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Community Calendar

Wednesday, Oct. 14

Senior Menu: Chicken bacon ranch pasta, broccoli, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast bento box.

School Lunch: Chicken and noodles, peas.

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Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

Region 1A Cross Country Meet at Webster Golf Course (Girls varsity, 11 a.m.; Boys varsity, 2 p.m.; JV times TBA)

Fourth Grade GBB Practice, 5:30 p.m., Elementary School

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, Oct. 15

Senior Menu: Goulash, corn, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cheese breakfast bake.

School Lunch: Flat bread sub, chips.

Volleyball at Deuel (JH at 4 p.m., C at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m., Varsity at 7:15 p.m.)

GT GBB Fall Skills, 6-8 p.m., Arena

Sixth Grade Girls Basketball Practice, 8 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.

Musk Be the Money

Elon Musk, the world's richest man, is the single biggest known donor in the 2025-26 US election cycle, federal filings are expected to show tomorrow. Musk donated \$366M to conservative candidates, groups, and causes—among the heftiest political spends in US history.

Musk's largest donation was to a fund working to elect Republicans in the Senate. He also donated \$76M to his own political action committee, America PAC, and \$10M apiece to the Republican Governors Association and to a PAC supporting Texas Senate candidate Ken Paxton (R). Musk has increasingly posted messages critical of the left on issues like immigration and transgender rights; see an interactive analysis of how his posting habits on X evolved from 2019 to 2024.

Separately, the Supreme Court agreed yesterday to hear arguments on whether the Department of Government Efficiency has to supply records to a government watchdog group. Musk led the agency for four months in early 2025.

AI Unicorn Bankruptcy

AI startup Character.AI filed for bankruptcy yesterday amid several lawsuits linking conversations with its customizable chatbots to suicide and self-harm.

Founded in 2021 by former Google engineers, Character.AI was an early generative AI unicorn, reaching a \$1B valuation in 2023. The startup's popularity grew after it struck a \$2.7B licensing deal with Google in 2024, with roughly 20 million users creating and conversing with its chatbots each month. Character.AI and Google have since settled lawsuits from several families saying the chatbots led their children to die by suicide or harm themselves. Kentucky has filed a similar lawsuit alleging the chatbots encouraged self-harm, while Pennsylvania is suing over the chatbots allegedly posing as licensed medical professionals.

The Walt Disney Company is expected to acquire \$20M of Character.AI's \$50M to \$100M in estimated assets, including staff and some technology licensing. Disney had previously sent the startup a cease-and-desist letter over using copyrighted Disney characters without permission.

The Emperor's Lost Fort

Archaeologists in Wales have revealed evidence of a Roman military fort that may lend credibility to a centuries-old legend about a fourth-century emperor.

The fort, first identified in 2024, sits near Frenni Fawr hill in southwest Wales, where medieval folklore claims Roman Emperor Magnus Maximus established a camp. Maximus was proclaimed emperor by troops in Britain in 383, then expanded his rule into Europe before being executed in 388. Recent excavations uncovered two late-fourth-century Roman coins, pottery, tiles, and preserved wagon tracks. Surveys also suggest the presence of buildings resembling military headquarters, which likely housed 500 soldiers. Archaeologists say the find challenges assumptions that the region's Indigenous Celtic population lived peacefully under Roman rule. While the findings don't prove Maximus visited, the fort is the only known Roman military site near the location described in the medieval tale.

The legend appears in "The Dream of Macsen Wledig," part of "The Mabinogion," a collection of Welsh mythology.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Duane "Keefe D" Davis receives sentence of 40 years to life in prison for directing the murder of rapper Tupac Shakur in 1996.

Davis is the only person ever to have been charged in the case.

Lena Dunham's comedy "Girls" begins production next year for five-episode revival featuring most of the original cast.

WNBA reschedules Game 3 of Finals series to Oct. 21, moves location to accommodate larger crowds.

Science & Technology

Researchers send mini organs into orbit to study why humans age faster in space.

NASA's Perseverance Mars rover has driven over 28 miles since its 2021 landing, breaking the record for off-world driving distance.

Anthropic warns AI models may soon be capable of self-replicating across internet-connected devices like smart speakers, a process that would be difficult for humans to rein in.

Researchers uncover how pancreatic cancer cells change genetic makeup to resist treatment and spread, opening doors to new therapies.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.0%, Dow -0.4%, Nasdaq -0.2%) despite Wall Street's biggest banks reporting strong Q3 earnings.

Federal Trade Commission asks a federal judge to hold Martin Shkreli, also known as the "Pharma Bro," in contempt for allegedly violating his lifetime pharmaceutical industry ban by trading biotech stocks and sharing commentary on social media.

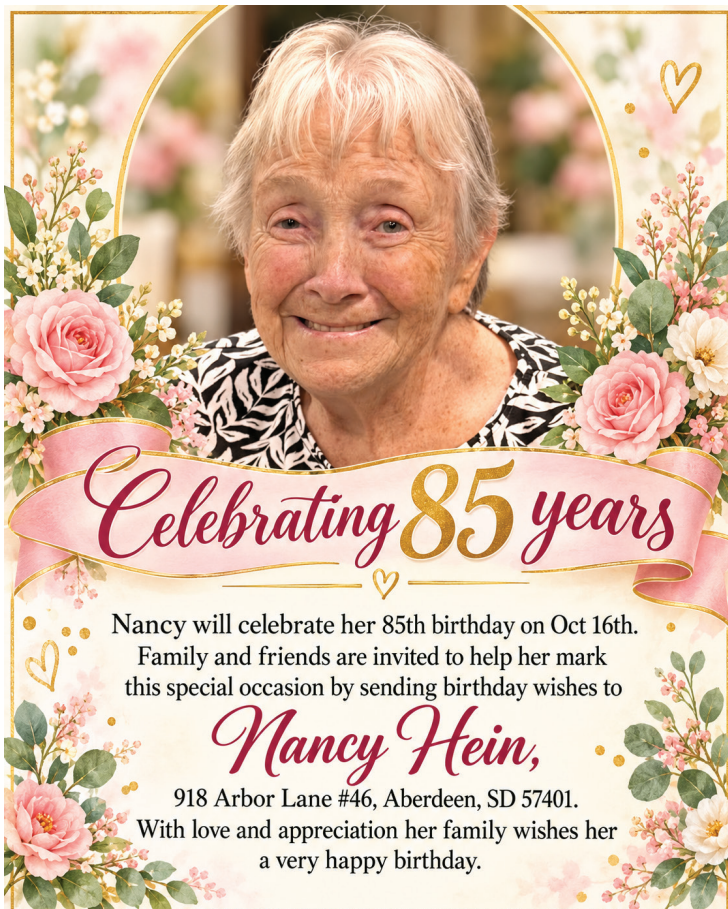
Bumble shares soar 56.6% on news the dating app agreed to \$1.3B acquisition deal with Ithaca Holdings that will take the company private.

Politics & World Affairs

White House asks US Ambassador to Greece Kimberly Guilfoyle to resign after reports she solicited \$100K from a political donor in exchange for access to Trump admin officials, new Press Secretary Katie Zacharia reveals.

Six Flags temporarily closes nine rides across the country after Georgia rider is killed on roller coaster.

A former Chicago police detective is identified as the killer of then-8-year-old Gloria Kowalewicz in 1960, due to advances in forensic technology.



Nancy will celebrate her 85th birthday on Oct 16th.
Family and friends are invited to help her mark
this special occasion by sending birthday wishes to

Nancy Hein,
918 Arbor Lane #46, Aberdeen, SD 57401.
With love and appreciation her family wishes her
a very happy birthday.

Groton School Board hear technology update, dual credit issues during morning meeting

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area school board heard presentations on technology, library and media services, and dual credit opportunities during its Tuesday morning meeting, highlighting programs and resources available to students.

The three program overviews provided board members with insight into how technology is integrated into classroom instruction, the variety of responsibilities handled by school library and media staff, and opportunities for high school students to earn college credit while completing their high school education.

District Technology Coordinator Aaron Helvig discussed summer work getting about 600 devices ready for students and staff. He also talked about new computer curriculum he teaches at the elementary school, which goes beyond basic usage of a computer, but also troubleshooting problems, basic fixes, keyboarding and more. However, it could expand to things like designing computers, learning parts of computers and more.

"I'd really like to see at some point some classes offered at the middle school and high school, just to continue what they learned at the elementary and to kind of reiterate and practice skills," he said. "...Computer science is the fastest growing occupational field. They're estimating that there are about 280,000 jobs per year generated in the computer science field. I just think that we should probably be exploring that as an option for our kids to take classes, or actually requiring a little bit of it so everybody has a taste of it."

Helvig also expressed concerns about some dated equipment, including some of the security cameras and servers.

The next report to the board was from Middle School/High School Librarian Brenda Madsen. Beyond library duties, Madsen is senior class advisor and an e-mentor, overseeing students taking online courses including agriculture classes left without a teacher after the department of the agriculture teacher at the end of the last school year.

Madsen is already looking to various upcoming events, including celebrating national honor society inductees in March and reordering caps and gowns for graduation.

New Opportunity Coordinator Maria Carlson reviewed dual credit opportunities junior and seniors have, including benefits of college credit and lower costs for college courses, as well as drawbacks like taking a course not needed for specific fields of study and the challenge of online-only learning.

The board also discussed the use of volunteers in the kindergarten classrooms. However, members tabled the discussion to give district officials additional time to review how the district wants to move forward with long-term volunteers and determine an appropriate approach.

Conde National League

Oct. 12 Team Standings: Cubs 12, Stooges 11, Giants 10, Braves 9, Mets 9, Pirates 9.

Men's High Games: Skip Kettering 197, Austin Schuelke 163, Butch Farmen 158.

Men's High Series: Austin Schuelke 455, Skip Kettering 455, Butch Farmen 453.

Women's High Games: Michelle Johnson 196, Alice Severson 195, Suzie Easthouse 169.

Women's High Series: Alice Severson 489, Suzie Easthouse 481, Michelle Johnson 475.

Groton Area school bond information explored at Bristol community meeting

By Elizabeth Varin

BRISTOL – About twenty community members gathered Tuesday evening at the Bristol Community Center as Groton Area School District officials presented information about a \$26 million bond issue voters will decide on in early November.

The project would combine \$26 million in bond funding with \$5 million in capital outlay certificate funding to pay for renovations and additions at the district's school facilities. Proposed improvements include renovations to portions of the existing building, along with additions to classrooms, the lunchroom and career and technical education (CTE) spaces.

The meeting in Bristol was part of a series of informational meetings intended to give district residents an opportunity to learn more about the proposed project and the financial commitment it would require.

Community members raised a variety of questions during the meeting, touching on everything from the logistics of the proposed construction project to current classroom sizes and open enrollment into the district.

Attendees also asked about the bond election process, including what percentage of voters would need to approve the measure for it to pass (60%) and the hours the polls would be open at the school (8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Nov. 2; and 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 3). Other questions focused on what would happen if voters rejected the bond and how district officials plan to ensure residents living on the district's outskirts are informed about the election and proposed improvements.

District officials emphasized the need for improvements at the middle and high school, noting that the proposed project is intended to address existing facility needs while providing space to better serve students. Classrooms are cramped (most of the 1934 and 1979 classrooms are undersized at about 650 square feet on average, while classroom sizes today average 900 square feet), HVAC deficiencies create academic concerns due to physical discomfort, most classrooms lack adequate access to power and more.

"I need a room to stay the temperature that we set it at all day long," said Superintendent Joe Schwan. "I need the toilets to flush and get the waste out when we need the toilets to flush. We need hot water, and we need cold water. We need more electrical outlets in the rooms and stuff like that."

The district has been working around these issues, but at some point, the district will be forced to address specifically the 1934 school addition.

"I don't think we have another 10 years to wait like we did last time when the issue failed. I just don't think it's there," he said. "If the issue isn't passed, it doesn't make the problems in the facility go away. They're still there, and they're still going to have to be addressed."

Some in the crowd expressed concern about getting information out to the far reaches of the Groton Area School District, which reaches areas in five counties.

Linda Witt, who lives southwest of Bristol, asked how the district in the weeks remaining before the November 3 vote plans to get information out to the public. Witt only heard about the issue when a postcard from the district mailed to registered voters within the district boundaries arrived last week. She added she was taken by surprise when she received the card.

"Me too," came a call from the crowd.

Witt continued, "do you think that the people as far away as Lily and all the corners (of the district) have been really informed, you know, before the card came."

Some emphasized the importance of a good learning environment.

"I grew up in the old part. I mean, I went there and my mom did," said Groton resident Deb McKiver. "Is it sad? Yes, but we need a new facility. We don't want our kids in icky buildings."

Others framed the proposed improvements as an investment in the district's future, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing education and providing students with the facilities they need to succeed.

"We're all pretty blessed on the public education that we have in this area," said Becky Hubsch, current

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Webster Area School District business manager and former Groton Area School District business manager. "We can go North, we can go East, we can go West. We have phenomenal places to send our kids to school

"We might not send our kids to Groton, but we support it because it's all education," she added. "Our kids deserve a good place to be educated, right?"

The district will hold one more informational meetings before voters head to the polls. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 21, in Groton.

The bond question will appear on the Nov. 3 ballot. Registered voters also will have the opportunity to vote ahead of Election Day at Groton Area High School. More information about the project and bond vote is available at <https://bit.ly/GASD-BondInfo>.

