"This race continues to get more competitive — and national Republicans are right to be worried about Mazzei," he said.

The event will be held on the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, putting him in the company of just a handful of U.S. presidents who have visited tribal nations while in office.

Before his evening Oklahoma stop, Trump will tour a truck manufacturing facility in Texas, where Republicans are spending heavily to try to bolster state Attorney General Ken Paxton in a Senate race. Paxton faces a very competitive challenge from Democratic state Rep. James Talarico.

Paxton was planning to be with Trump at the official White House event Thursday in Denton, two campaign officials familiar with Paxton's plans said on condition of anonymity to discuss the candidate's schedule before it was made public.

Vance is also stumping for GOP candidates

Trump will be campaigning in more politically competitive areas in the days and weeks ahead as he embarks on his travel blitz, but Republican officials will not send him to places where they think his presence could drag down their candidates, according to a person familiar with the party's strategy who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Trump's Oklahoma visit, and likewise one on Friday to Alabama, are aimed at hitting two targets with one stop, the person said.

Republican officials have noted that Durant is close to the Dallas and Fort Worth media market, meaning Trump's message will also be carried to Texas voters, and he's expected to talk about Paxton even while addressing voters in the neighboring state.

His Friday stop in Mobile, Alabama, is aimed at boosting not only Sen. Tommy Tuberville as he runs for Alabama governor, but shoring up support in Florida's adjacent panhandle for Republican Rep. Byron Donalds. Donalds is running for Florida governor against David Jolly, the Republican-turned-independent who is now running as a Democrat.

Donalds' campaign in heavily-GOP Florida comes as Republicans there have faced some turbulence and voter concerns about affordability and data centers have become central issues.

While Trump is in Oklahoma and Texas, Vance will stump with Donalds in central Florida on Thursday.

Vance's visit to Lakeland comes a day after the vice president campaigned in Texas. He rallied with Republican candidate Eric Flores, who is in a tight U.S. House race in south Texas.

Vance, speaking in Harlingen, Texas on Wednesday, acknowledged broader discontentment over the high prices in the U.S., but shifted the blame away from Trump and Republicans.

"I know that there are people out there who are frustrated by the pace of progress," he said, but "we have spent every single day fighting for you, diggin' ourselves out of the hole that Joe Biden left us in."

Trump will also campaign on Saturday in Vandalia, Ohio; and Monday in Grand Island, Nebraska.

Trump expected to campaign for GOP almost daily

In a meeting on Capitol Hill this week, White House chief of staff Susie Wiles described privately to GOP senators that Trump will have a near-daily sprint of campaigning ahead of the Nov. 3 midterms.

Wiles showed Republicans the president's upcoming travel schedule, which attendees described as extensive and almost every day, all across the country.

West Virginia Republican Sen. Shelley Moore Capito said White House officials are "acknowledging the headwinds" but that "they have a strategy, and we have a strategy," including money that the president's operation will continue to deploy.

Capito also defended the White House's plan to send Trump to traditionally conservative territory, arguing that he can motivate the Republican base not just in where he travels but elsewhere in the country because Trump has such a broad reach.

"He can get more of his voters out — that are going to be our voters — than anybody else," Capito said.

Tropical Pacific moisture drenches central US as another Pacific hurricane forms

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

Tropical weather that surged onshore from the Pacific soaked more of the U.S. on Wednesday while forecasters announced yet another hurricane off the coast of Mexico.

The new hurricane, Rachel, is expected to develop rapidly and could become a major one with sustained winds topping 111 mph (178 kph). The storm was far offshore, however, and posed no threat to land.

Parts of New Mexico, meanwhile, looked less and less like the months of drought that dried up reservoirs and caused hungry bears to roam into neighborhoods in search of food. Wednesday marks the end of the second wettest month ever in Albuquerque, with National Weather Service records dating back to the 1800s.

Flood warnings in the southwestern state remained in effect, despite the storm slowing.

"There's a lot of standing water in the fields and near some homes," National Weather Service meteorologist Greg Lundeen said of one area where water overtopped a minor dam.

Floodwaters threatened the state's famous chile crop at harvest time. And the Rio Grande that ran dry through a long stretch of the state was overflowing.

The damp and stormy pattern is consistent with an El Niño year of above average Pacific storm activity.

Soggy weather slogs off to the east

From Colorado and across the Great Plains to Iowa, as much as 2 inches (5 centimeters) of rain fell Tuesday and into Wednesday, with some areas seeing even more.

More storms were expected in Texas and Oklahoma after one in Amarillo, Texas, flooded streets and spawned a tornado Tuesday night. Storm totals in the Amarillo area topped 3.5 inches (9 centimeters).

The weather was the remnant of tropical systems including Hurricane Polo, a Category 3 hurricane that made landfall overnight Monday on the Baja California peninsula and then farther inshore.

In southern New Mexico, ongoing rain threatened to rot red chiles as the harvest wraps up. Mold and disease will put stress on the plants in the field, said Preston Mitchell, a Hatch Chile Association board member.

"There will be nobody picking chile for at least five or six days," Mitchell said. "All these growers whose fields were flooded, everything's toast. Everything that's out there is done."

But most of about 100 people who sought refuge from potential flooding in chile-growing Dona Ana County were headed home from shelters Wednesday, county officials said.

As the weather cleared, water stopped spilling over an earthen flood-control structure in the area that held without failing.

Acting Gov. Howie Morales declared a state of emergency that made \$3.75 million available through local governments to help affected people get temporary housing, healthcare, food and transportation.

Rachel is the latest in a busy Pacific hurricane season

Mexican authorities remain on alert in the states of Michoacán, Colima and Jalisco due to Hurricane Rachel.

In the state of Jalisco, schools were closed Wednesday in 30 municipalities as a precautionary measure.

Rachel was located about 200 miles (320 km) west-southwest of Cabo Corrientes, Mexico. Its maximum sustained winds were around 90 mph (150 kmh), according to an advisory from the Miami-based National Hurricane Center.

The cyclone was moving northwest at 7 mph (11 kph) and was forecast to turn toward the west-northwest and west later this week, moving away from mainland Mexico and passing south of the Baja California peninsula.

The hurricane center said the Mexican government had discontinued all coastal watches and warnings. But it warned of possible isolated rainfall totals of up to 12 inches (30 centimeters) and heavy surf along the coasts of Guerrero, Michoacán, Colima and Jalisco states.

In Jalisco, the bodies of three people -- two children ages 3 and 15, and their mother -- were found Sunday after the family went missing due to a river flooding in the city of Talpa de Allende, before Polo made

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landfall. The father is still missing, according to the Jalisco State Civil Protection agency. A tourist also is missing due to strong waves in Puerto Vallarta, but the agency says that case is not linked to Polo either.

In the central Pacific Ocean, Tropical Storm Nolo threatened dangerous conditions for parts of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, a marine conservation area. Formerly a hurricane, the storm drenched parts of Hawaii's Big Island over the weekend. Its maximum sustained winds were near 50 mph (85 kph).

Trump plugs \$54 billion natural gas project in Alaska, flanked by a senator in a tight race

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, WILL WEISSERT and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said South Korea plans to invest about \$54 billion in a natural gas project in Alaska, an announcement he made in the Oval Office on Wednesday flanked by a Republican senator who has found himself in a tough reelection race in the state.

But while Trump and Alaska Sen. Dan Sullivan — a two-term senator and long-time advocate for the pipeline project — described it as a fait accompli, South Korean officials were more cautious, saying they needed to assess the project's commercial viability before committing to the investment.

The announcement was the second time in three days that the president used promises of big projects to try to elevate Senate candidates in states where Trump won comfortably each time he has run — but where Republicans are now in surprisingly competitive races just weeks ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections. On Monday, Trump made a similar-styled announcement about a massive steel plant in Iowa.

But South Korea's participation in the Alaska project — an 807-mile (1,300-kilometer) pipeline connecting Alaska's North Slope to a liquefied natural gas export terminal in the southern part of the state — "has not been finalized," said Han Jeoungae, secretary-general of South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's liberal Democratic Party. She said that she believes Trump's comments were "intended to emphasize the U.S. position."

"We will decide whether to invest in the Alaska LNG project only after thoroughly reviewing it in accordance with our domestic legal procedures and based on the principle of commercial viability," she wrote on Facebook.

Trump and Alaskan leaders in the Oval Office did not describe the project as pending. Trump praised Sullivan — who is facing a competitive challenge from Democrat Mary Peltola, a former congresswoman — for pushing it forward, saying "He's been working on this deal and other deals in Alaska, the pipeline, for almost 20 years, and we're now getting it done."

Sullivan thanked Trump and his cabinet for their work on the deal. "Mr. President, this one is huge for Alaska," Sullivan said, adding that he'd been working on it "relentlessly."

Peltola, Sullivan's Democratic challenger, also praised the project and Trump's advocacy for it, saying in a statement that she had been part of the bipartisan push to bring it "closer to reality" and looked forward to "continuing this bipartisan work with the President as Alaska's next United States Senator."

Trump is hitting the road to promote his administration's actions

The push to deliver big projects in areas where GOP candidates could use a boost comes as Trump's approval ratings have sunk ahead of the midterm elections.

Even Trump himself has begun acknowledging that Republicans could face an uphill climb in their push to retain control of both chambers of Congress after November. "We have to turn this around," he said on Wednesday, suggesting his administration hasn't done enough to promote its accomplishments.

"I've done a very bad job of explaining," the president said during an earlier event in the White House East Room. He's promised to try to rectify that by spending much of the next month on the road campaigning. He begins that swing on Thursday with trips to Texas and Alabama, followed by Ohio on Saturday and Nebraska on Monday. All four are normally solidly red states.

Democrats are targeting Alaska and Iowa

On Monday, Trump announced plans for a \$15 billion steel plant to be built by a Minnesota company

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owned by an Indian industrial conglomerate in Iowa, where Republican Rep. Ashley Hinson is in a close U.S. Senate contest with Democratic state Rep. Josh Turek for the seat being vacated by retiring two-term Republican Joni Ernst. Hinson spoke in the Oval Office during the announcement.

Democrats need to gain a net of four seats in the 100-member Senate to overtake Republicans and gain a majority, and the seats in Iowa and Alaska are among those they're targeting.

Trump's announcements come as voters express concern about near-record fuel prices related to the unresolved war with Iran and as majority Republicans in Congress are facing voters dissatisfied with Trump's handling of the economy.

In a late-July poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, only about one-third of Americans approved of Trump's handling of the economy, and about 7 in 10 described the economy as poor.

Woman accused of firing at home of Rihanna indicted on attempted murder with assault weapon

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A Florida woman accused of driving across the country to fire a rifle at Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky's home, hitting a trailer the celebrity couple was inside and a nursery where their kids were, has been indicted by a grand jury on 14 felony counts including attempted murder.

The indictment against 36-year-old Ivanna Lisette Ortiz of Orlando was unsealed Wednesday by a Los Angeles County judge.

Ortiz, appearing in court wearing yellow jail clothes, spoke only to her attorney, who entered a not guilty plea for her. The judge then ordered her held on \$2.6 million bail.

The move came a day after another judge ruled that Ortiz is mentally competent to stand trial. The secret grand jury proceedings were held as Ortiz was undergoing months of psychiatric evaluation. The jurors returned their indictment June 18, but it was kept under wraps for three months until the judge ruled on her competency. Now, a case that appeared stalled — possibly permanently — is on a fast track to trial.

No one was injured in the March 8 shooting. Authorities allege Ortiz drove a Tesla up to the gates of the Beverly Hills-area property of the singing superstar and her rap star partner, A\$AP Rocky, pointed an AR-15 style rifle out the window and fired at least 20 rounds toward the property and the neighboring house.

"This is a person who wanted to kill Rihanna," Deputy District Attorney Alexander Bott said outside court. "Everyone else was collateral damage."

Bullets tore through the Airstream trailer, according to a police report. Shots also struck the wall of their home's nursery, where their three small children were with their nanny. Rihanna's mother and several staffers also were in the home, and authorities say she also fired shots toward a neighbor's house.

Both Rihanna and her mother, Monica Fenty, testified to the grand jury, as did Hollywood agent Tracey Jacobs, the owner of the neighboring house who was home at the time and is listed among the victims in the indictment.

Their testimony remains under seal but will become public in about two weeks unless the defense seeks to keep them secret and the judge agrees.

Rihanna told investigators just after the shooting that she "suddenly heard approximately ten loud sounds like something banging on metal," and pulled Rocky out of a bed and onto the ground. She said she opened curtains and saw bullet marks in the windshield right in front of where she had been standing.

Deputy Public Defender Derek Dillman, Ortiz's attorney, did not speak to reporters outside the courtroom, and a message seeking comment from the public defender's office on the indictment was not immediately answered. Other than her not guilty pleas, her lawyers have not publicly addressed the charges, saying only that they would work to defend her rights.

Investigators said that on the day of her arrest, Ortiz told them: "I wasn't attempting murder."

Ortiz was charged with very similar counts in March. The new indictment supersedes those charges. The secret grand jury proceedings allow prosecutors to skip California's preliminary hearing process, where

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evidence must be presented publicly to see if a trial is merited.

The indictment also charges Ortiz with 10 counts of assault with an assault weapon — one for each of the people on the two properties — and three counts of shooting at an inhabited dwelling or camper. It names the couple's three children Rza, Riot and Rocki, all under age 5, as victims. The assault weapon counts carry a stiffer sentence than the original charges of assault with a semiautomatic firearm. Ortiz was the registered owner of the rifle, which she obtained in Florida, authorities said.

She could get life in prison if convicted of all counts.

Reports have been sealed on the psychiatric evaluations that paused the case shortly after it began, and there was no public discussion of the details of her mental state.

Prosecutors have not said anything about a motive or cited any connection between Rihanna and Ortiz, a longtime licensed speech pathologist. But in videos posted on Facebook and YouTube in the months before the shooting, Ortiz made increasingly angry comments on Rihanna that sometimes took the form of threats, at one point calling her a "devil."

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."

Judge keeps Venezuelan delivery driver shot by ICE in custody for alleged assault

By ANNA WILDER and SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A Venezuelan delivery driver who was shot in his car by a federal immigration agent in Texas will remain in custody on charges that he assaulted an officer while trying to evade arrest, a federal judge ruled Wednesday.

Judge Dustin Howell said that the case against Wilber Rafael Garces Perez, 28, should proceed after prosecutors presented body-worn camera footage of the encounter in Austin, in which Garces Perez allegedly struck a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer with his driver's side mirror.

Garces Perez is charged with one count of assaulting, resisting and impeding a federal officer and faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted. His case has sparked widespread outrage across the Texas capital city and brought renewed criticism from Democrats of President Donald Trump's aggressive crackdown on immigration.

Garces Perez appeared in court in a wheelchair and wearing a sling on his arm

With a bullet still lodged in his back, Garces Perez appeared in court in a wheelchair. His attorneys said he still urgently needs medical care, 10 days after being shot. He also wore a sling on his arm and needed help putting on a headset to listen to a translation of the proceedings.

The defense called the charges against Garces Perez "retaliation" and argued that the camera footage was inconclusive because it didn't fully capture the moment when he allegedly tried to flee.

The hearing also included testimony from Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent Rick Bazan, who signed the criminal complaint charging Garces Perez with assault. The defense argued that Bazan, whose agency is the investigative arm of ICE, could not confirm whether the ICE agent was actually hit by the car mirror since no federal investigators interviewed the agent directly. Bazan also couldn't explain why officer allegedly struck by the mirror was not wearing a body-worn camera.

Footage provided Wednesday in court shows officers pulling Garces Perez over Sept. 20 in Austin, where he was making deliveries for DoorDash.

The video showed Garces Perez giving officers his drivers license through a crack in his window and then asking in Spanish if he can park his car so that a relative could come retrieve it. The officer demanded Garces Perez get out of the car multiple times, to which he asked if he could park his own car so a family member could come retrieve it. After a back and forth, Garces Perez abruptly and rapidly drives off.

Prosecutors show video but not of the shooting itself

Prosecutors presented a video from cameras at a nearby business showing the ensuing high-speed chase through residential streets. The shooting itself was not captured on the footage shared in court.

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The federal officer who shot Garces Perez wasn't wearing a body-worn camera. The immigration officer who did have a camera was driving in a separate car and turned the camera off during the pursuit.

Garces Perez said he was struck by a law enforcement SUV and spun around before he was shot. Federal officers told investigators, however, that Garces Perez attempted to strike an officer with his car at the end of the chase before the unidentified officer fired his weapon.

The accusations against Garces Perez recall previous claims made by immigration agents after other high-profile shootings similarly accusing drivers of weaponizing their vehicles. In a handful of cases, the allegations have been undermined or walked back after the release of body-worn camera footage, drawing renewed scrutiny about the DHS's reliance on vehicular stops to execute arrests.

The man's lawyer accuses ICE of denying him medical treatment

Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch, one of Garces Perez's immigration attorneys, accused ICE of denying him medical treatment for his bullet wound.

"ICE's conduct has been so egregious, that physicians, nurses, medical ethicists and health advocates have come together to demand his release," she said outside court after the hearing.

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

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

Judge Howell said he denied Garces Perez bond on the basis that he could be a flight risk to Venezuela, where he has a child.

His attorneys have filed a lawsuit seeking to prevent his removal from the U.S.

Woman told Cornell police 2 years ago she was 100% confident she was raped, report says

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

A woman who filed a lawsuit saying she was sexually assaulted by seven men at a Cornell University fraternity house told police weeks after the incident that she could "say with 100% confidence I was raped," according to a report by CBS New York, which said it obtained a transcript of her interview with investigators.

The transcript, which has not been publicly released, raises new questions surrounding the local district attorney's decision not to prosecute anyone at the time.

In recent days, Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten has maintained the woman's first account to police didn't include allegations that she was drugged, incapacitated beyond the ability to consent, or forced into sex. Yet, he also said he had reopened the investigation based on new information in the woman's lawsuit, which was filed this month.

Cornell has agreed to bring in outside lawyers to independently investigate how the university handled the woman's allegations, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced Wednesday.

The woman initially went to Cornell's campus police about three weeks after the alleged attack that began on Oct. 19, 2024, then went back on Nov. 14 and 15, 2024, to be interviewed.

"Yes. It was coercion, yes," she told a campus police officer, according to the transcript obtained by CBS. According to CBS News, she said she was "completely and totally incapacitated" before some of the sexual abuse.

The woman acknowledged she had been drinking alcohol and used drugs the night she visited the Chi Phi fraternity house in October 2024, and that she had gaps in her memory.