Celebrate Arts and Humanities this month

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

Since 1993, Americans have marked October as the month to celebrate the impact, value and legacy of arts and humanities across the nation. The month-long celebration raises awareness for the arts and encourages people to participate, engage and advocate for our shared cultural heritage.

This year's national theme, Stories Unite Us: Add Your Voice, is an invitation to speak up for the arts and humanities, recognize the power of our collective story and to share your own thoughts and experiences on the arts and humanities. National Arts and Humanities Month is your opportunity to join the conversations occurring throughout our country right now—and there are so many ways to share your voice.

One of the most vital audiences for hearing your perspective on cultural topics is Congress. Our representatives need to know why you believe that federal support is critical for the arts and humanities in your community, across America and around the world. Equally, our state and local elected officials need to know your opinions on the arts—and why they, too, should be advocates for our creative ecosystem. The upcoming election is another way to make your ideas about the arts known. Ask candidates their opinions about cultural support and share your own. You can find great ideas for bringing arts topics into the public debate at ArtsVote.org.

You can also join the celebration by hosting or participating in National Arts and Humanities Month events in your community. Check out ArtsSouthDakota.org or your local arts advocacy calendars for talks, workshops, performances, exhibitions and more. You can share your story with Americans for the Arts—the ways in which the arts and humanities have shaped your life, your community or your perspective can be part of the dialog. Share your story on social media and use #StoriesUniteUs and #AddYourVoice.

To learn more about National Arts and Humanities Month, visit us at the Arts South Dakota website, www.artssouthdakota.org.



Names Released in Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash

Where: Nemo Road, 8 miles southwest of Deadwood, South Dakota

When: 3:34 p.m., Friday, October 9, 2026

Driver 1: David Orlin Lustfield, 65-year-old male from Balaton, Minnesota, serious non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2002 Harley-Davidson FLSTC

Helmet Used: No

Passenger 1: Katherine Ann Lustfield, 66-year-old female from Balaton, Minnesota, serious non-life-threatening injuries

Helmet Used: No

Driver 2: Neco James Biou, 35-year-old male from Rapid City, South Dakota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 2013 Harley-Davidson FLHX

Helmet Used: No

Lawrence County, S.D.- A Rapid City man died Friday in a two-vehicle crash near Deadwood, South Dakota.

Preliminary crash information indicates Neco James Biou, the driver of a 2013 Harley-Davidson FLHX motorcycle, was traveling southbound on Nemo Road when he approached a curve in the roadway and began to slide. At the same time, David Orlin Lustfield, the driver of a 2002 Harley-Davidson FLSTC motorcycle, was traveling northbound at the same location. Biou's Harley-Davidson slid into the other motorcycle and continued into the ditch. Biou sustained fatal injuries. Lustfield and his passenger, Katherine Ann Lustfield, were taken to a Deadwood hospital with serious non-life-threatening injuries.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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

Brule County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash

Where: I-90 at mile marker 292, 8 miles east of Kimball, South Dakota

When: 2:02 p.m., Monday, October 12, 2026

Driver 1: 31-year-old male from Monticello, Minnesota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2015 Honda Odyssey

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger 1: 24-year-old female from Monticello, Minnesota, life-threatening injuries

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger 2: 11-month-old male from Monticello, Minnesota, minor injuries

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger 3: 3-year-old male from Monticello, Minnesota, fatal injuries

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: 54-year-old male from Plankinton, South Dakota, no injuries

Vehicle 2: 2012 Dodge Ram 2500

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Brule County, S.D.- Two people died Monday in a two-vehicle crash near Kimball, South Dakota.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2015 Honda Odyssey was traveling eastbound on I-90 near mile marker 292. At the same time, the driver of a 2012 Dodge Ram 2500 was traveling westbound pulling a stock trailer when a wheel came off the trailer. The wheel crossed the median and struck the Honda. The driver of the Honda and one of his passengers sustained fatal injuries. Another of the Honda's passengers sustained life threatening injuries. The third passenger had minor injuries. The driver of the Dodge was not injured.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota's federal-only voter list grows to nearly 6,000, surprising some who are on it

New laws create class of people excluded from voting on state and local races and questions

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

Julian Winchester didn't know he was one of South Dakota's nearly 6,000 federal-only voters, let alone what that means, until South Dakota Searchlight found his name on the list and called him this month.

The Lake Area Technical College student registered through a voter registration drive on the Watertown campus this fall. His driver's license predates a change that added a citizenship indicator to new licenses, making it ineligible as proof of U.S. citizenship when registering to vote in South Dakota.

A new South Dakota law says people who fail to produce proof of their U.S. citizenship are registered as federal-only voters. That means they can only vote in the two federal races on the Nov. 3 ballot, for U.S. House and U.S. Senate. They can't vote on the governor, four state constitutional amendments, state lawmakers or local races.

Winchester will need to provide a copy of his birth certificate or other accepted proof of citizenship to the Codington County auditor by Monday, the voter registration deadline, to be able to receive a full ballot.

What's happening to him "seems like voter suppression," said Winchester, who added he'd have been angry if he hadn't learned of his federal-only designation until he went to vote.

"That's the whole point of democracy: Every person gets a vote," Winchester said.

The number of South Dakotans restricted to voting in federal races has nearly quadrupled to 5,735 since May, driven by two recent laws passed by the state Legislature and signed by Gov. Larry Rhoden.

A 2025 law designates newly registering voters and voters requesting absentee ballots as federal-only when they list only a mail-forwarding service or post office box as their address, unless they can provide a physical description of their South Dakota residence and attest to 30 days of state residency. Targets of that law include people who drive recreational vehicles across the country year-round while registering in South Dakota.

A new law this year requires newly registering voters to provide a birth certificate, passport, driver's license, non-driver's identification card or tribal identification card, or "any other type of acceptable documentary evidence of citizenship" permitted under federal law. Photocopies can be used in place of all of them except driver's licenses and state or tribal identification cards.

Registrants who fail to document their U.S. citizenship are registered as federal-only. Courts have determined states can require citizenship documentation for state-level registration, but states must allow people to attest their citizenship without documentation when registering for federal elections.

South Dakota Searchlight purchased a list of the state's federal-only voters from the Secretary of State's Office as of Oct. 6 and emailed county auditors about voters whose registration information — including their original registration date or mailing address — raised questions about whether they belonged on the list. In three instances, auditors said the voters had been mistakenly designated as federal-only and corrected their status.

Samantha Chapman, advocacy manager with the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, said the errors flagged by Searchlight underscore the "stakes" of the recent law changes.

"When a law is so badly written and, in my opinion, carelessly implemented, the results of people being unfairly disenfranchised are inevitable and extremely upsetting," Chapman said. "This is someone's

fundamental right to vote. They didn't do anything to lose it — there was an error that nearly cost them a voice in key races in November."

Voters might not realize they've been registered as federal-only. Some may not notice the designation on the postcard they receive from their county auditor confirming their registration. The state's online Voter Information Portal does not tell voters if they are registered as federal-only. Voters can surmise their status if their sample ballot in the portal includes only federal races, or they can check their status by calling their county auditor.

More than 4,800 of the 5,735 federal-only voters on the list are registered using a commercial mail-forwarding address or post office box, indicating they may have failed to provide a physical address or prove 30 days of residency, although they also could have failed to prove their U.S. citizenship. Another roughly 800 listed residential addresses and are restricted solely because they didn't provide proof of U.S. citizenship.

About 40% of federal-only voters are either independent or non-politically affiliated (meaning they left the affiliation portion of the form blank), 38% are Republicans, and 21% are Democrats. Libertarian and "other" registered voters make up 1% of federal-only voters.

When contacted by Searchlight, Gov. Rhoden's office said he won't comment on pending litigation. The South Dakota League of Women Voters and Sioux Falls resident Jaysen Hill sued the state earlier this year over the citizenship law's implementation. Hill says he was unable to vote in local races in the June 2 primary election because of a registration error and was never given an accurate explanation or a chance to fix it before casting a ballot.

In response to some of the lawsuit's claims, the Secretary of State's Office instructed county auditors in September to send federal-only voters more accurate letters explaining their status. The move addresses part of the lawsuit, which remains pending in federal court.

Some federal-only voters Searchlight called knew about their status and had plans to fix it; others were unaware. Chapman led a group of volunteers to call voters on the federal-only voter list and remind them of their voter status ahead of Monday's registration deadline.

"It's heartbreaking," Chapman said, "to see these numbers climb month after month."

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

Medical Marijuana Oversight Committee clashes with industry advocates again over critical speakers

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — Supporters of South Dakota's medical marijuana industry clashed with a state oversight committee Tuesday about speakers invited to address the group.

The Medical Marijuana Oversight Committee is led by state lawmakers and also includes representatives of healthcare professions, a medical marijuana patient and law enforcement.

Ned Horsted, who operates 605 Cannabis in southeastern South Dakota, told the committee he was frustrated by the choice of speakers invited to make presentations Tuesday. They included a Harvard professor and Colorado doctor who opposed the federal government's recent downgrading of medicinal marijuana to a less dangerous class of drugs, and a founder of a nonprofit that says it's "taking on Big Marijuana."

Similar clashes have occurred at past committee meetings. During this year's legislative session, the state House approved a bill that would have eliminated the committee, but the bill failed in the state Senate.

Horsted referenced some of that history in his comments Tuesday.

"You've done quite the job once again in stacking the committee with anti-cannabis individuals from out of state," said Horsted. "The agendas produced by this committee show evidence of a two-year war on

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patients, industry and, at times, the Department of Health.”

Rep. Josephine Garcia, R-Watertown, chairs the committee alongside co-chair Sen. John Carley, R-Piedmont. Both lawmakers lost their primary races in June.

Garcia, who has co-sponsored unsuccessful legislation to repeal medical marijuana, said Tuesday she believes the committee has “done a very good job” in aligning with what state law requires of it, including recommending legislation regarding patient access to medical cannabis.

Meeting attendees, “whether they’re from here or not,” have helped the committee meet its goals regarding medical marijuana, Garcia said.

“The bottom line is the people of South Dakota want it, and we need to make it right, to where it’s safe,” she said. “We learn from our other states. We learn how to not make the same mistake.”

South Dakota’s medical marijuana program began in 2021 after voters authorized it in 2020. There are 20,040 patient cards issued in the state to people with qualifying medical conditions.

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

New program provides 5% down payment for qualifying South Dakota homebuyers

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

The South Dakota Housing Development Authority is starting a temporary program to give down-payment assistance to homebuyers.

The authority will launch its Give Me Five program on Nov. 2, lending qualifying homebuyers a down payment equal to 5% of their mortgage. Recipients are not required to make payments on the down-payment loan, and it’s forgiven after five years if recipients stay in the home and meet other program requirements.

To qualify for the program, buyers must not have owned a home in the past three years, and must have a family income less than maximums ranging from \$103,400 to \$144,760 (depending on the county and family size). The maximum home purchase price is \$410,000.

The program will be available for a limited time through participating lenders. The authority has authorized up to 2,500 loans.

The program is funded through surplus revenue generated by the authority’s existing First-Time Homebuyer Program. It uses tax-exempt bonds to finance mortgages at low interest rates.

The authority is a self-supporting nonprofit created by state government. Executive Director Chas Olson said the authority has enough revenue to offer the additional incentive. In the past, the authority has offered other incentives, such as the Grants for Grads program that helped college graduates buy their first home.

“In today’s challenging housing market, first-time homebuyers need every advantage they can get,” Olson said in a statement.

That challenging market includes mortgage interest rates above 7% and a median list price of \$375,000 in South Dakota, up from about \$240,000 five years ago.

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.

Trump pressed states for info on millions of voters in the midterms. It's mostly failed.

BY JONATHAN SHORMAN

Three weeks before Election Day, the Trump administration's sprawling project to send sensitive personal information on millions of voters to the Department of Homeland Security has been declared illegal by a federal judge.

The blistering court decision comes after the Department of Justice pressured or sued states for their voters' information and then, according to court records and federal documents, turned over the data it obtained to Homeland Security Investigations — a sub-agency of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

The decision, issued late last week, marks the latest rebuke of the Trump administration during more than a year of legal confrontations with dozens of states and voting rights groups over President Donald Trump's efforts to assert authority over voting ahead of the midterm elections.

If Republicans lose control of one or both chambers of Congress, Trump's final two years in office could be consumed by Democratic-led investigations into his administration and opposition to his legislative agenda.

The Justice Department's legal arguments suggested that "every American citizen who registers to vote is the subject of a voter fraud investigation underway in the (Justice Department's) Civil Rights Division simply because they registered to vote," wrote Judge Sparkle Sooknanan of District of Columbia District Court, an appointee of President Joe Biden.

"Behind all the window dressing, the challenged policy represents the federal government's attempt to decide who gets to vote," Sooknanan wrote. "But Congress has left that authority where our Constitution has always placed it: with the states."

SAVE program

The Justice Department has already lost at least 23 district court lawsuits seeking to force states to provide voter data. The U.S. Supreme Court also blocked Trump's plans to use the U.S. Postal Service to restrict voting by mail.

While the Supreme Court cleared states to use a supercharged Homeland Security computer program called SAVE to seek out noncitizen voters, its effects on the midterms have been minimal because most states are restricted by federal law from conducting mass purges of registered voters so close to an election.