She also told police she was comfortable with an initial sexual encounter with two of the men, but not with what happened later, when other men began to enter the room.

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"And then, of course, I was being hit at the same time. Physically hit very, very hard," she told police, according to the transcript. "I can say with 100% confidence I was raped," it said she told investigators.

The woman, identified only by the pseudonym Jane Doe in the lawsuit, filed a complaint Sept. 16 saying she was sexually assaulted at the Chi Phi fraternity house after being pressured into snorting ketamine, smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol. She became completely incapacitated while fraternity members were sexually assaulting her, she said.

Van Houten didn't immediately respond to emails and phone messages from The Associated Press on Wednesday, but he told CBS News he never saw the transcript of the woman's interview when his office declined to bring charges, and relied instead on a statement written by a campus police officer but signed by the accuser.

Van Houten has released a summary of that statement, with some of her direct quotes included. He has defended his office's decision not to do additional investigation after the woman first came forward.

"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 told CNN earlier this week.

Cornell University first publicly disclosed that it was investigating the woman's allegations on Nov. 8, 2024, the same day she first went to police. The school sent students an email warning them that a person had reported they had been sexually assaulted at a fraternity house and coerced into consuming drugs. Cornell suspended the Chi Phi fraternity the same day.

In another public statement to students in late November 2024, Cornell University President Michael Kotlikoff said campus police were investigating "deeply disturbing allegations of drug abuse and sexual violence" at the fraternity house.

Later, Cornell appointed a task force designed to address sexual assault on campus. But with the district attorney's decision not to pursue charges and the university's internal disciplinary investigation shielded from the public, attention on the matter waned.

Cornell said in a statement this week 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, but the university has declined to release more information on discipline for individual students, citing privacy rules.

Earlier this week, Hochul called for a new investigation into the university's handling of the matter. In a post on social media Wednesday, she said she had spoken with Kotlikoff and he "agreed to bring in outside counsel for an independent investigation." Cornell confirmed it had agreed but declined additional comment.

"This culture has to stop. And in New York, we're going to do everything we can to stop it," Hochul said.

Judge approves Paramount's settlement with states over Warner buyout, allowing merger to soon close

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — A federal judge has granted Paramount's settlement agreement with 12 states that sued over the company's takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery, allowing the companies to soon close their \$81 billion mega merger.

In a Wednesday order, U.S. District Judge Araceli Martínez-Olguín ruled that the proposed consent decree was a "fair, reasonable, and good faith approach to address the competitive harms" alleged by the states' lawsuit. Paramount, which was bought by Skydance just last year, previously called the antitrust challenge the last hurdle ahead of closing its Warner merger.

The companies now expect to complete the deal on Oct. 6. Shortly after Martínez-Olguín's ruling Wednesday afternoon, Paramount also announced Ynon Kreiz — who is toy giant Mattel's current chief executive — will soon join as co-CEO alongside David Ellison.

In a statement, Ellison said Paramount's merger with Warner marks a "transformational moment for our industry" and that he and his new co-CEO will lead a business that is "creator-first, tech-forward and

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built to scale globally.”

A Paramount-Warner marriage will bring together two of Hollywood’s last five legacy studios. HBO Max, a library full of titles including “Harry Potter” and cable networks such as CNN will also find themselves under the same roof with CBS, the likes of the “Top Gun” franchise and the Paramount+ streaming service.

That further concentrates power in an industry already run by just a handful of major players. And many critics of the deal have decried the states’ settlement, arguing the terms are too weak.

The final antitrust fight

Paramount touted clearances for its Warner acquisition from regulators worldwide over recent months, including the Trump administration’s Justice Department in the U.S.

But in July, top prosecutors from 12 states — led by California Attorney General Rob Bonta — sued to block the merger altogether. They alleged a Paramount-Warner combination would “extinguish competition” in Hollywood and lead to fewer choices for consumers, particularly movie theatergoers and cable customers.

Last week, the states agreed to settle those claims through new commitments from Paramount, including pledges to increase film production in the U.S. over the next five years, grant millions of dollars to a fund aimed at supporting workers displaced by the merger and establish new editorial monitoring of CNN and CBS.

Martínez-Olguín didn’t greenlight the terms right away — maintaining at a Thursday hearing that the court isn’t merely a “rubber stamp” on a settlement of this kind and that she, like many others, had questions. The judge granted outside critics of the settlement (including members of the Block The Merger coalition and the League of United Latin American Citizens) a brief window to share their opposition. She also instructed Paramount and the states to respond to concerns raised by Democratic Sen. Cory Booker.

By Wednesday’s order, however, she concluded that the hopes for settlement terms to go further “do not rise to the level of legal violations upon which the Court can reject the parties’ negotiated resolution.”

The Writers Guild of America, which had filed its own suit shortly after the states in July, also reached a settlement agreement with Paramount last week — concluding that it couldn’t continue its legal fight alone.

Ongoing criticism of the deal

The Block the Merger coalition on Wednesday maintained the states’ settlement was a “toothless” deal. “In years to come, we’ll be able to point to this failure to put consumers over the monied interests of corporate consolidation as the tipping-point moment for media in this country,” Block the Merger said in a statement. But, the group added, “if there is one discernible benefit to the approval of this corporate takeover, it’s that people are now wide awake and paying attention — and their anger is not going to fade away.”

Before agreeing to settle, Bonta previously said the states would only consider “robust” structural remedies. The bulk of the eventual settlement outlined behavioral requirements, at least in the immediate future, with some potential “court enforceable” penalties if Paramount breaks promises down the road.

Even so, most of the company’s new commitments only last five years. Paula Blizzard, an attorney for California, said in Thursday’s hearing that the states eventually settled on terms that didn’t “last forever” because the industry is changing — while immediate divestments, or even the complete blocking of the deal that they initially demanded, could open the door to further acquisitions.

Among those new commitments include a pledge from Paramount to increase spending on film production in the U.S. — by at least an additional \$1.5 billion over the next five years — and promises to release at least 30 films each year, a figure Ellison already touted earlier in his quest for Warner.

The states’ settlement would require Paramount to distribute 30 films in theaters each year for the next two years — and 32 films in each of the three years after that. The fine print notes that only 50% of those movies would have to be “produced or jointly produced” by the combined company. If Paramount fails to meet these film outputs, the states say it will have to divest from Miramax Studios and pay \$30 million for each missed film toward healthcare and retirement trust funds associated with the Writers Guild of America and other industry unions.

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Paramount also agreed to commit \$47.5 million to help fund training and career development for workers displaced by the merger, again over the next five years (\$9.5 million each year).

Meanwhile, when it comes to cable, the states' settlement orders the company to negotiate deals for current Paramount-owned and Warner-owned basic cable channels separately over the next five years. If Paramount violates those terms, a court may order future divestments.

The company must also form a "News Editorial Independence Board" to monitor news operations at CBS and CNN within 180 days of completing its Warner acquisition. But critics point to editorial turmoil already seen at CBS under Skydance ownership — and aren't convinced this new body will move the needle much.

Per court documents outlining the settlement's terms, Paramount's new editorial body will be made up of five "active or retired" journalists with at least 10 years of experience — all appointed by, and reporting to, the combined company's board of directors for three-year terms. Beyond his CEO title, Ellison is Paramount's current chairman and is set to remain in the top spot after the Warner acquisition closes.

While joining the rest of the states in the wider settlement, Colorado and Washington declined to sign off on the editorial board terms. And prosecutors like Connecticut Attorney General William Tong, who wanted a full divestiture of CNN and CBS, said last week he wished the deal could have gone further.

Including billions of dollars in debt, Paramount's buyout of Warner is currently valued at about \$111 billion based on outstanding shares.

High gas prices are spurring states to waive taxes and regulations amid midterm election

By DAVID A. LIEB and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — State officials nationwide are focusing on rising gas and diesel prices tied to the war in Iran, offering gas tax holidays and other measures to ease costs as affordability remains a top voter concern in the critical midterm elections.

The high gas prices took center stage in Ohio on Wednesday, as lawmakers passed a 90-day state gas tax holiday with broad bipartisan support. Including Ohio, about one-third of U.S. states have implemented some form of fuel tax relief, with many taking action within the past week, according to an Associated Press review.

Some states have suspended their fuel taxes. Others have temporarily reduced taxes. And still more have targeted relief only to farmers, loggers and others who use a special type of diesel fuel.

The average price of regular gasoline stood at \$4.43 a gallon on Wednesday, up roughly 50% since the war with Iran began, according to the AAA motor club. The average price of diesel was \$6.41 a gallon — just a few cents shy of a record high set last week.

Here's what to know about states' actions on fuel taxes:

Ohio governor's race at center of fuel tax action

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's office said he plans to sign legislation that will suspend the 38.5-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax and 47-cent-per-gallon diesel tax through the remainder of this year. The plan taps \$725 million from the state's general fund to pay for roads and bridges typically funded by fuel taxes.

Republican legislative leaders scrambled to recall lawmakers to the Statehouse after Democratic gubernatorial candidate Amy Acton called for a gas tax holiday last week and rival Republican Vivek Ramaswamy announced a plan to do the same a few hours later. The two are locked in a closely fought contest to succeed DeWine, a term-limited Republican. Democrats criticized Ramaswamy for taking credit for Acton's idea, while Ramaswamy's allies said his plan had substance and Acton's consisted of "tweets."