SAVE's opponents point to multiple examples of the program falsely flagging Americans as possible noncitizens. Sooknanan previously ruled against SAVE's use in a June decision, which the Supreme Court overturned in September when it allowed states to access the program.

Asked about Sooknanan's latest decision, Justice Department spokesperson Kiersten Pels in an email to States Newsroom said only that the department was "reviewing the ruling."

More noncitizen voting charges

In recent weeks, the Justice Department has filed a series of cases alleging noncitizen voting, which studies have consistently shown rarely occurs. The DOJ on Monday announced voter fraud charges against 16 individuals, including 13 noncitizens. In September, prosecutors secured grand jury indictments against 10 noncitizens in Minnesota.

"The law is clear, only American citizens may vote in American elections, and enforcing this law is fundamental to our democracy. That should not be a partisan concept," U.S. Attorney General Todd Blanche said at a late September news conference.

Sooknanan's ruling came in a lawsuit filed in April by the voting rights group Common Cause and a group of voters. While both Republican and Democratic-led states had fought the Justice Department individually, the new lawsuit targeted the entire voter roll collection project — a choice aimed at protecting voters living in states that had shared or might share their data with the Trump administration voluntarily.

"This is a victory for voters and yet another loss for the Department of Justice. It's time the Trump administration stop these desperate attempts to seize voters' private data and take control of our elections,"

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Virginia Kase Solomón, Common Cause president and CEO, said in a statement.

16 states provided voter rolls

Despite the courtroom losses, the Trump administration still obtained records on tens of millions of voters. At least 16 states voluntarily provided the Justice Department with their voter rolls, according to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University, which has tracked the DOJ's actions.

Those states include Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and Wyoming.

Court filings and internal government documents show the Trump administration put the information to use. Last week, the watchdog group Democracy Forward released internal HSI reports showing the agency received nearly 51 million Justice Department records as part of its "election integrity" investigations.

The HSI reports didn't describe the nature of the Justice Department records. But Sooknanan wrote the DOJ had given records on millions of voters to ICE. Sooknanan ruled the transfers violated the Privacy Act, a federal law that restricts how federal agencies collect and share information on individuals.

Sooknanan referenced a letter from the acting director of ICE to the Justice Department asking for the state voter lists as part of an initiative to combat voter fraud. In the March 6 letter, Todd Lyons asked for the data "in order for HSI to conduct appropriate investigation of potential violations of federal election law."

DOJ attorney Eric Neff replied to Lyons on March 12 to confirm the data sharing. He wrote that Homeland Security and the Justice Department would "take reasonable efforts to limit impacts to the privacy and civil liberties of United States citizens."

However, Sooknanan found that the DOJ sought to investigate every registered voter without a specific reason to believe they committed voter fraud or that their states violated federal election laws. She warned that the department cannot evade the free speech protections within the Privacy Act by launching a "dragnet" investigation of the whole country.

'Not only ill-conceived, but illegal'

Justin Levitt, who served as senior policy adviser for democracy and voting rights in the Biden White House and is now a law professor at Loyola Marymount University, said not much in Sooknanan's decision will directly affect the 2026 elections.

Writing in Election Law Blog, Levitt noted that most states never turned over their voter files to the Justice Department, and of the states that did, only a few appeared to have pledged to act on whatever "unreliable garbage" data the DOJ sent back.

"But even without a direct impact on anything happening in the next month, this is an important declaration that the whole program was not only ill-conceived, but illegal," Levitt wrote.

The Trump administration may still be allowed to compile lists of voting-age citizens in each state as part of a sweeping executive order on voting by mail signed by Trump in March. But court-mandated notice requirements mean the lists won't be available before the midterms.

The so-called state citizenship lists are the only major element of the executive order not currently blocked by the courts. The order directs Homeland Security to work with the Social Security Administration to develop the lists and provide them to state officials, though it doesn't require states to do anything with the information.

Maryland judge to consider citizenship lists

U.S. District Court Judge Paula Xinis, an appointee of President Barack Obama in Maryland District Court, is set to decide what the Supreme Court's Sept. 25 decision allowing the use of SAVE means for the fate of the citizenship lists.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center, or EPIC, a public interest research organization, sued the Trump administration over the lists in August. While Xinis hasn't ruled in the lawsuit, she has ordered the DOJ to provide at least 30 days notice of any effort to move forward with the initiative or provide the lists to states.

With less than a month before Election Day, the notice requirement effectively means the lists won't be available before the midterm elections, even if they are upheld in court. Still, the eventual outcome holds

potential consequences for future elections if states use the information to purge registered voters.

EPIC and the Justice Department have submitted dueling briefs to Xinis on what the SAVE decision means for the citizenship lists.

Lawyers for EPIC argue that key differences exist between the state citizenship lists and the SAVE system. While the SAVE system discloses information on requested individuals, they noted, the executive order mandates providing information on all U.S. citizens by state.

"Critically, states or localities must initiate a request for verification of specified individuals' citizenship status in order to utilize" SAVE, the attorneys wrote.

Lawyers for the Justice Department called the argument a "red herring." In their brief, they argue that state officials would have to log into a federal portal to download the citizenship data.

"That affirmative conduct would be materially similar to sending a request to DHS: either way, the State would itself initiate the transfer of data," the DOJ brief says.

Xinis could rule at any time.

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.

Advocates again ask South Dakota governor to endorse summer food program operating in 39 states

Education Department official expresses concerns about setup and ongoing costs

BY JOHN HULT

Thirty-four South Dakota organizations and businesses have asked Gov. Larry Rhoden to support a program that offers debit cards for food to low-income families during the summer months.

The program is federally funded, but is administered by states.

The governor's deputy secretary of education told South Dakota Searchlight that the administration is "taking another look at the program requirements and associated costs" after years of resistance to accepting the federal money. The costs to set up the program and run it each summer "remain a significant consideration," Deputy Secretary Laura Scheibe said in a written statement.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer program offers \$120 per child, at \$40 per month across three months, to help eligible families buy groceries during June, July and August. The money can't be used for prepared food.

South Dakota would be in line for \$6.8 million, according to the nonprofit Food Research and Action Center, enough to cover 57,000 kids.

Families could get the per-child stipend if they're enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, if they qualify for free or reduced price school lunches, or are enrolled in Medicaid, the federal health insurance program for people who have low incomes. The money would also be available for families who participate in the Food Distribution on Indian Reservations program, as well as for the families of kids without homes and those living in foster homes.

South Dakota is one of 11 states not offering the program this year. The other non-participating states are Alaska, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Utah, all of which, like South Dakota, have Republican governors.

Iowa had previously opted out, but opted in for summer 2026. Wyoming also took part this year, so every state bordering South Dakota now participates. Tennessee lawmakers voted to fund the program this spring, but families there won't be able to access it until next summer.

To participate for the summer of 2027, South Dakota would need to signal its intention to do so by Jan. 1.

Groups call on Rhoden to participate

Bread for the World South Dakota is the local chapter of a Washington, D.C.-based Christian nonprofit organization.

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The group sent a letter to Rhoden's office last week asking him to participate in summer EBT next year. Among the 33 other signatories are the Salvation Army of Mitchell, the South Dakota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, South Dakota Kids Count, the League of Women Voters South Dakota and the South Dakota Advocacy Network for Women.

The letter urges Rhoden "to help ensure that every child in South Dakota has consistent access to the nutrition they need to grow, learn, and thrive" during the summer months through summer EBT.

Bread for the World sent a similar letter to former Gov. Kristi Noem in 2023, urging participation for 2024.

A handful of people and organizations reached out to Rhoden about the issue last year, Bread for the World's Cathy Brechtelsbauer said, but the group wanted a more concerted effort this year, "because it's ridiculous that we still don't have it," Brechtelsbauer said.

"Everybody in South Dakota is paying for it through our federal taxes," Brechtelsbauer said. "Kids are hungry here, too."

Federal money pays for on-site meals across South Dakota during the summer, but Brechtelsbauer said those meals feed only 1 in 7 kids who'd be eligible for summer EBT payments.

"Not everyone is able to get to school in the summer," she said.

The EBT cards onto which the summer benefit payments are transferred can be used at grocers. Franklin Food Market of Sioux Falls and Team Buche Cares, the nonprofit arm of the Buche Foods chain of grocery and convenience stores, each signed the summer EBT letter of support.

State: Setup cost could be great

Earlier this year, Rhoden signed a bill into law covering the family portion of the price for reduced price school meals. His signature on the bill came after previous attempts to pass similar bills failed in earlier legislative sessions.

The federal government pays half of ongoing administrative costs for summer EBT, but Scheibe, Rhoden's deputy education secretary, said the estimated setup cost in 2024 was between \$500,000 and \$700,000.

"IT programming and additional staffing would be required," she said in a Monday email.

The state House of Representatives Education Committee endorsed a bill in 2024 that would have put \$150,000 a year toward paying the state's share of program administration for summer EBT. The Legislature's budget committee voted the bill down.

Dan Ahlers, the Democrat running against Rhoden for governor in the Nov. 3 general election, said support for summer EBT would be a given if he were elected.

"Honestly, that's not even a question," said Ahlers, who supports state-funded school lunches for all South Dakota public school students. "Of course I'd support that."

The setup and administrative costs associated with the program would be "negligible" compared to the benefit for hungry kids, Ahlers said.

"Even if it's \$150,000" a year to run the program, he said, "that's nothing."

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Students to compete in civics bee championship in nation's capital, carried on C-SPAN

BY SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — As partisan tensions rise in advance of the fast-approaching midterm elections, students will test their knowledge Wednesday in a field that's long enjoyed bipartisan support: civics.

Fifty-two middle school students hailing from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and American Samoa, will compete at the third annual National Civics Bee Championship in the nation's capital.

For the first time ever, C-SPAN will televise the nonpartisan civics competition set for 8 p.m. Eastern and hosted by actor and game show host Jerry O'Connell.

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Students will showcase their knowledge of "American government, the Constitution and the civic challenges facing their communities," according to a press release.

The winner of the competition, presented by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, will be awarded a \$100,000 529 education savings plan.

The 52 students advanced in state and local competitions from across the country.

Middle school students first submitted essays on "how they would improve their communities through civics" — a branch of social studies centered on rights and obligations of citizenship. Their essay topics ranged from homelessness to childhood poverty to solar energy.

The students with the top essay scores moved on to regional competitions within their states, and the regional winners advanced to a final competition in their states.

Each state's first place winners made it to the nation's capital to compete in Wednesday's championship.

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

Up to \$6 million in tax rebates approved for South Dakota's largest wind project

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota's Board of Economic Development voted Tuesday to authorize up to \$6.1 million in tax rebates for the state's largest wind energy project.

The \$750 million, 333-megawatt wind farm will span about 110 square miles of private land, located north of Philip and 85 miles east of Rapid City. State regulators described the project as the state's largest wind facility when they approved a permit Feb. 12 for Philip Wind Partners, a subsidiary of Chicago-based Invenegy. Plans call for up to 87 turbines and 5.5 miles of electrical transmission line.

The Governor's Office of Economic Development said Tuesday that construction has begun on the project, which is expected to become operational in 2028.

The company applied for the state's Reinvestment Payment Program, which provides a rebate on sales taxes paid to upgrade equipment or build a new facility or expansion in South Dakota. The program is limited to building projects over \$20 million or equipment upgrades over \$2 million.

According to the wind project's regulatory application, it will create about 200 construction jobs and 12 long-term jobs. Over the next 30 years, the company anticipates paying about \$85 million to landowners, \$50 million in property taxes, and \$10 million in other state and local taxes.

The board also approved a sales tax rebate of up to \$8,845.87 for OmegaQuant Analytics from the state's New Frontiers program, which supports qualifying research and clinical trials. OmegaQuant is a Sioux Falls lab that offers nutritional status testing to researchers, clinicians and the public.

The board's agenda said the rebate is for "a new or adapted research method, process, product or technology under approval by a federal authority." The Governor's Office of Economic Development later said, in response to South Dakota Searchlight questions, that OmegaQuant has been awarded a \$320,864 National Eye Institute grant through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to "develop blood fatty-acid-based algorithms for the early prediction of macular degeneration and glaucoma, with the potential to create new commercially viable testing tools developed and offered from South Dakota."

The office said OmegaQuant has 12 employees in South Dakota and estimates adding eight jobs over the next five years.

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.

Aging workforce, immigration crackdown are depleting skilled workers

The trade worker shortage is hitting 9 states the hardest, according to an industry report

BY TIM HENDERSON

A perfect storm of harsh immigration enforcement, aging journeymen and a building boom for data centers is wreaking havoc on the nation's supply of skilled trade workers.

Automakers and construction contractors say they need more access to workers through accelerated training, steady immigration and a cultural shift to encourage young people to do the hard, dirty work of skilled trades. They're looking for plumbers, electricians, carpenters, machinists and technicians — specializations increasingly in short supply.

Worker shortages are the top reason for construction project delays, a September survey by the Association of General Contractors of America found. Applicants are there, but half of the contractors who were surveyed said too many job candidates are unqualified and need more training.

The association cited both the demand for workers building data centers and tougher immigration enforcement as contributing causes for the shortage.

"Over 50% of craft workers are born outside the United States. We don't know that they're illegal but frankly DHS (the Department of Homeland Security) is not being that discriminating in whom they pick up or who feels threatened by them," said Ken Simonson, the chief economist for the Association of General Contractors of America. One answer is for the government to allow more worker visas for construction and other trades, he said.

"We've been stymied for 20 years or longer trying to get construction treated similarly to agriculture, where if you can demonstrate that there isn't enough Americans interested in a job you can bring in somebody," Simonson said.

Pay is rising for the skilled trades, but it's hard to say how soon higher wages would attract more people. On social media, trades workers complain of long commutes to work sites, long waits through low-paid apprenticeships and a feeling they're not valued as much as office workers.

"Getting up at 4am-5am. Driving 50 plus miles to random job sites. Obviously the dirty part which is construction sites and inhaling dust and dirt all day. Seeing people in corporate jobs in nice clothes while I'm dirty going on lunch break," wrote a 30-year-old on a Reddit social media post in July, concluding that they should have finished a college chemistry degree.

Thousands agreed, including a 31-year-old tradesperson from Michigan who said top pay in their field, plumbing and HVAC, is attractive but that many make less than \$70,000.

"Been in the trades since I was 16 and recently started going back to college," the person wrote. "Everybody I know who chose a degree over an apprenticeship is starting to outpace me in life buying houses and having kids while we're check to check and getting less healthy by the day."

These are the concerns employers have to address if they're going to find enough workers to build homes, cars and data centers for artificial intelligence. Ford Motor Company and the Ad Council announced a publicity campaign to bring more young people into the trades, with a videodeclaring "millions of skilled trade jobs are waiting for people ready to do something, with great pay, job security and work you can take pride in."

Ford and the alliance didn't mention immigration enforcement as an issue, but the Association of General Contractors and an unrelated survey of roofers both mentioned it as a prominent factor in reducing the supply of skilled workers.

John Burns Research and Consulting, an independent housing research company, reported that many of the roofers it surveyed earlier this year saw immigration enforcement as hurting their business.

"There are no American kids willing to install roofs in Central Texas," said one roofing contractor in anonymous quotes published by the group.

"Tough immigration reform and not enough Americans to fill the void," said another.

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"A lot of these people have been deported. The next generation is complacent and does not want to do physical work," said a Florida roofer.

Elizabeth LaJeunesse, vice president of building products research at John Burns, said the vehemence of responses about immigration was surprising.

"Most of these firms are pretty conservative, so this is a real phenomenon we're picking up on, that level of concern over immigration enforcement," LaJeunesse said.

Duane Musser, vice president for government relations for the National Roofing Contractors Association, said the responses are typical of what he hears from members. Immigration as well as better trade education are critical to roofing, he said.

"Advocating for solutions to workforce shortages, including expanded career and technical education programs and bipartisan immigration reform, is a top priority," Musser said.

The DHS told Stateline in an unattributed statement that "those who are here legally and are not breaking other laws have nothing to fear" and that "we will continue to enforce our nation's laws and remove illegal aliens from American communities."

In September a Trump-appointed federal judge stayed a federal practice of entering construction sites without a warrant to investigate immigration status. One construction worker of Mexican descent in Alabama complained that he had been detained three times since 2025 despite showing a state driver's license demonstrating that he was a citizen born in Florida.

Immigrant workers make up a majority of roofers, painters and stucco masons, according to a Stateline analysis last year.

The nation will need 1.7 million new skilled trade workers every year through 2035, according to a September report by Alliance for America's Skilled Trades, a trade group including Ford Motor Company, toolmakers and other businesses. Training programs produce just more than half the numbers needed, and only half of those who enroll in skilled training programs finish, the report found.

Nine states were identified by the alliance report as having high demand but low supply of skilled labor: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas.

Florida ranks first for demand for skilled workers, but nearly last for supply, higher only than Maine. Not enough new Florida workers are coming online as building in the state booms and current workers near retirement age. The state's Association of General Contractors' chapter hopes the advancements in workforce AI will drive more young adults into construction jobs since those can't be replaced by chatbots.

Other states have the opposite issue: ranking high for new workers but low in demand for them, based on recent hiring and future projections.

In the top 10 for worker supply but bottom 10 for demand: Indiana, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

The alliance report suggested employers themselves need to help train future workers. The companies building data centers, in particular, want those tradespeople.

"America needs hundreds of thousands of electricians, welders and fiber technicians to build AI infrastructure," said Dina Powell McCormick, president and vice chairman of Meta, in a statement, adding that the alliance is "paying for the training, removing the barriers that keep people from stepping into these careers, and guaranteeing a job at the end of it."

Shoua Thao, 40, is straddling the line between trades and AI as a machinist in the computer-assisted manufacturing business known as CNC machining, which uses computer code to control production. The son of Hmong refugees in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, Thao is now experimenting with AI production techniques.

"Trades are the one career path that doesn't lie," he said. "You can't hide lower skills in a trade, whereas middle management and white collar jobs are protected by the vagueness of the job."

Eventually trades could become a more valued career path than college, Thao said, though he has been discouraged at times by low pay and long hours that take time away from family.

"I think it will be a slow process but eventually, sometime in the future, maybe my children's future,

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trades will take over," Thao said.

Stateline reporter Tim Henderson can be reached at thenderson@stateline.org.

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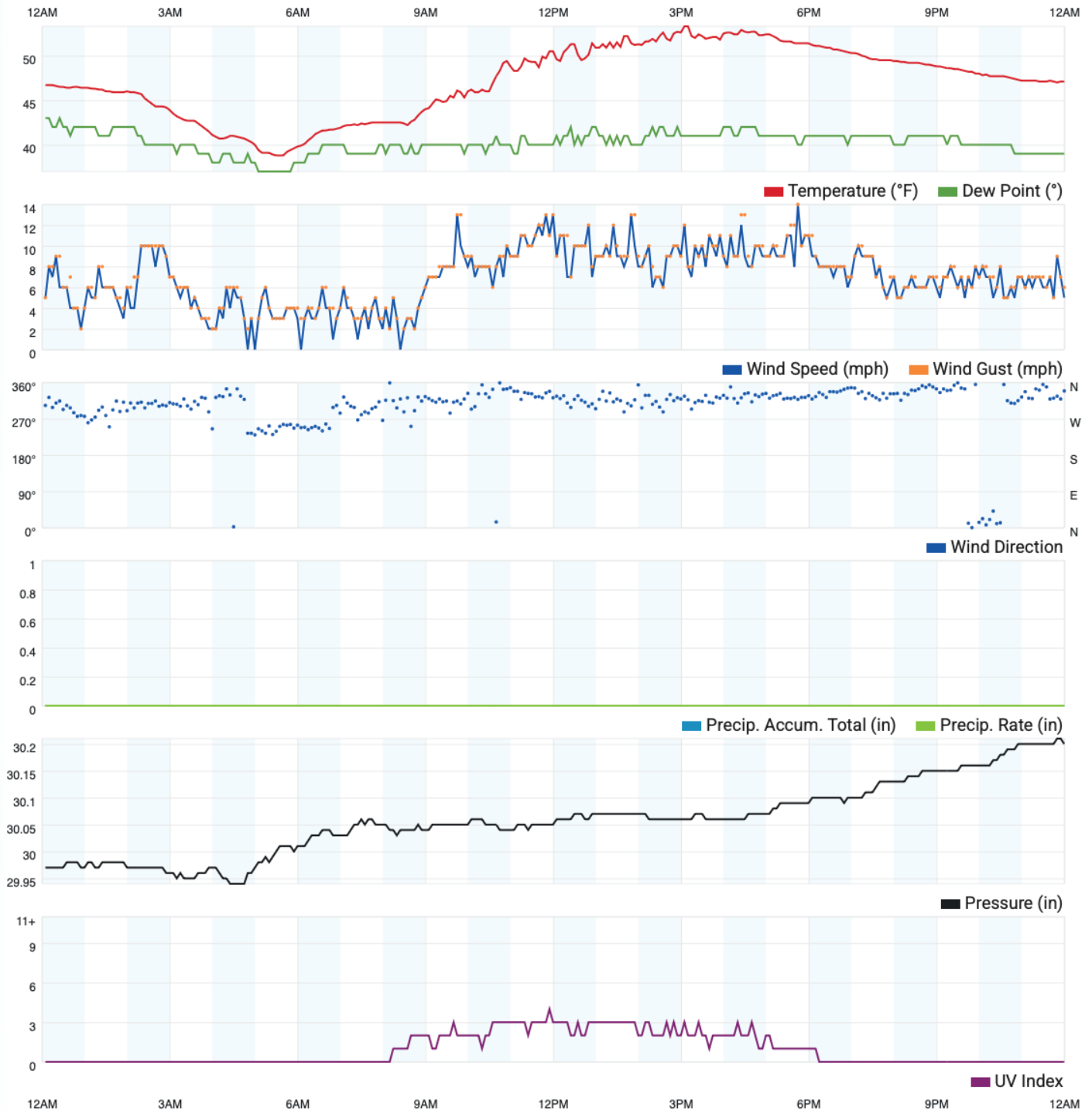
Tim Henderson covers demographics for Stateline. He has been a reporter at the Miami Herald, the Cincinnati Enquirer and the Journal News.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

October 13, 2026



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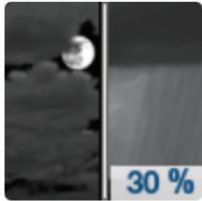
Today



High: 58 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 41 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Showers

Thursday



High: 60 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Partly Sunny
and Breezy

Thursday
Night



Low: 36 °F

Mostly Cloudy
and Breezy

Friday



High: 55 °F

Sunny

Warming Up This Weekend

Today



A.M. frost over
central SD.
Decreasing
clouds east in
afternoon.

HI: 55-60 F

Thursday



Showers
possible,
especially
south. Windy,
gusts 35-50
mph.

HI: 55-62 F
LO: 30-38 F

Friday



Less wind and
mostly sunny.
Dry conditions.

HI: 52-58 F
LO: 30-38 F

Saturday



Warming
temps,
especially
central SD.
Breezy.

HI: 63-75 F
LO: 37-45 F

Sunday



Mild
temperatures
and continued
dry.

HI: 65-73 F
LO: 33-43 F

October 14, 2026 3:25 AM



After morning frost/freeze conditions over portions of central SD, expect light winds today with temperatures in the 50s to near 60 degrees. Scattered rain showers will move northward into the region tonight into Thursday, especially over southern portions of the forecast area. Windy conditions are also expected on Thursday, with gusts approaching 50 mph across central SD. Warmer temperatures in the 60s and 70s are in store for this weekend, with dry conditions.

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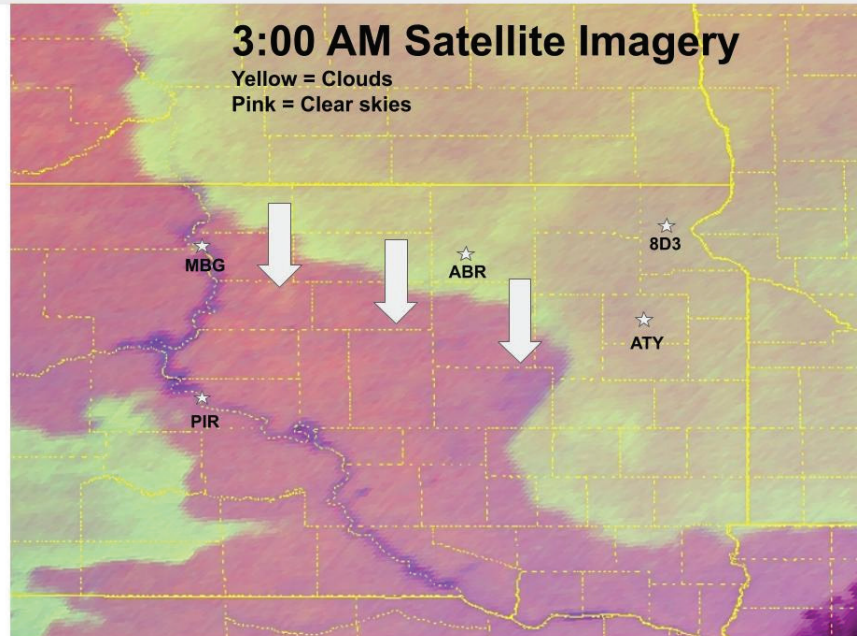


Frost/Freeze Over Portions of the Area This Morning

October 14, 2026
4:06 AM CDT

Coldest over central SD

- Clouds (yellow) moving south across northern SD are keeping temps in the upper 30s and 40s across Campbell, McPherson, Edmunds, and Brown counties. **Limited or no frost.**
- Clear skies (pink) over central SD have allowed temps to fall into the **upper 20s to low 30s, supporting frost or freeze conditions.**
- Changes have been made to Frost/Freeze headlines to account for the cloud cover. **Further cuts to the frost/freeze headlines may occur through 6:00AM.**
- Freezing temperatures over central SD will harm or kill sensitive vegetation this morning.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

An area of clouds has moved south across northern SD early this morning, keeping temps in the upper 30s and 40s, thus preventing much in the way of frost formation. Over central SD, skies remain clear with temps dropping into the upper 20s and low 30s, allowing for frost/freeze conditions. Clouds will continue to creep southward through sunrise.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 54 °F at 2:59 PM

Low Temp: 40 °F at 5:34 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 1:33 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 87 in 1962