Ramaswamy's running mate, Rob McColley, is the Ohio Senate president. On Wednesday, McColley used a technical maneuver to quickly close debate on the measure, suggesting Democrats were preparing for nothing more than "theatrics." Senate Democratic Leader Nickie Antonio said one proposal would have called for an end to the Iran war.

Republican state Sen. Michele Reynolds, a co-sponsor of the legislation, said it "will provide much-needed relief to Ohioans at a time when they are feeling the pressure of gas prices continuing to rise."

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In the House, Democratic state Rep. Allison Russo, a candidate for secretary of state, accused Republicans of an election-year "stunt" that will save Ohioans an average of \$55 over the next three months.

Several states have already halted or reduced gas taxes

In March, Georgia became the first state to suspend its fuel taxes after the war in the Middle East sent prices spiraling. Republican Gov. Brian Kemp extended the tax break into June. More recently, he announced a 30-day resumption of the motor fuel tax holiday, which began Tuesday.

Indiana Gov. Mike Braun, a Republican, has extended a fuel tax exemption multiple times since spring, with the current version running through Oct. 5.

A six-month, 6-cent reduction in Utah's fuel tax is in effect through the end of this year. Illinois and Kentucky have more modest fuel tax breaks in effect, delaying increases that were due to take effect in July.

Some states have relaxed diesel fuel regulations

In the past week, governors in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Texas all have taken steps to provide fuel tax relief for the agricultural industry amid the harvest season.

The executive orders target dyed diesel fuel, which is exempt from state taxes but normally can be used only for off-road machinery like tractors, logging equipment and irrigation pumps. The orders temporarily waive enforcement of those rules, allowing the tax-exempt diesel fuel to be used in vehicles driven on highways.

Some governors noted that reduced costs for transporting crops could affect grocery prices.

California ends restrictions on cheaper fuel blends

The Environmental Protection Agency allowed an annual switch to cheaper, winter-blended fuels beginning Sept. 1, a couple of weeks earlier than normal. The change could save up to 15 cents a gallon, according to data from the National Association of Convenience Stores.

But California sets its own stricter environmental fuel standards. In many parts of the state, summer-blended fuel is required through Oct. 31. Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom ended the summer fuel requirement Monday, citing a recent state law that requires a reevaluation of regulations when retail gas prices rise substantially.

Fuel tax changes may have a delayed effect for consumers

State actions intended to provide relief from high fuel prices don't always have the effect some consumers expect. That's partly because fuel price volatility could cause costs to rise even as tax rates fall. But that's also because taxes typically are charged at the wholesale level, not at the retail pump.

"Customers expect the day that a gas tax holiday takes effect that the price at every pump will be reduced by that amount. But it's way more complicated than that," said Jeff Lenard, a spokesperson for the National Association of Convenience Stores.

"The costs and the changes happen further upstream," he said. "The retailer may also have product that has already been paid for with taxes that needs to be sold before you can acquire the new fuel that is not taxed and you can lower the price."

US can deport the leader of Wisconsin's largest mosque on national security grounds, judge rules

By CYBELE MAYES-OSTERMAN Associated Press/Report for America

CHICAGO (AP) — The U.S. can deport the leader of Wisconsin's largest mosque — an outspoken advocate of Palestinian rights — on the grounds that he is a threat to national security, an immigration judge ruled Wednesday.

Salah Sarsour was detained in Milwaukee in March by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. A federal judge ordered Sarsour's release in June, saying he raised a "substantial" claim that the Trump administration was targeting him for speaking out against Israel and advocating for Palestinian rights.

Sarsour called the ruling "deeply disappointing," but said he intends to appeal.

"I will continue fighting to defend the right to free speech and to stay in the country I have called home

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for more than three decades," Sarsour said in a statement.

Government attorneys say Sarsour's decades-old convictions in Israel make him a threat to national security and accuse him of lying on his green card application and falsely claiming citizenship to vote. Judge Jayme Salinardi, with the Chicago Immigration Court, found him removable on foreign policy grounds but tossed out the government's claim that Sarsour lied to immigration authorities.

"All illegal aliens receive due process," the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement. "If a judge finds an illegal alien has no right to be in this country, we are going to remove them. Period."

Sarsour says his life will be at risk if he is deported to the West Bank

Sarsour, who was born in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, was imprisoned in Israel in 1988 after being convicted of throwing stones at Israeli military personnel. DHS has said he was also convicted of throwing a Molotov cocktail. His defense team says he was accused of that but not convicted. In 1995, he was convicted of attempting to possess weapons. Sarsour denies committing those crimes and his attorneys say he was tortured and coerced into confessing in both instances.

Sarsour, the president of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee, does not have a criminal record in the U.S., where he has lived since 1993. His attorneys say the U.S. government has known about Sarsour's convictions in Israel since he arrived.

Deportation to the West Bank "means the end of my life," Sarsour told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

One of his attorneys, Patrick Taurel, said Sarsour's treatment by Israeli authorities is "probably a good indicator of what awaits him" if he is deported.

At a status hearing Wednesday, Taurel pressed the judge to specify that Sarsour can only be deported to Israel or the Palestinian territories. Jordan, a country to which Sarsour has no connection, is listed as a possible destination on the order of removal.

Sarsour was instructed by immigration officers to list Jordan as his home country on an immigration form because his preferred entry — "Palestine" — is not a fully independent, unified state. But he "has no right to reside in Jordan," Taurel said.

Salinardi declined, saying that can be addressed on appeal.

If sent to Jordan, Sarsour "would just be immediately handed off to Israel," Taurel said during a news conference Wednesday.

Attorney says Sarsour will fight deportation

Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a memo in June 2025 invoking a rarely used immigration provision saying Sarsour could be deported on the same grounds as Mahmoud Khalil and Mohsen Mahdawi, both advocates for Palestinian rights whom the Trump administration has tried to expel, according to court documents.

DHS said in its statement that Rubio "has reasonable grounds to believe Sarsour's presence would have adverse foreign policy consequences for the U.S., and he has engaged in terrorist activity or supported a terrorist organization."

Salinardi found Rubio's letter singling out Sarsour as a foreign policy risk was "presumptive and sufficient evidence" that the government can remove him, Taurel said Wednesday, reading from the judge's decision. The judge gave "extreme deference" to Rubio and to Israel, which has "collaborated" with DHS in the effort to deport Sarsour, the attorney said.

Taurel has said Sarsour will need to demonstrate that he could be tortured again if he were deported, calling it a "very high bar" that he believes his team "can meet in this case."

A notice of appeal is due within 30 days, and Sarsour has 60 days to file an application for relief. The government cannot deport Sarsour until he has exhausted all available legal avenues. Salinardi, who did not schedule a new hearing, announced he is retiring and that Judge Craig Defoe will oversee the case going forward.

Sarsour says he was tortured and coerced into confessions

Jawad Boulos, who represented Sarsour when he was convicted in Israel, testified in August that Sarsour was coerced into confessing and that he wasn't convicted of any charge tying him to a terrorist organiza-

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tion. He said Sarsour was tortured by Shin Bet, Israel's internal security agency.

The Department of Homeland Security challenged Boulos about the torture allegations, questioning how he could know it was true.

Sarsour's defense team has repeatedly asked why the government waited until this year to detain him, saying it has known of his imprisonment in Israel for decades.

Experts on forced confessions and the treatment of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons also testified in Sarsour's defense. Israeli military courts have faced repeated scrutiny over allegations of limited due process and the high conviction rate of Palestinians. Israel rejects the claims.

In June, U.S. District Judge James Patrick Hanlon ordered Sarsour released from ICE custody saying he could have a case arguing the U.S. government detained him in retaliation for protected speech. Further, Hanlon said, government attorneys had not explained why Sarsour was suddenly considered a threat after decades as a lawful permanent resident.

The Trump administration has appealed Hanlon's ruling.

Sarsour, who has Type 2 diabetes, lost more than 30 pounds (14 kilograms) while detained by ICE, and his blood sugar levels were checked only once a month, putting him at risk of organ failure or death, his attorneys said.

An investigation by KFF Health News and The Associated Press found that hundreds of detainees in at least 33 states have filed federal lawsuits with similar allegations of medical neglect.

Hegseth announces a new drone command and cuts to 20% of generals in 'State of the Force' speech

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN, BEN FINLEY and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

QUANTICO, Va. (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced some major changes to the U.S. military on Wednesday in what he called his "State of the Force" address, including establishing a new drone command and cutting 20% of the nation's generals and admirals.

The Pentagon also will launch an effort to study the future of warfare that will be led in part by SpaceX CEO Elon Musk and former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Hegseth said. The Defense Department will create an Office of Religious Affairs and plans to build a new base for the first time in 40 years, he added.

Hegseth made the announcements to junior officers and enlisted leaders at the Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia — the second year in a row that he has given such an address. But this time, the U.S. military is seven months into a war with Iran with no clear end in sight, has captured Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and killed more than 200 people in strikes on alleged drug trafficking boats in Latin America, among other actions worldwide.

The speech is not a usual fixture among Pentagon leaders. While Hegseth's predecessors have regularly addressed troops and top officers, they have traditionally done so in small or private settings.

The Pentagon chief, however, again led with how he has drastically retooled the U.S. military by targeting what he calls "woke" culture — through a rollback of diversity programs, a review of ground combat units with female troops and a new screening program for "testosterone deficiency" among male personnel — as well as attacks on the media for the coverage of the military.