Record Low: 10 in 1937

Average High: 61

Average Low: 34

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.05

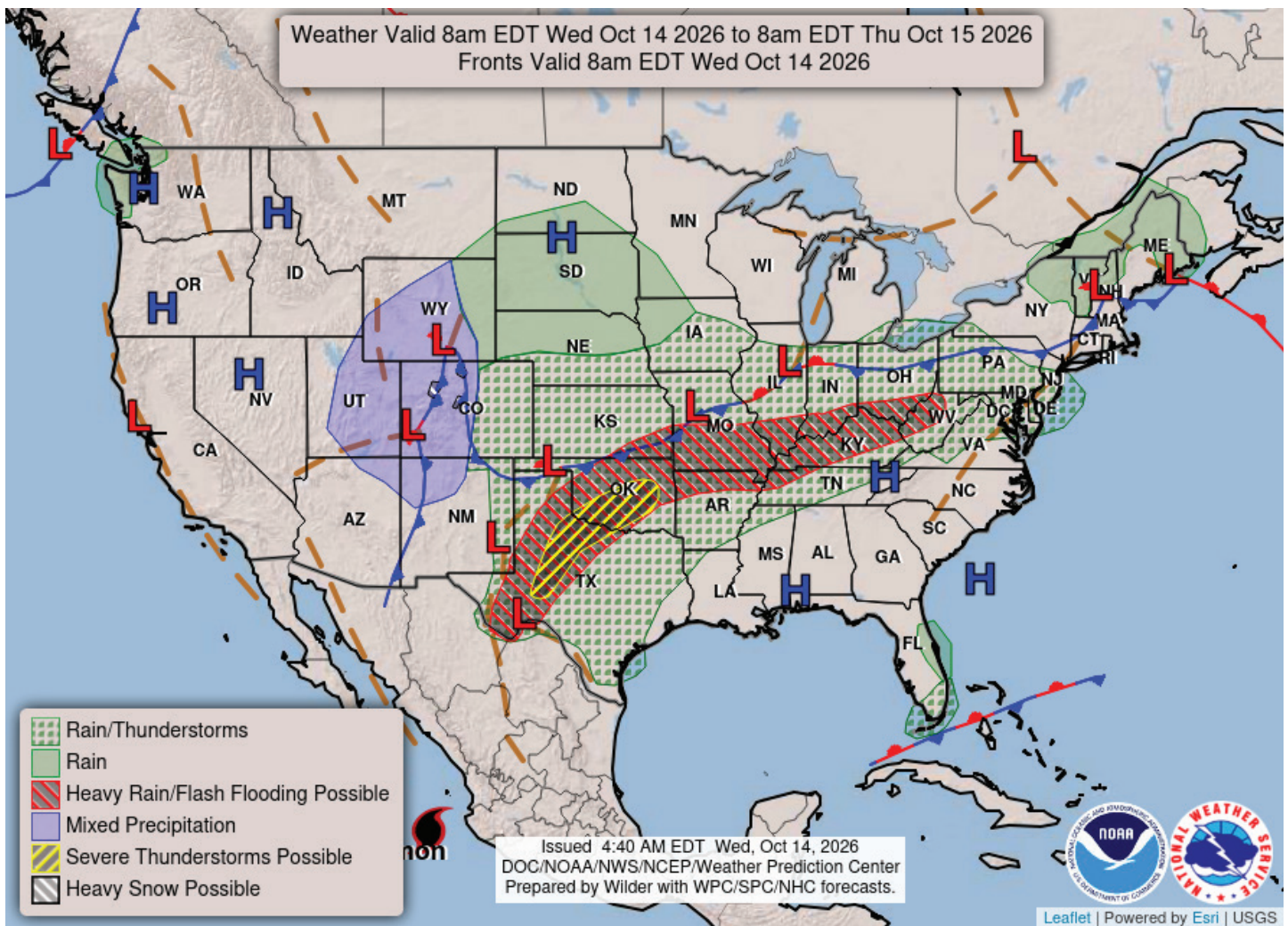
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 19.38

Precip Year to Date: 22.08

Sunset Tonight: 6:49 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:48 am



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Today in Weather History

October 14, 1969: Cold air during the overnight produced lows from six degrees in Custer, Gillette, and Devils Tower to fifteen degrees in Dupree, Hot Springs, and the Rapid City Airport.

1909: An F3 tornado struck Pittsburg Landing and Stantonville, TN killing 23 people and injuring 80 others.

1941: America's first television weather forecast was broadcast on New York's WNBC (later WNBC). There weren't many televisions at that time, so viewers were limited to perhaps a few hundred people. The weathercast consisted of a sponsor's message followed by a text screen containing the next day's forecast.

1957 — Floodwaters roared through a migrant labor camp near the town of Picacho AZ flooding fifty cabins and a dozen nearby homes. 250 migrant workers lost their shelters. The month was one of the wettest Octobers in Arizona weather history. (The Weather Channel)

1965 — Heavy rains hit the coastal areas of southeastern Florida. In a 24 hour period rains of twenty inches were reported from Deerfield Beach to Fort Lauderdale, with 25.28 inches on the Fort Lauderdale Bahia-Mar Yacht Basin. Flooding that resulted caused considerable damage to roads and streets. The rains inundated numerous newly planted vegetable fields, and some residences. Ten miles away just 4.51 inches of rain was reported. (14th- 15th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1981 — Four days of heavy rain across northern Texas and southern Oklahoma came to an end. The heaviest rains fell in a band from southwest of Abilene TX to McAlester OK, with up to 26 inches reported north of Gainesville, in north central Texas. The heavy rains were the result of decaying Hurricane Norma, which also spawned thirteen tornadoes across the region. Seven deaths were attributed to the flooding. (Storm Data)

1984 — Dense fog contributed to a 118 vehicle accident on I-94, just south of Milwaukee WI. It was the seventh day of an eight day stretch of dense fog. At the time of the accident the visibility was reportedly close to zero. (Storm Data)

1987 — Sixteen cities, mostly in the Appalachian Region, reported record low temperatures for the date. Record lows included 43 degrees at Lake Charles LA, 35 degrees at Augusta GA, and 27 degrees at Asheville NC. Gale force winds buffeted the Carolina coast. Light snow fell across parts of Wyoming, Colorado, and western South Dakota. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Forty cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Elkins WV was the cold spot in the nation with a record low of 18 degrees above zero. Thunderstorms in Arizona drenched Phoenix with nine inches of rain in nine hours, the fifth highest total for any given day in ninety-two years of records. Carefree AZ was soaked with two inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather over Michigan during the morning, and over New York State and Connecticut during the afternoon and evening hours. Thunderstorms spawned two tornadoes, and there were ninety reports of large hail or damaging winds, including seventy reports of damaging winds in New York State. A tornado at McDonough NY killed one person and injured three other people. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 105 mph at Somerset. Temperatures warmed into the 80s and lower 90s over much of the nation east of the Rockies, with eleven cities reporting record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 81 degrees at Beckley WV and Bluefield WV equalled October records. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotion

What We Could Never Earn

Salvation isn't earned—it's freely given through Christ, who conquered sin to set us free.

Galatians 3:10-14: 10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."

11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"--

14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:21-24: 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Most of us are accustomed to working for a reward. We get paid for a completed job, and there's a bonus when our effort exceeds expectation. It's understandable why so many people assume salvation depends upon our actions. But thankfully, that is simply not the case.

God gave commandments to reveal His standard for holiness, but no one—with the exception of Jesus—has ever obeyed them perfectly. In fact, James 2:10 points out, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all." A single jealous thought, unkind comment, or dishonoring action is enough to fall short of God's standard. In other words, if salvation depended on our self-righteousness, nobody could be saved.

Our heavenly Father knew that our own strength was insufficient for observing all that He has commanded. Yet out of grace, the Savior bore our iniquities, died, and rose from the grave. In doing so, He conquered sin so we can be free.

Jesus' death and resurrection broke the bonds of sin. That freedom is available to everyone who trusts in Him—and for those who have, it reshapes everything. In surrendering our life to Him, we find genuine liberation.

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

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The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.13.26

3 7 35 45 53 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT 17 Hrs 38 Mins 8
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.13.26

11 12 15 40 66 17

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$403,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 23
DRAW: Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.12.26

4 22 26 40 45 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,200,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 38 Mins 8
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.10.26

3 8 10 31 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$87,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 53 Mins 8
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.12.26

23 25 51 53 54 16

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 22 Mins 8
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.12.26

22 28 38 51 69 9

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$562,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 22 Mins 8
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

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

No black-footed ferrets found in Meeteetse, 40 years after a rescue saved the species

By MIKE KOSHMRL/WyoFile WyoFile

Wyoming wildlife managers are reporting that no black-footed ferrets are being detected in the cradle of the species' conservation: the Absaroka Range foothills outside of Meeteetse, where the ferrets were saved after presumed extinction in the 1980s.

A tough combination of plague and drought — both big issues for the embattled western species — are suspected causes of a population collapse in the Meeteetse area, where wildlife managers returned ferrets to the wild in 2016 after a three-decade-long absence. It's not assured that the reintroduced population is completely gone, but it's not looking promising, Wyoming Game and Fish Department small carnivore biologist Andy Gygli said.

"We spent a couple hundred hours of effort surveying 4,000 to 5,000 acres of the Meeteetse reintroduction area," Gygli said. "We didn't see any ferrets."

The complete absence of ferrets during the late August surveys wasn't wholly surprising. Sylvatic plague flared in the region in 2018 and 2019, and ferret numbers plunged to just one confirmed animal in 2020. Subsequent releases of captive-raised ferrets, including 18 animals in 2022, helped the small population temporarily recover, but plague struck again in 2023. By 2025, spotlighting surveyors again detected just a single ferret. This summer there were none.

Ferrets bottoming out and potentially disappearing struck Meeteetse rancher Allen Hogg as a big letdown.

"I'm really disappointed, of course," Hogg told WyoFile. "They might be gone. But just because they didn't find them doesn't mean they're not there, either. I'm not saying all hope is lost."

The Meeteetse rancher's family name became synonymous with black-footed ferrets 45 years ago, when a blue heeler owned by his parents brought a dead weasel-like critter home. Subsequently, biologists found more than 100 other black-footed ferrets — presumed extinct for the two years prior — on and near the family ranch.

The exact cause of the ferrets' absence during the surveys is unknown, but recently drought in the Bighorn Basin walloped their primary prey species, prairie dogs. In many corners of the West, there just hasn't been enough vegetation growth to sustain strong numbers of the grass-eating mammals.

"We've heard a lot about deer, elk, pronghorn and cattle having hard times," Gygli said. "It's the same with our other herbivores. Prairie dogs also have to eat, and lack of (vegetation) coverage can result in low recruitment, which can result in downstream effects."

For ferrets, those downstream drought effects are severe. They, too, haven't had enough to eat. Indirectly, drought caused the numbers of rare mustelids in the world's largest wild black-footed ferret population, in South Dakota's Conata Basin/Badlands, to plummet from 250 to 70 animals between 2024 and 2025, according to biologist and ferret expert Travis Livieri, who studies that population.

"In my 30 years of doing this, I've never seen (drought) this bad, where prairie dogs failed to reproduce at a high rate," Livieri said. "The prairie dogs don't do well, the ferrets won't do well."

Prairie dogs in the Meeteetse area also continue to struggle, Gygli said. After the 2023 bout of sylvatic

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plague, Game and Fish surveys mapped prairie dog colonies and found only 3,800 acres in active use — down from the 6,000-plus acres that were mapped around the time of the 2016 reintroduction. Densities of prairie dogs per acre aren't great, either.

The habitat conditions were bad enough for black-footed ferrets this summer that Gygli diverted 10 captive-raised animals that were going to be released in Meeteetse to the Shirley Basin, site of a rare ferret reintroduction success story. His rationale was that keeping ferrets out of the reintroduction area would relieve predation pressure on prairie dogs, helping them recover — and ultimately again support ferrets.

"There are prairie dogs there," Gygli said. "They just need some time and some good conditions to come back. Rodents reproduce. That's part of their strategy — they reproduce really quick."

Wildlife managers are also assisting the recovery with prophylactic insecticide treatments to kill fleas and guard against plague. On average, they treat roughly 4,000 acres annually — a roughly \$100,000 expense, with the lion's share covered by the Bureau of Land Management, Gygli said.

For now, the Meeteetse reintroduction area might stay free of ferrets intentionally. The last time that happened, in 1986, there were wildly different circumstances. It was a rescue mission to save the species. Although the federal and state wildlife officials found 124 black-footed ferrets after Shep the ranch dog's remarkable rediscovery, the population plummeted in 1985 from a combination of plague and canine distemper.

Retired Game and Fish Nongame Wildlife Supervisor Bob Oakleaf was on the front lines at the time, and he helped develop a contingency plan that outlined when wildlife officials should step in and whisk the remaining animals from the wild. Taking every last ferret into captivity from their only stronghold was a controversial decision, he recalled.

"There was a lot of blockage in the Game and Fish," Oakleaf told WyoFile. "Back then, the Game and Fish really wasn't oriented towards captive breeding."

Then-Game and Fish Director Bill Morris halted the ferret capturing operation "halfway through," he said, leading to a series of meetings. Oakleaf and others talked him into allowing them to resume.

"Thank God for the agreement on the contingency plan, because it allowed us to catch a few more ferrets," Oakleaf said.

After the last known wild ferret, a male known as Scarface, was captured in early 1987, there were a total of 18 black-footed ferrets remaining in the world — all from Meeteetse. Ferrets didn't return to the area for another three decades. They went back into the wild on the same private ranchland where they were rediscovered.

"All of the releases and all of the recovery efforts have all been concentrated here on our ranch and the Pitchfork," Hogg said. "Lenox Baker, the current owner, was probably the most instrumental person in getting them brought back here — he really made the push."

Hogg's hopeful that the Meeteetse reintroduction area's prairie dogs stage a comeback and the black-footed ferrets reappear — even if it takes continuous intervention.

"It might be a situation where, to maintain it here for historical reasons, we have to keep supplementing that population," Hogg said. "Sometimes it just is what it is. You can only spend so much money on a project. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work, but we certainly hope it will work."

There are some skeptics that Meeteetse will ever be home to self-sustaining ferrets. Oakleaf, the Game and Fish retiree, says he understands the desire to restore the historically significant population, but he worries that it's just not the right place — it's too small and has too much plague, he said.

"Everybody involved feels obligated to put them back in Meeteetse," Oakleaf said, "But, man, I don't know how you do it. It just hasn't shown over the years that it could support a ferret population."

For now, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is not giving up.

"This is a place that we're going to continue to work on," Gygli said. "It's the place where ferrets persisted."

In an ideal world, prairie dog populations would bounce back enough to support a captive-raised ferret release in 2027, he said.

Former Ukrainian officer goes on trial over Nord Stream gas pipeline blasts

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

HAMBURG, Germany (AP) — A former Ukrainian army officer went on trial in Germany on Wednesday over the undersea explosions four years ago that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines linking Russia and Germany in what is considered one of Europe's biggest acts of sabotage since World War II.

In a trial expected to last months, the suspect faces charges of causing an explosion, damaging property, disrupting public service and being an "accomplice to war crimes" by attacking civilian infrastructure, according to prosecutors.

According to German privacy rules, the suspect will be identified in court only as Serhii K., although he was publicly named as Serhii Kuznietsov in extradition proceedings in Italy.

While international observers initially blamed Moscow, investigators have increasingly examined suggestions that Ukrainian state security agencies may have been involved — even though Ukraine counts Germany as one of its closest allies.

The trial of the suspect, who is believed to be the alleged ringleader of the attack, is being held under strict security measures at the Hanseatic Higher Regional Court in Hamburg.

More than 100 media representatives from around the world, including Britain, China, France, Ukraine and Russia, have been accredited to cover the case, according to the court.

Pro-Ukraine protesters gathered outside the courthouse as attendees filed into the building, holding up placards and signs that carried messages including "Russia is a Terrorist" written in red.

Explosions that damaged the pipelines at center of case

According to the charges, the defendant was allegedly involved in causing the Sept. 26, 2022, explosions that damaged pipelines built to carry Russian natural gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea.

At the time, European countries were moving to wean themselves off Russian energy sources, following the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Prosecutors say the aim of the plot was to permanently disrupt gas deliveries and prevent Russia from using the revenues to finance its military operations.

The defendant and others allegedly used a yacht that departed from the German port of Rostock. It had been rented from a German company using forged IDs and with the help of intermediaries.

The explosions ruptured the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which was Russia's main natural gas supply route to Germany until Moscow cut off supplies in August 2022. They also damaged Nord Stream 2, which never entered service because Germany suspended its certification process shortly before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The suspect allegedly organized and carried out the detonation of at least four bombs between 14 and 27 kilograms (around 31 to 62 pounds) at a depth of 70 to 80 meters (230 feet to 263 feet) near the Danish island of Bornholm.

He was detained in 2025 in an Italian village, where officers raided a bungalow where he was staying with his family. Police said he surrendered without resistance. He was extradited to Germany in November.

Ukraine has denied any role in the pipeline blasts

A second suspect was arrested on a European warrant in the northern Croatian town of Pula in August. He has applied for asylum in Croatia to fight his extradition to Germany.

The pipelines were long a target of criticism by the U.S. and some of its allies, which warned that they increased dependence on Russian gas.

Russia has claimed that U.S. and British intelligence agencies were involved in staging the explosions and has also accused NATO of involvement in the attack, while several Western countries initially blamed Russia.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has denied allegations that his country was involved in the pipeline blasts.

The German government has so far refrained from comment on the trial, pointing out that no verdict has yet been reached and the case is in the hands of the independent judiciary.

So far, 16 court dates have been scheduled through Dec. 17. Additional dates are also planned for January and February 2027. It is not yet known when the verdict will be announced.

Zelenskyy to meet Burnham in London as Kyiv seeks more help against Russia

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is due in London on Wednesday for talks with British Prime Minister Andy Burnham.

Kyiv and its European supporters are racing to shore up Ukrainian defenses amid Russia's escalating bombardment and doubts about the Trump administration's commitment to helping Ukraine to fend off Moscow's invasion, which began in February 2022.

Burnham's office said the U.K. government will provide "urgent support" for Kyiv in the coming weeks and will accelerate delivery of air defense missiles that Ukraine desperately needs before the bitter winter sets in.

Not the first time since the war began, a surprise decision by U.S. President Donald Trump rattled Ukrainian and Western European leaders.

Trump announced last week that he struck a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin to import tons of Russian diesel. The stunning decision, coming amid international efforts to sanction Russia's economy and isolate Putin, added to a growing list of instances where the Republican president has sided with the Russian leader while cold-shouldering Zelenskyy.

Burnham took a different track. "My message to the Ukrainian people could not be clearer, we are with you for as long as it takes, and we will go further and faster in our support to back your courageous fight for peace in Europe," he said ahead of the visit.

Analysts noted that Trump's move girded Europe into standing firm behind Kyiv.

"Ahead of a tough winter for Ukraine, Donald Trump's swing back toward Russia bodes ill," Rym Momtaz of Carnegie Europe wrote in an assessment Tuesday. "But instead of panicking, Kyiv's European allies are focusing on action."

Britain, like the European Union, is also looking to impose more sanctions on Russia.

London has also called on Moscow to observe a partial ceasefire announced by Trump and halt strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities. Zelenskyy says Ukraine is observing the energy ceasefire.

Burnham's first foreign trip after becoming leader in July was to Kyiv, where he offered to share technology for making long-range missiles. In response, Russia accused Britain of taking part in the war on Kyiv's side.

Texas prosecutor says ICE agent appeared to intentionally strike man with vehicle in Houston

HOUSTON (AP) — A Texas prosecutor says a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent appeared to use a vehicle to intentionally strike a man who took off running in Houston and that an investigation opened by his office could result in criminal charges.

Miguel Parra Hernandez, 48, needed surgery for a broken leg after being hit by a car Saturday, said Cesar Espinosa, executive director of FIEL Houston, an immigrant rights organization that is helping the man's family.

The encounter has set off new criticism over immigration enforcement in Houston, where local prosecutors have also investigated a July fatal shooting by a federal immigration officer.

Harris County District Attorney Sean Teare, a Democrat, expressed concern over surveillance footage that shows Parra Hernandez and another person jumping out of a white truck and running as a dark SUV pursues them. A vehicle strikes Parra Hernandez, who is seen on the ground seconds later.

"In a case like this, the most obvious criminal charge is aggravated assault with a deadly weapon," Teare told FOX 26 Houston. "Meaning the car was used as a deadly weapon. And it certainly is what appears to

have happened based on the surveillance footage.”

Tim Oberle, a spokesperson for ICE in Houston, said in a statement sent to The Texas Tribune on Saturday that “As ICE officers attempted to apprehend the illegal aliens, Miguel Parra-Hernandez ran in front of an ICE vehicle and was struck.”

Spokespersons for the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment Tuesday.

Parra Hernandez has been in the U.S. for 34 years and was on his way to work when the encounter began, according to Espinosa. Espinosa declined to share Parra Hernandez’s status.

He said he saw two ICE agents in Parra Hernandez’s room while visiting him at the hospital.

“He already had a surgery for the injury under his knee and now we’re waiting for swelling to go down in his ankle to be able to have a reconstructive surgery on his ankle,” Espinosa said.

Teare said ICE and DHS have not cooperated with his office during its investigation.

In July, Teare said DHS also ignored his request for information after an ICE officer fatally shot 52-year-old Lorenzo Salgado Araujo. The shooting was one of at least 10 deaths involving encounters with immigration officers since the start of President Donald Trump’s mass deportation campaign.

Saudi Ministry of Energy reports limited fire in building at Aramco compound targeted in attack

By FATMA KHALED Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — A limited fire broke out Tuesday in an administrative building at Aramco, one of the world’s largest oil facilities, that was targeted in an attack in the country’s Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Energy said. The ministry said no injuries were reported.

The attack came as the Iranian-backed Houthis and the Saudi coalition fighting them exchanged attacks Tuesday night. The fighting marked a fresh escalation in the widening Middle East crisis and came shortly after the Saudi coalition reported a series of alerts for incoming missiles heading for the Eastern Province, a major oil-producing region, and the capital Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia’s Civil Defense said debris from two intercepted Houthi missiles fell on residential areas in Riyadh, injuring four people and damaging 15 homes.

The coalition of forces in Yemen led by Saudi Arabia carried out new airstrikes Tuesday on the Houthi rebel-held Yemeni capital, the Houthi-run broadcaster Al Masirah and residents said.

The strikes came shortly after a coalition spokesman urged residents to evacuate the area for their safety. Witnesses reported hearing strong explosions in Sanaa hours after the coalition struck the Subaha fuel facility west of the city.

In a rare statement earlier, the coalition had urged civilians in the Houthi-controlled capital to leave the Yemeni Oil Company site, on a hill overlooking the capital, and nearby storage areas ahead of a possible strike.

Coalition spokesman Maj. Gen. Turki al-Maliki accused the Houthis of using the facility and its underground fuel depots for their arsenal of missiles and drones.

Houthi officials appeared to have anticipated the attack. The oil company said its storage facilities were empty and that a Saudi strike would not affect oil reserves or supplies for residents. Still, witnesses in the city said lines of cars formed at some gas stations amid fears of a shortage.

Shortly after the warning, Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said on Telegram that any Saudi attack on Sanaa would be met with a “firm and painful” response in the Saudi capital, Riyadh.

Hours later, Saudi Arabia issued alerts for incoming missiles heading for Riyadh and the Eastern Province but quickly said the danger had passed. The coalition said it had intercepted a series of Houthi-launched ballistic missiles, drones and cruise missiles in multiple areas in the country, including Riyadh and the southern province of Wadi al-Dawasir. Riyadh residents reported hearing loud explosions.

Airlines moved a number of their planes out of Riyadh on Tuesday on the advice of insurers and government officials because of the threat of additional attacks. They needed to transfer the planes to other

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airports in the country so they can keep flying passengers to their destinations, said Osprey Flight Solutions Chief Intelligence Officer Matthew Borie, whose company advises airlines, insurers and countries on flight threats.

"It's not abnormal for this to occur especially in this day and age with the types of conflict zone situations that have occurred in the region," Borie said.

More than 3,120 flights scheduled to depart from airports across Saudi Arabia since Oct. 8 have been canceled or listed as not operating, representing about 41% of scheduled departures, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium. That includes more than 300 flights that had been scheduled to depart Wednesday.

Several airlines have suspended service to the kingdom because of the Houthi attacks on airports.

It was unclear whether the Tuesday strike in Yemen was a signal of military escalation or a carefully measured response to recent deadly attacks on the Riyadh airport.

The warning and the attack show "the Saudis' aims of upping the ante and striking deep in the heart of Houthi-controlled territory while attempting to control the narrative by presenting themselves as more careful and humanitarian actors than the Houthis," said Adam Baron, a fellow at the Washington-based New America institute.

"It may be a warning — or it may be a sign of things to come," he said.

Fighting surged over control of key waterway

Saudi Arabia is still scrambling to determine how its air defenses failed to intercept a barrage of missiles and drones fired by the Houthis, including an attack on Riyadh's international airport on Saturday that killed at least 13 people and wounded over 300.

The latest conflict between the Saudis and the Houthis began last month after the rebels seized key areas along the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a critical waterway for the transport of Gulf oil and other goods at the southern end of the Red Sea off Yemen.

The Saudi-led coalition, backing forces aligned with Yemen's internationally recognized government, has been trying to retake them.

Saudi Arabia's Cabinet on Tuesday warned the Houthis they would "face consequences" for their repeated attacks on the kingdom.

"The Kingdom will not allow any threat to its security or to freedom of maritime navigation in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait," the Cabinet said in a statement carried by Saudi state-owned Al-Ekhbariya television. The Bab el-Mandeb is another area key to the flow of oil out of the Persian Gulf.

The fight for a major Yemeni city

On Tuesday, Yemen's interior ministry said in a statement on X that Houthi strikes over the past day on Taiz, a major city in the country's southwest, had killed six people and injured 18 amid ongoing battles in the region.

A commander with the Saudi-backed forces said rebels had fought through fierce resistance to reach the edges of Taiz, and some had entered the city. The fight was now critical for Taiz, which has long been a sought-after prize, he said.

The commander, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe battlefield details, said rebel forces were surprisingly large, and bolstered by medium and short-range ballistic missiles.

That fighting is leading to the large-scale displacement of people and growing shortages of food and other supplies, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Tuesday, with cooking gas largely unavailable and food prices that have reportedly risen about 50%.