Hegseth announces a new drone-focused warfare command

The Pentagon chief announced the intention to create a new four-star command to oversee the rollout of autonomous and robotic capabilities in what he called "the fastest peacetime shift in modern military history."

He acknowledged that "the pace of war is changing faster than the process to support it." Iran commonly uses cheap drones, including those that have killed U.S. troops during the seven-month war. Hegseth pointed to Ukraine's pioneering use of drones to combat Russian forces — something American forces have learned from firsthand.

"Ukraine's lesson is not that one type of drone wins wars, but rather the need for a purpose-built system

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that maximizes the ability to adapt," Hegseth said.

However, a U.S. Army unit based in Europe that specialized in drone warfare was ordered recently to end its efforts and return to being a traditional infantry battalion.

A bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers subsequently asked the Army to explain the order, given that the world's battlefields are rapidly evolving and military tactics increasingly rely on uncrewed systems to fight.

The plans for a drone command come as the U.S. is in a stalemate with Iran over control of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy shipping corridor. The war has forced American forces in the region to expend hundreds of expensive missile interceptors to defend against Iran's missile and drone attacks, which have still managed to kill and wound U.S. troops.

Hegseth repeated claims that the U.S. military has destroyed Iran's navy, air force and defense systems as well as many of its leaders and its industrial base. But Tehran has continued intermittently to launch drone and missile attacks against at U.S. or allied bases, while maintaining its ability to strike commercial and military ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

During his speech, Hegseth touted the Trump administration's major investments in the defense industry and push for contractors to speed up their work to expand the nation's weapons arsenals. But experts say U.S. military contractors will need at least three years to replenish stockpiles of key weapons systems used heavily in the Iran war.

Hegseth faces questions from lawmakers over cuts to general ranks

Hegseth said he directed the military services to double the 10% reduction he ordered last spring for roughly 800 flag and general officer positions, to a 20% decrease to be completed by Jan. 1, 2027.

"I call it accountability and long overdue," he said.

Some members of Congress have criticized the war and the drawdown of munitions stockpiles, while calling the latest cuts to the general ranks a "purge" that will take years to rebuild.

"He's got some kind of like deep-seated grievance about leadership in the military," said Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., a former Navy combat pilot who has been critical of Hegseth. "He's purging a generation of great leaders of the military, and it's going to take a generation to recover from it."

Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he wanted to understand Hegseth's reasoning.

"If it's simply a matter of eliminating a very heavy top, there may be some validity to it, but I want to see it first," Rounds said.

Musk and Gingrich to lead a study of future warfare

In innovating the next wave of weapons systems, Hegseth announced an effort to study the future of warfare led by Musk, Gingrich and Palmer Luckey, co-founder of Anduril Industries.

Hegseth said the work "will be focused on discovering, developing and fielding the weapons and systems that our children and our grandchildren will need in their lifetimes." He pointed to the need to dominate "any future battlefield, from under the Earth to beyond the moon."

This month, the U.S. confirmed for the first time that it had deployed weapons in space, a remarkable revelation after previous warnings about countries such as Russia possibly weaponizing a global frontier long agreed in treaties to be used for only peaceful purposes.

Among the other announcements was the unveiling of a plan to build a new military base, with Hegseth inviting all 50 states to compete for the chance to play host to 15,000 to 25,000 service members. He also announced a plan to make every military base self-powered.

US economy grew a solid 2.2% in the second quarter, government says, upgrading previous estimate

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy grew at a solid 2.2% pace from April through June as consumer spending and business investment came in strong.

Growth in gross domestic product — the nation's output of a goods and services — decelerated from a

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2.5% pace from January through March, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday. The second-quarter growth was an improvement on the department's previous estimate of 1.5% — a surprise to economists who had expected little or no change in the GDP number.

Consumer spending — which accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic activity — increased at a healthy 3.8% annual pace, up from 0.7% in the January-March period. Spending has been helped by a strong stock market, which reflects enthusiasm over the prospects for artificial intelligence and which enriches wealthy investors and gives them more money to buy things with.

The overall growth number was dragged down by imports. They are subtracted from growth because GDP is only supposed to count domestic production. Imports rose at a 12.6% annual pace from April through June, partly due to a surge in shipments of computer chips and other products that support artificial intelligence investment, and slashed nearly 1.7 percentage points off second-quarter growth.

The U.S. economy has proven surprisingly resilient in the face of fighting with Iran and the energy price spike it caused.

Business investment, excluding housing, rose at a 9% clip in the second quarter, reflecting the AI investment boom. And a measure of the economy's underlying strength — which strips out volatile government spending and trade numbers — grew at a strong 4.6% rate, up from 1.8% in the first quarter.

"The economy is increasingly reliant on AI gains and the corresponding wealth effects boosting higher-income households' spending power to fuel recent growth," said Michael Pearce, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "The economy remains sensitive to a sudden reversal of optimism on AI."

Investment in housing rose 2.8% ticking up for the first time since the end of 2024. The housing market has been depressed by high mortgage rates.

Wednesday's report was the last of three Commerce Department estimates of second-quarter GDP growth. The first look at third-quarter growth is due Oct. 29.

FTC is investigating OpenAI and Anthropic over possible risks to consumers

By The Associated Press undefined

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission has opened an investigation into OpenAI, Anthropic and other artificial intelligence companies over dangers their technology may pose to consumers, the agency said Wednesday.

The AI giants and other tech companies in recent months have disclosed examples of their AI agents going beyond human instructions, finding their way onto the internet and hacking external websites.

An FTC spokesperson confirmed the investigation but declined further comment. The investigation was first reported by the New York Post, which said it has been underway for months.

Representatives for Anthropic and OpenAI did not immediately respond to messages for comment on Wednesday.

Concerns around the dangers powerful AI models may pose to humanity have led some of the top AI developers to call for a slowdown. The CEO of Anthropic, Dario Amodei, said this month that the industry should slow its fast-moving development to give safety measures time to catch up. Without such a slowdown, Amodei warned that within six to 12 months AI could be capable of leading a swarm of agents that could take over the entire internet.

OpenAI, meanwhile, recently delayed the launch of its newest model this week over safety concerns.

UK says there are strong indications Iran played a part in a security incident at a US-run air base

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. has "strong indications" that Iran played a part in the incident that saw five men arrested near a U.S.-run military air base in England late at night, Prime Minister Andy Burnham said Wednesday.

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Burnham said U.K. and U.S. officials are carrying out a "complex and serious" investigation into how and why five men and three vans were near the perimeter of RAF Fairford, a base that has been used by American bombers striking Iran during this year's war.

Five British men in their 20s were arrested Sunday on suspicion of explosives offenses and planning an act of terror, before being released on bail a day later. Police say they found a quantity of an accelerant – gasoline – in the vans, but no explosives.

Burnham did not provide details about what the suspects were planning or why the U.K. thinks Iran was involved. He said he would "update people more in due course."

"There are strong indications that Iran played a part in what happened over the weekend at RAF Fairford, but of course it remains an ongoing, complex, and serious police investigation," Burnham told the BBC in one of a series of interviews with British broadcasters. "And of course, we are working closely with our colleagues in the United States of America."

Iran has denied involvement in the incident. It has previously said that it considers any base used to attack its territory a legitimate target.

The base 100 miles (160 kilometers) west of London has been used by American bombers during decades of conflicts in the Middle East, including this year's war with Iran.

Top U.S. officials have criticized the decision to grant the suspects bail, with President Donald Trump saying "I wouldn't have done that" and Secretary of State Marco Rubio saying a lot of people were "disturbed" by the move.

Burnham said authorities have the investigation under "the strongest grip and the closest control," and British officials had been "talking to counterparts in the United States all week to explain what is happening here, how things are being done."

"I have complete confidence in the way British security services are handling this," he told the BBC.

Laurence Taylor, the head of British counterterror policing, said Tuesday that the suspects remain under investigation and the decision to grant bail was grounded in "experience and strategy."

He said a line of inquiry is whether the suspected offenses were committed by "proxies or individuals, either knowingly or unknowingly, working on behalf of a foreign state."

The arrests came at a time of heightened tensions around the threat from hostile states, with British security services saying Russia and Iran have both used proxies to commit crimes on U.K. soil. 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.

U.K. officials also say proxies linked to Iran have been behind a string of arsons and other attacks in the U.K. and other countries, many of them targeting the Jewish community and intended to sow fear. They have previously warned that Tehran could expand its targets in the U.K. if conflicts in the Middle East continue.

Inflation cooled slightly last month even as consumers stepped up spending

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation slowed a bit last month as Americans ramped up their spending, though prices are still elevated and a challenge for many voters that will head to the polls for midterm elections in just over a month.

Consumer prices rose 3.4% in August compared with a year earlier, the Commerce Department said Wednesday, below the 3.7% economist expectations. On a monthly basis, prices climbed 0.3%, up from 0.1% in July, a sign prices that are still running hot.

Excluding the volatile energy and food categories, inflation also came in lower than expected, rising 3% in August from a year ago. And from July to August, core prices rose just 0.2%, up from 0.1% the previous month. Many economists feared core prices would rise more quickly month-to-month.

U.S. markets bounced higher immediately on the new inflation reading, with investors betting that an

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expected interest-rate hike from the U.S. Federal Reserve might be delayed.

Even so, inflation remains above the Federal Reserve's 2% target and the monthly increase in August suggests it isn't moving back toward the target anytime soon. The Fed lifted its key short-term interest rate two weeks ago for the first time in three years to combat inflation and most economists expect it will do so at least once more this year, possibly as soon as late next month.