Saudi Arabia has been pushing for the U.S. military to provide more direct support in the fight against the Houthis.

The U.S. has provided intelligence sharing, target identification and planning for a Saudi-led offensive, but has held off on carrying out strikes against the Houthis.

A U.S. intervention could prompt the Houthis to try to halt shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb.

China's trade surplus hits \$938 billion for Jan-Sep as pressure ramps up to rebalance trade

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — China's exports surged 36.3% in September from a year earlier, its customs agency said Wednesday, bringing it on track to exceed last year's record trade surplus as pressure ramped up from its trading partners, including the European Union, to rebalance trade.

The exports data, which was better than what economists had expected, accelerated from the 25% growth in August. High-tech goods such as semiconductors and autos have helped fuel its rising shipments overseas.

September's export growth pace was the fastest since February, according to FactSet data.

Imports climbed 31% in September year-on-year, also accelerating from August's 28.2% rise. Still, China recorded a \$133.5 billion trade surplus last month, widening from \$119.1 billion in August.

For the first nine months, China's trade surplus reached \$938 billion, with expectations growing that it could surpass last year's full-year \$1.2 trillion record.

Strong exports have helped drive China's overall economic growth this year, at a time when domestic consumption and investment remained sluggish, weighed on by a yearslong real estate sector downturn.

However, China's export resilience is now faced with mounting challenges, said Ecaterina Bigos, a senior market strategist at BNP Paribas Asset Management.

"While U.S.-China trade tensions have eased somewhat, the EU's push to rebalance directly targets high-value exports," she said.

The U.S. has launched an ongoing probe against China and other trading partners this year on their excess industrial capacity, although Washington and Beijing last month reached an agreement to extend their trade truce and cut tariffs on \$60 billion worth of goods.

The 27-nation EU has particularly been struggling to rebalance a trade deficit exceeding \$1.1 billion a day with China. EU trade chief Maroš Šefčovič, following his visit to Beijing where he met his Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao last week, said a deal has been reached with Beijing, including halving Chinese hybrid car imports into the EU over the next few years.

Many of China's trading partners are facing weak growth prospects and are fearful of their manufacturing industries being overrun by exports from China, said Eswar Prasad, a professor of economics and trade policy at Cornell University.

Policymakers have also pointed to a weakened yuan, China's currency, versus the U.S. dollar and other currencies contributing to Chinese exports being cheaper overseas when compared with goods from other countries, adding to trade imbalances.

China has said it has "no need or intent" to gain competitive advantages through currency devaluation and that its trade growth has been driven by its industrial competitiveness in the global market.

Between January and September, China's semiconductor exports soared 108.1% year-on-year in terms of value, customs data showed. Its exports of automatic data processing equipment and parts jumped 54.6%, while auto exports rose 54.3%, driven by an increased global demand for Chinese electric vehicles and hybrids.

China's trade surplus and its high-tech export model depend on open markets, Bigos said, and while diversifying its exports into markets such as Southeast Asia and Latin America can help, it cannot fully substitute for Western demand.

The country's reliance on high-tech exports, meanwhile, could face challenges as some U.S. technology industry leaders called for a global slowdown in the development of artificial intelligence over safety reasons.

"A slowdown in the global AI investment cycle could pose a greater threat to China's export growth than trade restrictions imposed by other countries," said Max Zenglein, Asia Pacific senior economist at The Conference Board.

Chinese leaders have set an annual economic expansion target of 4.5%-5% for 2026. It is set to release its July-September quarterly economic growth figures next week.

This week, the International Monetary Fund lowered its forecast for China's 2026 economic growth to 4.5%, down 0.1 percentage point from its previous projection, as it warned that the country's robust exports were unable to fully offset domestic weaknesses.

While Chinese officials have highlighted the need to bolster domestic demand, analysts believe that has yet to become a priority for this year even after authorities recently rolled out new measures to help lift its economy, including subsidies for homebuyers' mortgage interest payments.

Judge extends order blocking Trump from banning CNN, MS NOW and Politico reporters from White House

By HALLIE GOLDEN and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

A federal judge on Tuesday extended an order blocking President Donald Trump's administration from banning reporters for three news outlets from the White House, a pivotal operational development for the organizations as the extraordinary case — pitting the president against the media that cover him — makes its way through the legal system.

In a victory for media organizations at a time when tension between the White House and journalists is high, U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly ruled that CNN, MS NOW and Politico are likely to succeed in their constitutional free speech and due process claims.

"Still," he added in his late-night order, "no one should interpret the Court's decision to suggest that President Trump's concerns about accuracy and fairness in the media's reporting are unfounded, or that the government is powerless when its true aim is to protect national security when classified information is unlawfully disclosed."

But Kelly agreed with the plaintiffs that the national security arguments came after the fact and were unsupported by the administration.

The judge also wrote that without a preliminary injunction the outlets "are likely to suffer irreparable harm, and that the balance of the equities and the public interest tip in their favor."

An email to the Justice Department, which is arguing the case on behalf of the administration, was not immediately returned. The White House also did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

Theodore Boutrous Jr., attorney for the three media organizations, hailed the judge's ruling.

"When the President issued his 'ban on the free press,' he blatantly and explicitly violated due process and the First Amendment," Boutrous said in a statement. "The harm this ban did to our clients, the First Amendment, and the public as a whole is profound. The Court was right to enjoin the White House from enforcing this 'unconstitutional ban on the free press' for the foreseeable future."

Judge says no warning given before banishment

Kelly, who was nominated to the bench by Trump, previously ordered the White House to restore the reporters' "hard pass" press credentials while he weighed their claims. With that temporary order expiring Tuesday, the judge issued a preliminary injunction that preserves the status quo indefinitely while the case is pending.

Kelly said that, "to put it mildly," the White House didn't give the plaintiffs any warning that they were in danger of losing their hard passes before Trump's Sept. 18 social media post about their bans.

The judge also said the impact of the White House ban goes far beyond a single reporter's ability to do their job.

"The ban threatens to cut off all Plaintiffs' access to the White House press area—a space open to many of their competitors—thereby restricting their ability to observe happenings there firsthand, immediately report on those activities, and try to engage with government officials," the judge wrote.

Hard passes give journalists who regularly cover the White House longer term access to its campus without having to get permission ahead of time.

The government asked Kelly to suspend his own decision pending an appeal, but the judge said it didn't justify that request. Kelly said the bans impacted a total of 78 reporters at the three news organizations.

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Earlier judicial action against White House had been only temporary

Trump provided no notice before announcing the bans in a Sept. 18 social media post, which criticized their reporting as "fake news." Kelly temporarily blocked the bans on Sept. 24 at the request of the news outlets, which jointly filed a lawsuit in Washington, D.C.

Attorneys for the outlets have described Trump's move as "unprecedented and blatantly unconstitutional" under the First and Fifth amendments. They argued that it's illegal for Trump to punish the journalists because he doesn't like the content of their reporting.

"The ban also inflicts an injury on all news media organizations — which now risk a similar fate if they engage in fact-based, independent reporting the President deems insufficiently favorable," plaintiffs' lawyers wrote.

Government lawyers argued that access to the White House is a privilege — not a right — and said the president can impose the bans to protect national security and to stem the spread of misinformation.

"The White House is the official residence and workplace of the President," Justice Department attorneys wrote. "Presidents have had a relationship with the press since the beginning. They have long decided which journalists should receive privileged access, which has varied substantially from administration to administration."

House Democrats plan a first 100-days agenda if they sweep to power in midterm elections

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats are preparing an ambitious 100-days agenda focused on delivering their campaign promises — making life more affordable and conducting vast oversight of the Trump administration — if the party seizes majority control in next month's elections.

Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, who is in line to become House speaker if the party wins power, said the Democrats will be united "right out of the gate" on reinstating Affordable Care Act tax breaks, reversing Republican Medicaid cuts, holding votes against the Iran war and undoing President Donald Trump's tariff regime.

They expect to launch the agenda in the first 100 hours, once the new Congress is seated in January.

"Fighting for an affordable America — that's what unites Democrats all across the country," Jeffries said recently at the party campaign headquarters in Washington.

"That's our commitment to the American people, because the cost of living is way too high and far too many people who are working hard, playing by the rules, can't thrive and can barely survive — and are drowning — in the Trump economy."

It's a hyper-focused agenda tapping into the voter sentiment that is driving much of the midterm election as Americans wrestle with affordability concerns and inflationary costs from the Iran war and other policies.

The undertaking will also test the ability of the sprawling House Democrats to work together and avoid the chaotic divisions and disruptions that have hobbled Republicans under Speaker Mike Johnson's leadership.

Democrats have been out of power in the House since 2023. If Jeffries takes the helm, he would be the first Democratic speaker since Nancy Pelosi, leading a new generation of lawmakers that includes a handful of far-left candidates who are aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America.

"The antidote to that is getting things done," said Illinois Rep. Nikki Budzinski, who is poised to become chair of the New Democrat Coalition, the largest caucus within the House Democrats. She said the party is determined to show the American people that "Democrats know how to govern."

A Freedom Caucus of the far-left?

Rep. Greg Casar, D-Texas, the chairman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said he is often asked if Democrats will be confronting their own version of the Freedom Caucus, referring to the far-right Republicans who often grind the House agenda to a halt.

"It doesn't work that way," Casar told The Associated Press in an interview. "The Freedom Caucus breaks things. But if you're a progressive, you want to pass things."

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Leader Jeffries, Casar and other Democrats have been in touch with the progressive candidates, many of whom are backed by the DSA as the party focuses on shared priorities.

"This notion that because we'll have new members somehow we're going to be disjointed — not so," said Louisiana Rep. Troy Carter, who hopes to become chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. "All those banking on that, save the popcorn for another day."

The Republicans, who are confronting an increasingly difficult election-year climate to hold onto their majority, portray Democrats as beholden to a far-left socialist agenda.

If Republicans retain power, Johnson has said they would press on with what they have already accomplished alongside Trump, which has been an agenda focused on cutting taxes and federal spending.

"What we would do in the next two years is exactly what we have been doing already," Johnson said on CNBC's Squawk Box, "and that is putting the conditions in place for a strong America again."

Fix healthcare, stop the war, end the tariffs — and investigate Trump

Months ago, Jeffries launched five working groups to tackle the affordability agenda focused on health-care, housing, groceries and goods, gas and utilities, and care-giving.

Each group is headed by a progressive and a centrist Democrat — the healthcare working group, for example, is run by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Rep. Terri Sewell of Alabama — with the goal of striking common ground on draft policies that all House Democrats can support.

At the same time, Jeffries has tasked the ranking Democrats on the House Oversight and Judiciary committees with preparing investigations. They are focused on Trump, his family and his administration, as part of a sweeping anti-corruption agenda. Impeachment, Jeffries has said, is neither on nor off the table.

"We need to lower the cost of groceries and gas. Two, we need to make healthcare affordable for every single American. Three, we're going to hold the crooks accountable who've visited unprecedented corruption on the American people," Jeffries said. "Beginning on day one."

Democrats plan to vote quickly to reinstate the health care tax credits for the Affordable Care Act, which expired in 2025, leaving millions of Americans confronting higher health insurance costs.

Proposals are also ready to reverse the Medicaid cuts that Republicans put in place as part of their "One Big Beautiful Bill" of tax breaks and program cuts, including new work requirements for recipients.

There are measures to reverse Trump's tariffs as Congress works to claw back power from the White House.

And Democrats, who have forced multiple votes on ending the Iran conflict, plan to pressure the Trump administration to end the military action by pushing forward more war powers resolutions.

Much of the House Democrats' agenda, if they regain power, would depend on the size of the majority. Details also depend on the Senate, and whether it flips to Democrats.

"We cannot simply go back to the status quo," said Usamah Andrabi, a spokesman for Justice Democrats, an outside group that supports the far-left progressives.

And Trump, at the White House, has ultimate say, with veto power at the stroke of a pen.

"We're going to do a lot and we're going to be very busy," Carter said. "We will not be able to fix everything overnight."

The not-so-secret vulnerability in Ukraine's drone arsenal? Chinese technology

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Since Russia invaded more than four years ago, Ukraine has become a global leader in military drone innovation, enabling its forces to grind a much larger enemy to a stalemate.

But this technological force multiplier has come with an unsettling vulnerability: Ukrainian drone makers are highly dependent on electronics made by China, a key Russian ally.

Ukraine's greatest fear is that the Chinese government could severely restrict its access to these critical parts. It also worries that Russian defense companies that need these same supplies could be given

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preferential treatment by Chinese factories.

Over the past two years, Ukraine has sought to break its dependence on China by expanding domestic manufacturing and importing more supplies from Taiwan, Europe and the U.S. That has minimized its need for Chinese-made electric motors, flight controllers and other parts.

Yet Ukraine cannot entirely break free from China, whose lower costs and vastly greater production capacity cannot be matched by allied suppliers.

"If China stops their production to us ... we are blinded," said Andrii Taganskyi, an executive at Odd Systems, a Ukrainian weapons manufacturer that develops cameras for drones. "This is the scariest part."

China has tightened controls on exports of drones and related equipment for several years, citing concerns about prolonging the war in Ukraine. While the restrictions have not stopped the flow of Chinese components to Ukraine, they have caused delays and driven up costs, pushing Ukrainian companies toward intermediaries in third countries.