"Inflation's trend is lower but still not close to their target and not improving, either," Bill Adams, chief U.S. economist at Fifth Third Commercial Bank, said in an email.

Wednesday's report covered a key inflation gauge closely watched by the Fed, known as the personal consumption expenditures price index. It is similar to the higher-profile consumer price index, which was released earlier this month.

High prices have cast a pall on the U.S. economy, even as growth is mostly solid and the unemployment rate is low. On Tuesday, the Conference Board's consumer confidence survey fell to its lowest level since 2014, a period that includes both the Great Recession and a global pandemic.

Americans' paychecks are growing but not as quickly as prices.

Inflation for July was previously reported at 3.7% but was revised lower to 3.4% by the government as part of an update in how it measures price changes in several categories, including investment management, computer software and accessories, and legal services.

For example, the government previously put a heavy weight on some computer accessories that have jumped in price because of outsized demand from the AI buildout. The revisions lowered that weight and as a result, the higher prices for some computer equipment are not driving up this measure of inflation as much.

Spending picks up

Despite elevated prices, Americans accelerated their spending last month, the government said, with spending jumping 0.9% from July to August, up from just 0.1% the previous month.

Some of that increase was likely fueled by wealthier Americans cashing in their gains from higher stock prices, a recent report from JPMorgan suggests. Other consumers may be taking on more debt to support their spending.

After-tax incomes, adjusted for inflation, were unchanged on a monthly basis in August, after rising 0.3% in July, the report said.

Healthy consumer spending could fuel a pickup in growth. In a separate report Wednesday, the government said the economy expanded at a 2.2% annual pace in the July-September quarter. Analysts expect that to pick up to a 3% rate in the current quarter.

US removes Syria from arms export ban as Trump administration draws closer to new Syrian government

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is removing Syria from a list of countries that are not allowed to purchase or import U.S. weaponry, a step that is part of a monthslong process of easing sanctions on the new government in Damascus and its leaders.

In a notice published Wednesday in the Federal Register, the State Department said it was amending its International Traffic in Arms Regulations, or ITAR, so that Syria no longer was among the nations subject to a policy of denial for licenses and other approvals needed for the sale of U.S. weapons and munitions.

The change effective Thursday means that arms sales requests from Syria will now be considered on a case-by-case basis.

President Donald Trump acted last year to ease economic sanctions on Syria that had been in place for decades during now-ousted President Bashar Assad's rule. In August, Secretary of State Marco Rubio rescinded Syria's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, helping paving the way for the latest step in drawing closer to the current government.

The State Department has also announced plans to reopen the U.S. Embassy in Damascus. It has been

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closed for 14 years.

With Syria's removal from the ITAR blacklist, only seven countries remain subject to the policy of denial for licenses for U.S. arms exports: Belarus, China, Cuba, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea and Venezuela.

Syria's interim president, former rebel leader Ahmad al-Sharaa, overthrew the Assad government nearly two years ago and has embarked on a policy of change that has impressed the Trump administration. His moves have led to hopes of eventual stability in a country that was wracked by civil war and the Islamic State insurgency that engulfed northeast and western Iraq for years.

Wednesday's withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq may mean that the Syrian government plays a greater role in preventing an IS resurgence.

Senate committee advances Dr. Nicole Saphier's nomination for surgeon general

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Nicole Saphier, President Donald Trump's third nominee for surgeon general, moved a step closer to confirmation after a Senate committee voted to advance her nomination on Wednesday.

Saphier, a radiologist and former Fox News Channel contributor, was advanced out of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on a 12 to 11 vote to serve as surgeon general after she was grilled at her confirmation hearing earlier this month about her stance on childhood vaccines.

She expressed support for vaccines and told lawmakers she didn't believe they cause autism. The Trump administration has sought to revisit claims about a link between vaccines and autism, although widespread scientific consensus and decades of studies have firmly concluded there is none.

Timothy Westlake, who was nominated to serve as assistant secretary for mental health and substance use at the Department of Health and Human Services was also advanced out of committee on the same en bloc vote.

It was not immediately clear when the officials would face a full Senate vote for their confirmation but they are expected to be approved.

During her confirmation hearing, Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy pressed Saphier to declare whether she believed there was a link between vaccines and autism. Saphier responded that she does "not believe childhood vaccines cause autism," adding that "the MMR vaccine is our greatest tool for combating measles," in response to a question by Cassidy over whether parents should give children that shot.

MMR stands for measles, mumps and rubella, and the president recently called for the shots to be spaced out, against the guidance of medical groups.

The surgeon general position carries limited policymaking power but serves as a loud megaphone as the nation's top communicator to Americans on public health issues.

Cassidy, who led the inquiry into Saphier's views on vaccines, ultimately voted in support of her nomination.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, the ranking member of the Senate HELP committee, said ahead of Saphier's vote that he would vote down her nomination because in part Saphier "has questioned the need for the hepatitis B vaccine at birth, when the data science has been clear."

"We need a surgeon general who will tell the truth about vaccines, not someone who misleads the public," Sanders said. At her confirmation hearing, Saphier said the universal birth dose of hepatitis B was safe and effective.

Chris Klomp, who was nominated to serve as deputy secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, was advanced out of the Senate Finance Committee last week on a 15 to 12 vote. He was questioned during the same hearing as Saphier about his duties associated with the role as the current chief counselor of the Department of Health and Human Services under the leadership of Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as well as about his vaccine stance.

In protesting Klomp's nomination at the Senate Finance Committee, Sen. Ron Wyden said Klomp "tried to create the impression that he will be the adult in the room on vaccines. Yet, as we sit here today, the vaccine chaos that we've come to expect from Robert Kennedy's HHS continues."

What to know about Spain's housing protests sparked by the eviction of the 87-year-old Maricarmen

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Public outrage over the eviction of an 87-year-old woman has put Spain's progressive government under immense pressure to tackle the nation's entrenched housing cost crisis.

Around a thousand protestors have spent the past week camped out in Madrid's Puerta del Sol, the capital's most popular public space, after the elderly María del Carmen Abascal was evicted from her home of seven decades in downtown Madrid on Sept. 23. The protestors say they won't leave until the government takes real steps to protect tenants.

The government led by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who faces a national election next year, has pushed forward a package of emergency measures to respond to the housing crunch. Lawmakers plan to vote Friday on the measures in Parliament, where the Socialist-led minority coalition will need the backing of several smaller parties to get them over the line.

Here is what you need to know.

Spain is hard hit due to small rental market

The housing crunch has been simmering for years in Spain, eating into household budgets and angering voters. While many countries have similar circumstances, Spain's poorest and its young are being particularly hard hit because they can't afford to purchase a home and are being squeezed by the country's small stock of rental properties.

Spain ranks near the bottom of countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development for government-owned rental properties, which represent less than 2% of its available stock. The European Union average is 8%.

Meanwhile, the average rent for Spain has almost doubled in the last 10 years. The price per square meter has risen from 8.20 euros (now \$9.30) in 2016 to 15.1 euros (\$17.15) this year, according to the real estate website Idealista.

Spain's government said that 26% of Spaniards who rent spend an average of 40% of their income on rent and utilities, compared to the EU average of 18% of renters who do so.

Maricarmen set the spark

Tens of thousands of people periodically march in major cities demanding action from lawmakers and blaming real estate speculators as well as tourist apartment platforms like Airbnb for rising rents.

But a new wave of indignation swept Spain when Abascal, who uses a wheelchair, was carried on a stretcher from her apartment after police cordoned off the street. Televised images of the eviction prompted thousands of people to protest in Madrid and other cities across the southern European country.

"I haven't managed to defend my home, but I have fought so that others can learn to fight for what's theirs," Abascal said in a video recorded from a hospital bed after the eviction.

The Spanish real estate company which had insisted on evicting her in order to rent the property at a much higher price ended up reaching an agreement for her to return to the apartment, her lawyer said, adding Abascal was "happy." She has yet to be discharged from the hospital.

Even with a satisfying resolution for "Maricarmen," as Abascal is now widely known, she remains the embodiment of the struggle against suffocating rental costs. Protesters have carried signs with slogans such as "Not even one more Maricarmen!" and demonstrations have been cropping up in cities across the country.

"The housing crisis will sweep this government away," left-wing parliament member Gabriel Rufián of the ERC party said when she was evicted, urging Sánchez to act.

Spain takes aim at speculators and aims to empower tenants

Spain's government is hoping that its newly presented housing measures will appease the protestors and sway public opinion. It split the measures into two decrees, issuing the first on Sept. 30. Parliament has 30 days to ratify it.

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It would:

1. Stop so-called "vulture funds" from speculating with real estate by prohibiting the purchase of properties for under 70% of their estimated value through 2028. The goal is to stop large real estate owners from buying properties in bulk and then reselling them at much higher prices.

2. Extend through 2030 protection for vulnerable renters, prohibiting the eviction of tenants who have been deemed by social services to be in precarious financial standing and with no other home to move to.

3. Impose tighter regulation on short-term leases. Rental contracts between one and 12 months would have to be accompanied by proof that the tenant only needs to reside in the locale for less than a year, for example, to study at a university.

4. Establish various tax incentives to encourage renting properties and real estate construction.

The government said on Sept. 29 that it will soon issue a second decree to make the standard five-year residential lease roll over automatically when it is set to expire.

If a property owner wishes to break the contract unilaterally, they would have to compensate the tenant by paying them the equivalent of a year's rent, Housing Minister Isabel Rodríguez said Tuesday. The decree would include an exemption for owners if they can prove either they or a close relative need to move into the property.

The complete details of the second decree are supposed to be published in the government gazette on Thursday.

Unclear whether the measures will be enough to quell outrage

The latter decree has been one of the main demands of the organizers of the encampment protest, the renters association Sindicato de Inquilinas.

Both decrees need to be backed by the majority of Spain's 350-seat Parliament. That is not a given. The leading conservative Popular Party has said it will vote against both, and neither does the government have the guaranteed backing of the smaller parties it relies on to pass any legislation.

It is also no guarantee that their passage would quell the unrest and dispel the camp-in protest that is situated less than a kilometer away from the parliament.

Rural MAHA followers say Trump hasn't improved health of their communities, an AP-KFF poll finds

By ALI SWENSON, SARAH JANE TRIBBLE and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press and KFF Health News
WASHINGTON (AP) — About half of rural voters identify with Make America Healthy Again, a sprawling political movement championed by the Trump administration, but most said President Donald Trump's healthcare policies have not benefited their communities, according to a new poll from The Associated Press in partnership with KFF.

About 8 in 10 rural voters — an important voting bloc for Trump and fellow Republicans — said the Trump administration's policies have had a negative effect or no impact on the health of people where they live. Most MAHA supporters, 68%, also feel this way, according to the national survey of more than 2,000 rural registered voters.

The findings signal an apparent disconnect between the Trump administration's MAHA-branded policy priorities and rural America's perception of their reach and effectiveness.

Iowa pastor Mike Jager, 58, is a registered Republican and considers himself part of the MAHA movement. The Trump administration's health policies have had "minimal" impact on the health of his community, Jager said, but he added that Trump's health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., is moving the needle "in the right direction."

"It's a beginning," Jager said. "It's a big ship to try and turn around and course-correct."

Kennedy has used the MAHA label to support various agendas, including abandoning long-standing vaccine guidance, researching ultraprocessed foods and investing in regenerative agriculture.

Jager lives in Sumner, Iowa, "less than a quarter mile from where the corn ends and the city begins."

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He's seen family members and neighbors develop diseases that he believes resulted in part from exposure to agricultural chemicals and consumption of unhealthy, processed foods.

In the June Republican primary for governor, Jager voted for Zach Lahn, a businessman and farmer who ran on a MAHA platform and beat out Trump-backed U.S. Rep. Randy Feenstra. He plans to vote for him again in November.

Many rural voters are prioritizing health issues

About two-thirds of rural voters who support MAHA said it's "extremely" or "very" important to them to vote for a candidate who does, too, while only 4 in 10 rural voters overall said the same.

Trump sought to seize on MAHA support during his campaign for another term two years ago. Now, amid tight midterm races, Kennedy has campaigned to galvanize the movement's support. In May, he attended a MAHA bill signing with Iowa Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds, and in August, he went fishing with Lahn, posting about it on social media.

Yet the survey indicates voters are noticing "this weird split in the Trump administration" between what Kennedy messages and what Trump says and does, said David Peterson, a political science professor at Iowa State University.

In Iowa, concerns about what's causing rising cancer rates are "a big deal," he said. For many people who identify with MAHA, being healthy includes taking on corporate agriculture and pharmaceutical companies that they think cause cancer, he added.

In the poll, views on healthcare access and costs largely diverged along party lines. Most Democratic and independent voters said the Trump administration's healthcare policies have had a negative impact on their healthcare costs and the health and well-being of people in their communities. Republicans were likelier to say there hasn't been an impact.

Talking on the phone from her 200-acre farm in Carroll County, Iowa, 71-year-old Donna Klocke said that her husband had died from cancer and that she has neighbors who also have cancer.

"It's just very prevalent," Klocke said. "We're in a farming community. We use chemicals and pesticides and all kinds of things that aren't necessarily good for us."

Klocke, a Democrat, said the MAHA movement is a good idea because she cares about being healthy, but she does not consider herself part of it and will not be voting for a candidate who represents the movement.

Kennedy, who was an anti-vaccine activist before entering politics and has sent mixed messages to Americans about getting the measles vaccine, scares her.

"Measles are coming back and polio," Klocke said. "It's the measles that really gets me. It's like, do you not understand how dangerous it is?"

Survey reflects angst over healthcare

Nearly half of rural voters said their communities don't have enough doctors or other healthcare providers, and even more said there aren't enough mental health workers specifically. The share of rural voters who said their community does not have enough hospitals increased to 35% from 21% in a similar question asked in a KFF-Washington Post survey in 2017.

And as with the general population, healthcare, gas and grocery costs are top pain points. At least 6 in 10 rural voters said they were worried about healthcare costs.

The level of worry varied based on coverage, with rural voters enrolled in employer plans or Medicare less likely to be worried. The survey found that 80% of working-age rural voters on Medicaid were very or somewhat worried about healthcare costs. Last year, Republicans passed a tax and spending bill that cut over \$900 billion in projected Medicaid spending over a decade and mandated new eligibility requirements.

In the tiny community of Lipan, Texas, west of Dallas, Kim Solis and her husband have a handyman-and-home-remodel business and get their insurance on the marketplace. Since Trump returned to office, their premium payment jumped from zero to \$166 a month. Their copays went up, and their deductibles each increased by \$2,000.

Solis, 62, said she worries what will happen if they get a big medical bill.

"Certainly, we'd be in a world of hurt trying to take money out of savings or getting it out of our 401(k)

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just to be able to do something about it," she said.

Most MAHA voters are also MAGA — but not all

Like the general population, rural voters said they trust their own doctors and healthcare providers for health information over government agencies or officials, according to the poll.

Trust in Kennedy and Trump fell largely along partisan lines. About 10% of rural Democratic voters reported having a "great deal" or "fair amount" of trust in Kennedy, compared with 74% of rural Republican voters. About 5% of rural Democrats and 69% of rural Republicans said they trust Trump a "great deal" or "fair amount" for reliable health information.

While Make America Great Again and MAHA identities are "linked in a lot of ways," the rising costs of healthcare and groceries pose a challenge for those committed to the MAHA principles that Kennedy promotes, said Peterson, the Iowa State professor.

Buying healthy food "becomes, 'I can't afford to do that because of Trump's policies,'" he said.

In Stamping Ground, Kentucky, Alma Johnson, 65, works night security at a horse farm.

Johnson voted for Trump in 2016, 2020 and 2024 and said she "pretty much" likes how Trump is running the country. But she said she is not a MAGA devotee, preferring to "think for myself."

MAHA, however, is an easy sell for Johnson because, she said, she doesn't think people should be able to buy junk food in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

Still, she said she hasn't seen much impact from the Trump administration's healthcare policies, including the new food pyramid.

"It takes a long time to change people, their habits, their thoughts or the things they do," Johnson said.

Trump's shift from 'Housing First' is causing upheaval for homelessness programs and many they serve

By LAURA UNGAR and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Light streamed through stained-glass windows in a former church, illuminating long white tables where weary men gathered. Johnny Henderson was glad for the rest. The 71-year-old — who has one arm, heart disease and vision problems — slept on the street the night before.

Henderson is a regular at the St. John Center men's day shelter. So are a great-grandfather in a wheelchair who has prostate cancer, a 54-year-old with four psychiatric disorders and a 66-year-old with a walker who wears a hospital bracelet warning "fall risk."

All are potential candidates for permanent, government-subsidized apartments under a "Housing First" approach, a model rooted in the belief that people need a stable place to live before addressing other problems. But the approach that's been central to federal government policy for more than a decade is disappearing under President Donald Trump's administration. The upheaval, providers and advocates say, threatens the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in the nation.

"Housing is healthcare," said St. John executive director Ra'Shann Martin, whose organization provides housing and outreach in addition to the shelter. "The longer people stay unhoused, the more fragile they become."

Housing organizations across the U.S. that depend on federal funds are now reluctantly making changes to comply with new government policies that favor a "Treatment First" approach and short-term "transitional" housing — changes they fear will push people with extreme health risks back on the street or keep others, like Henderson, there.

Planned housing projects have been scrapped in communities such as Corbin, Kentucky. Less housing is available for homeless people in places including Santa Cruz County, California. And in cities such as Louisville, nonprofits are looking at making some permanent housing temporary, including most of St. John's 200 apartments.

US homelessness numbers have trended upward

Across America, nearly 750,000 people were homeless last year, according to an estimate compiled by

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the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. That number is down slightly from 2024 but up 31% from 2019.

The portion considered chronically homeless — having a disability and long-term or repeated episodes of homelessness of at least a year — has also risen since 2019. It's now about a quarter of the total.

Overall, research shows, roughly half of homeless adults live with a disability, up to two-thirds have mental illness and 2 in 5 have substance use disorder. Rates of disability, heart disease and diabetes are two to three times higher than in the general population.

In Louisville, outreach specialist Angel Sivado said such statistics are reflected in the people she serves, whose living conditions make it extremely difficult to care for themselves, get to doctors or keep up with medications.

On a recent day, she parked a St. John van near a fast-food restaurant and hiked into the woods to visit a couple living in a tent. Later, she and a colleague walked toward encampments surrounded by trees just off a highway, yelling "outreach" over the low roar of cars.

One of their main jobs is to shepherd clients through the process for getting housing.

"They're not just homeless people; they're people," Sivado said. "They're somebody's son. They're somebody's mother. They're someone's daughter."

Occasionally, Sivado savors a victory. Before heading home, she stopped under a downtown overpass to see James Myers, 66, who is blind, has congestive heart failure and is undergoing treatment for prostate cancer. She told him he should be in an apartment soon.

"I'm tired. I mean, the streets will beat you down, and I think they put a few years on me," he said, standing near his busted guitar. "I can't wait to get off the street."

Others are not so lucky. Henderson, the St. John regular, survived a train accident that cost him an arm and led to a yearslong opioid addiction. Recently, he's been dealing with heart disease, an eye problem, spinal surgery, and auditory hallucinations.

"I'm going to die sleeping outdoors," he said, choking up. "But I got nowhere to go."

The Trump administration favors 'Treatment First' and short-term housing

Each person's path to homelessness is unique. Determining the "best" solutions depends on the lens used to judge what's best. The answer may be different if the goal is reducing overall homelessness, helping people into the job market, spending as little taxpayer money as possible, improving health outcomes — or just keeping people alive.

The Housing First idea was pioneered by a New York nonprofit in the 1990s and has been at the heart of federal homelessness policy since 2013. Today, there are roughly 173,000 "permanent supportive housing" beds for chronically homeless people, and 235,000 for other populations, including veterans. These are long-term apartments paired with voluntary services. Tenants often must contribute 30% of their income, after certain expenses, to rent and utilities.

Studies have consistently shown that Housing First programs keep people stably housed. Some research says they do so better than other models, including "Treatment First," which favors mandatory services for addiction and serious mental illness. But findings on health outcomes have been mixed.

Last year, Trump signed an executive order calling for an end to federal support for Housing First policies. His proposed budget for fiscal 2027 calls for eliminating the federal initiative that goes mostly to Housing First programs. The administration favors housing lasting up to two years, during which people would be required to get treatment.

"Housing First has failed our most vulnerable and enabled addiction," HUD said in an email. "HUD's proposed reforms seek to address the root causes of homelessness and advance recovery, self-sufficiency, and competition that drives accountability."

Many opponents of Housing First policies don't think services including addiction and mental health treatment should be optional.

"That is the biggest difference between Housing First and not Housing First," said Devon Kurtz, the director of public safety policy for the Cicero Institute. Kurtz is also concerned that permanent supportive housing was becoming a "one-size-fits-all approach," including for populations better served by transitional housing.

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Service providers say short-term housing won't work for some people

Service providers acknowledge that transitional housing is a good option for some people, such as those getting on their feet after evictions. But they say most chronically homeless people can't pull their lives together within two years and would likely wind up homeless again.

"If you want to gradually work on reducing social services that are funded by the federal government, OK," said Jennifer Clark, CEO and executive director of St. Vincent de Paul Louisville, which offers permanent and transitional housing. "But you cannot make a huge sweeping change and big cuts and take an ax to everything and think that there aren't going to be consequences for some people who are really in need."

John Franklin, 58, said transitional housing wouldn't work for him. He spent nearly 14 years on the streets dealing with severe alcoholism, and it took a long time to adjust to normal life. He now gets by on disability, as a throat cancer survivor with heart failure, and can't imagine either having to fully pay for housing or surviving the streets.

"I could not make it," said Franklin, who shares a permanent supportive apartment in suburban Louisville with his orange tabby, Moe. "This is my safe haven."

Housing First provides homes and other help

The welcome mat outside Phillip Sieveking's permanent supportive apartment says "Home Sweet Home," a sentiment precious to him after a couple years on the streets.

Sieveking lives at St. John's Sheehan Landing, a complex with 80 furnished one-bedroom apartments plus a clinic space, food pantry, meeting rooms, and a community garden that he spends much of his free time tending.

The former chef has diabetes but didn't take care of it while homeless. Doctors had to amputate part of one leg. On a recent morning, he put on his prosthetic, grabbed his crutches and slowly made his way to the garden to check on the roses, sunflowers and vegetables.

He credits his caseworker with encouraging him to keep up with medical care and navigate systems for getting disability and food benefits. He also attends meetings at the complex, including one where residents discuss wellness and sobriety while working on art projects.

"They have helped me, you know, go from being homeless to being a part of society," said Sieveking, 47. "I feel blessed to be here."

In New Jersey, Tatiana Velez has been in permanent supportive housing since 2021, soon after connecting with the Camden Coalition, which serves people with complex health and social needs.

After spending 18 years in prison for robbery, she had lived in abandoned buildings and struggled with opioids for a couple years. Velez had never signed a lease or opened a bank account when, in her late 30s, she learned she was pregnant and decided she was ready to make changes.

"I didn't know what it was to have a roof over my head or pay the bills," said Velez, who receives disability payments for psychological and educational disabilities.

She now shares a first-floor suburban apartment with her daughter, 5, and a formerly homeless cat named Snowball. A preschool graduation certificate hangs on the wall.

Policy changes rock communities

After HUD tried to rework its homelessness grants to fit the administration's favored policies, a consortium of local governments and advocates for homeless people sued. A federal judge agreed with them. But this month, an appeals court said the administration could move ahead.

Meanwhile, Trump's proposed budget calls for eliminating the \$4 billion Continuum of Care program, which in 2024 awarded money to 6,500 projects. At that time, more than 60% went to permanent supportive housing, mostly to continue existing efforts. Just 1% went to transitional housing.

Trump's proposed changes have left homelessness organizations scrambling to figure out how to alter their housing strategies so they can keep getting federal money.

"It's like psychological warfare the last two years, trying to figure out how to navigate these changes that are looming right over us," Martin, the St. John director, said.

Dr. Robert Ratner, director of housing for health in Santa Cruz County, California, said losing permanent supportive housing funds would exacerbate problems caused by the winding down of another federal pro-

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gram: pandemic-era emergency housing vouchers. People set to lose those vouchers are being prioritized for available housing, meaning the county can't help as many people who are homeless now.

A similar dynamic is playing out at The Delores Project in Denver, which serves women and transgender and nonbinary people. Program leaders expect people already in the permanent housing on their campus will stay because they won't have access to vouchers to move out into the community. That will mean fewer spots for new people.

In Louisiana, the state housing agency applied to redirect federal money away from rental assistance and toward the establishment of a 200-bed shelter with strict mandates for participants. That effort was rejected by local coalitions in charge of the money, but local housing advocates worry it's a harbinger of what's to come.

Some communities are seeing planned projects nixed. For 18 months, Volunteers of America Mid-States worked with Eastern Kentucky University and others on a permanent supportive housing project in Corbin that would have included childcare and access to college classes. "That project is now dead," said CEO Jennifer Hancock.

Many nonprofit leaders feel forced to shift toward transitional housing. In Louisville, St. Vincent de Paul and Family Health Centers-Phoenix Health Care for the Homeless are looking at converting some permanent supportive housing apartments into transitional units. St. John would only be left with Sheehan Landing after converting its 120 community apartments to transitional housing.

The result for people like Henderson? More time on the streets as they grow older and sicker.

"The lady in the housing office told me, she said, 'Mr. Henderson, you got a stent in your heart. You got one eye and one arm. Something's going to have to happen for you.'"

But with "just a little life left," he said, it may not happen soon enough.

Today in History: October 1, Las Vegas music festival shooting

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Oct. 1, the 274th day of 2026. There are 91 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 1, 2017, in the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history, a gunman opened fire from a room at the high-rise Mandalay Bay casino hotel in Las Vegas on a crowd of 22,000 fans at a country music concert below, causing 60 deaths and more than 850 injuries.

Also on this date:

In 1890, Yosemite National Park was established by the U.S. Congress.

In 1903, the first modern baseball World Series began, with the National League's Pittsburgh Pirates defeating the American League's Boston Americans in Game 1; Boston would ultimately win the series 5-3.

In 1908, Henry Ford introduced his mass-produced Model T automobile to the market. Between 1908 and 1927, Ford would build more than 15 million Model T cars.

In 1910, the offices of the Los Angeles Times were destroyed by a dynamite explosion and fire, killing 21 employees; union activist J.B. McNamara eventually pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison for the bombing.

In 1949, Mao Zedong, leader of the communist People's Liberation Army, proclaimed the People's Republic of China during a ceremony in Beijing.

In 1957, the motto "In God We Trust" began appearing on U.S. paper currency.

In 1962, federal marshals escorted James Meredith as he enrolled as the first Black student at the University of Mississippi; Meredith's presence sparked rioting that left two people dead.

In 1964, the Free Speech Movement began at the University of California, Berkeley, as students surrounded a police car containing an arrested campus activist for more than 30 hours.

In 1971, Walt Disney World opened near Orlando, Florida.

In 1975, Muhammad Ali defeated Joe Frazier in the "Thrilla in Manila," the last of their three boxing bouts for the heavyweight championship.

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In 2024, Claudia Sheinbaum, a scientist-turned-politician, was sworn in as the first female president of Mexico.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-singer Julie Andrews is 91. Film director Jean-Jacques Annaud is 83. Baseball Hall of Famer Rod Carew is 81. Actor Randy Quaid is 76. Singer Youssou N'Dour is 67. Actor Esai Morales is 64. Retired MLB All-Star Mark McGwire is 63. Actor Zach Galifianakis is 57. Actor Sarah Drew is 46. Actor-comedian Beck Bennett is 42. Actor Jurnee Smollett is 40. Actor Brie Larson is 37.