"China has leverage," said Robert Tallost, a researcher at the think tank RUSI. "They could direct more material to Russia while restricting supplies to the West."

China's Foreign Ministry said Beijing takes a "prudent and responsible" approach to military exports. It said it opposes the use of civilian drones for military purposes, and urged all sides to find a political settlement of the war.

Switching away from China would be expensive

Ukraine has earned worldwide recognition for its cutting-edge drone industry, designing and assembling systems that have changed modern warfare. Yet many of the materials and components that go into Ukrainian drones cannot be localized anytime soon.

Magnets, motors, chips, thermal sensors, battery cells and more still largely come from China, a dozen Ukrainian manufacturers said.

Switching entirely to Western alternatives could raise costs by as much as 60% and cut production by a similar amount, said Oleksandr Yakovenko of TAF Industries, a major Ukrainian defense company. That is not a viable tradeoff, Yakovenko and other executives said.

Still, Ukrainian drone makers have begun to wean themselves off of China.

Three years ago, the Ukrainian drone maker Vyriy relied upon China for nearly 90% of the components in its attack drones. "Today, about 70% to 80% of our components are made in Ukraine," said Vyriy's founder, Oleksii Babenko.

This increasing self-reliance has an extra benefit in the midst of a grueling war. Drones and drone components made domestically can be redesigned in a matter of days to meet urgent demands on the battlefield, whereas it can take months for such changes to filter through foreign supply chains, said Artur Savchii, an analyst at the Kyiv-based think tank Serpens Center for International Security.

At the beginning of 2024, nearly 90% of Ukraine's imported drone parts came directly from China. In the first eight months of 2026, it was just 28%, according to Ukraine Customs data.

But the drop may not be as dramatic as it seems. Many components recorded as coming from Poland and the Czech Republic, for example, very likely were manufactured in China and routed through those countries.

Thermal cameras show why China is hard to replace

Ukraine can assemble batteries but must import the cells inside them. Motors require imported magnets and copper. And while Ukraine can manufacture some electronics, Chinese companies can produce them at far greater scale and roughly half the cost.

Thermal cameras show just how difficult it is for Ukraine to break its dependence.

Ukrainian companies design the cameras themselves but still rely on imported sensors, which detect infrared radiation, and lenses that cannot be made domestically, manufacturers said. One of the key raw materials is germanium, an element which China has in abundance, making Chinese lenses far cheaper than European alternatives.

Although the U.S. and Europe also make sensors, most of them are used domestically.

Ukraine could build thermal cameras entirely from European components, Taganskyi said, but capacity

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and cost are barriers: Europe produces about 600,000 thermal sensors a year, versus Ukraine's estimated need for 4 million, he said.

For now, some Chinese components remain essential.

"Without this 5%, there is no camera," Taganskyi said.

Ukraine competes with Russia for Chinese components

To be sure, Russia is even more dependent on China than Ukraine, experts say – in part because of Western sanctions that restrict its access to other markets. The difference is that Moscow doesn't face the risk of its allies in Beijing tipping the scales in favor of Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed Russia's advantage vis-a-vis its relationship with China during a recent interview.

"They are slightly on Russia's side. And by 'slightly,' I mean not direct weapons supplies, but a greater openness to them, a greater willingness to help them rather than us – and for a country as large as China, 'slightly' means a lot," Zelenskyy said.

Competing with Russia for the attention of the same Chinese factories carries another risk for Ukraine: revealing its needs to the enemy.

The risk is clear to Babenko. A Russian drone recovered by the Ukrainian army on the front line was equipped with highly sophisticated antennas useful for long-range reconnaissance and guidance, and Babenko's company traced the technology to a Chinese supplier. When the Ukrainians reached out to buy several hundred, the supplier initially refused, then agreed on the condition that they keep the deal private because the technology had been developed for Russia, Babenko said.

The episode underscored why domestic production is a matter of strategic security, Babenko said. "We should be ready for that situation when China will fully choose the Russian position," he said.

Ukraine finds ways around Chinese restrictions

China has tightened export controls on drones and related components several times since 2023. The restrictions have made it impossible for Ukrainian companies to purchase some long-range civilian drones, motors, cameras and infrared imaging equipment directly from Chinese companies.

The restrictions, which were tightened further this summer, have forced Ukrainian defense companies to adapt by using intermediaries in third countries to keep Chinese-made drones and parts moving. Many said they suffered disruptions and higher costs.

"We just need to have partner companies which purchase it in other countries, then a third, then to Ukraine," said one Ukrainian drone executive. "It's like a special operation."

Another executive said companies also get around export controls by altering product descriptions on government paperwork. "Sometimes you have to be creative," he said. Both executives spoke anonymously to avoid revealing their tactics.

For now, Chinese factories' willingness to do business with Ukrainian buyers, and the ease of routing goods through third countries, makes the trade difficult to shut down, said Joseph Webster, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council.

"This dependence is not going to go away in a war where both sides are burning through equipment at a horrifying scale," said Samuel Bendett, an analyst of military robotics. "Where domestic industry cannot keep up, China can."

Roller coaster rider's death puts spotlight on the safety of ever more thrilling rides

By JAIMIE DING, DYLAN LOVAN and SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

The horrific death of a man who was ejected from a Six Flags roller coaster in Georgia is drawing attention to the safety of amusement park rides that have become increasingly faster and steeper in their quest for the biggest thrill.

Even so, deaths on roller coasters are still extremely rare, and Georgia officials have said little about what

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happened Monday when Hassan Jihad Ibn Kariem, 42, was thrown from his seat while riding the Goliath at Six Flags Over Georgia before striking other patrons and then landing below the ride.

Goliath uses a sheer drop from 200 feet (61 meters) to reach top speeds of 70 mph (112 kph) and focuses on velocity and downhill plunges rather than turning riders upside down through loops or corkscrews. It has operated at the park for two decades.

Six Flags temporarily closed nine similar coasters across North America following the death, saying it was doing so out of an abundance of caution.

Ride manufacturer Bolliger & Mabillard said it is "actively investigating the incident and will not comment further until we have a better understanding of what happened."

The US has a patchwork of rules regarding rides

In the U.S., roller coasters and other rides at major amusement parks such as Six Flags are not regulated by the federal government. That responsibility falls to states.

Some say this has led to an inconsistent patchwork of rules where some states have strict regulations and others have little to no oversight.

U.S. Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts has repeatedly introduced legislation to close what he calls a "loophole" in federal law that allows U.S. safety officials to regulate mobile rides, but prevents the Consumer Product Safety Commission from overseeing stationary rides like those at major amusement parks.

Brian Avery, a University of Florida professor and amusement ride safety expert, agrees that more federal regulations are needed.

"Who's watching those in these organizations to ensure that they are adequately trained, that they are compliant, that they are monitoring these rides to the level in which the standards have established?" Avery said.

Georgia's Office of Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner, which oversees annual ride inspections in the state, is "conducting an in-depth and comprehensive review" of what happened Monday at Six Flags, said Garrison Bennett, a spokesperson.

Amusement park industry has set its own safety standards

Amusement park operators worldwide generally adhere to what are known as ASTM standards set by industry experts, which cover everything from ride design and construction to how much acceleration and force each rider is allowed to experience.

The industry has multiple layers of inspection, said Dennis Spiegel, a theme park consultant and past president of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, a trade group. Park operators are under pressure from insurance carriers that could face a hefty payout if something goes wrong.

"With the checks and balances that are put in place, theme parks are really one of the safest places to be on the planet," he said in a phone interview Tuesday.

The trade group said the chance of being seriously injured on a U.S. amusement park ride is 1 in 15.5 million rides taken.

Martin Lewinson, a roller coaster expert and a professor at Farmingdale State College, said it was difficult to imagine there being a mechanical malfunction on a roller coaster such as Goliath because of its design.

The ride features a pull-down lap restraint, called a "clamshell," that works with a ratchet mechanism that makes clicking sounds as you press it down over your hips. These have multiple disks to ensure redundancy if one fails, Lewinson said.

"They're dependable. They're not so technically advanced that theme parks have difficulty with operations," Lewinson said.

The operator then has a safety system that displays a green "go" light for every seat on the train before it can be dispatched. The train should theoretically not be allowed to proceed unless all restraints are locked, Lewinson said.

But few things are 100% safe.

In 2022, a 14-year-old Missouri boy fell to his death from an Orlando amusement park ride when the harness didn't lock properly due to his size. In 2013, a 52-year-old Dallas woman was killed when she

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slipped out of her seat on the Texas Giant ride at Six Flags Over Texas. Six Flags has since added redesigned restraint-bar pads, seat belts and a coaster seat at the ride's entrance so guests can check before they get on whether they fit safely into the cars.

Nick Mendenhall, who has been on the Goliath more than a dozen times in recent weeks, said he saw Six Flags staff check the restraints each time he rode it.

"There are two employees, one on either side of the train, and with their hands they push down and they make sure it locks every time. I've never seen them not do it," Mendenhall said.

States handle oversight in different ways

In California, the state Department of Industrial Relations approves new rides and rides that have been modified. State officials either directly inspect them and how they are being operated each year or rely on an annual inspection by the owner, according to the department's website.

Florida's largest theme parks, on the other hand, are exempt from state safety inspections, unlike smaller venues and fairs. Instead, the largest theme parks like Walt Disney World and Universal conduct their own inspections and have their own protocols, but they must report to the state any injury or death. Texas, similarly, relies on inspections carried out by private inspectors hired by park operators or their insurance companies.

Arizona, where Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix is located, does not have a state-level agency that regulates amusement park rides or conducts safety inspections at all. The law requires an annual private inspection, with enforcement largely by local government.

New White House press secretary's debut: Brief, limited questions and some harsh reviews

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

President Donald Trump's new press secretary stepped to the podium, the eyes of a packed room of journalists — and many in their audiences — upon her. She smiled broadly at the sea of faces both probing and friendly. With that, Katie Zacharia went live and became the official voice of the world's most powerful person.

Fourteen minutes and just three questioners later, she was done. In the aftermath, it was clear that the former Newsmax commentator accomplished at least one thing: She put the "brief" back in briefing.

In her debut Tuesday, Zacharia looked downward and often read directly from a script. She paused and grinned when she uttered the words "Department of War." She stumbled on a question about her background and mixed up the words "husband" and "president." The few questions she took were non-confrontational and from media outlets that have been sympathetic to Trump. In short: She made no memorable impression — or at least, to hear some tell it, not the one she likely wanted.

This would not be an easy job under any circumstances. Trump most frequently serves as his own spokesman. And his antagonism toward the media has created a new layer of tension. Zacharia is finding out on day one that she, too, will be under constant watch. Some — including a few of those who have stood in her shoes — didn't think it went all that well.

In fractured times, in a national media scrum unimaginable just a few decades ago, what is the proper way to approach a job like this? How do you speak effectively when your boss speaks for himself so often that he commandeers the news cycle multiple times a day — and sometimes late into the night — with remarks provocative, unexpected and sometimes incendiary?

For one, you realize for whom you work: not your audience of millions but your audience of one, and the absolute need for his approval.

"I get to do what I was doing on the outside already, which was hoping to amplify, multiply and expand upon President Trump's incredible agenda for the American people," Zacharia said. Nowhere did she mention the task of disseminating accurate information to Americans.

The press secretary role has been many things

Over the nearly 10 decades since former journalist George E. Akerson made his and the office's debut

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as Herbert Hoover's press secretary in 1929, the job has served many purposes: deliverer of information, amplifier of policy, jousting with journalists, protector of the presidential reputation and, sometimes, overlord of obfuscation.

Under Trump and his second-term press secretary so far — Karoline Leavitt, who resigned in August — the job has been primarily one of acting as the immovable object against an irresistible, and in Trump's eyes sometimes treasonous, force.

Leavitt got to know this terrain well in her 17-month tenure. She took a smiling but combative stance against a press that was increasingly coming under Trump's criticism for coverage — and was named in at least one lawsuit about White House media access. She was not shy about interdicting what she considered media bias. "What a stupid question," she said to one reporter at a briefing last year.

Trump, outside the White House shortly after the briefing, praised Zacharia's debut as "excellent." She was standing behind him at the time.

Other early reviews were more critical. MS NOW quoted one unnamed White House official as saying of the performance: "She needs to get much better fast, otherwise she'll break Scaramucci's record." Anthony Scaramucci, an early White House communications director for first-term Trump, lasted 11 days in 2017. Said Scaramucci on X Tuesday afternoon: "I hope she makes it."

Joe Biden's former press secretary, Jen Psaki, now the host of a show on MS NOW, put it more succinctly, posting on X: "Well that briefing was basically an SNL skit....except it wasn't."

Talking up Trump but taking few questions

While Zacharia's performance — and of course, that's what every briefing is — may have been bumpy to some, it was also mostly content-free except for news she broke about the White House asking U.S. Ambassador to Greece Kimberly Guilfoyle to quit, which she immediately did.

Predictably, also like Leavitt before her, Zacharia spent a great part of her opening monologue praising Trump and giving an "up 'til now"-style update on his second term's priorities and accomplishments so far. Talking points included a "booming economy," "his historic boom in energy production" and "a great relationship with Venezuela."

She was also fond of superlatives, a trait that likely will resonate with a president whose remarks are often equally if not more expansive: "President Trump is working to secure the Western Hemisphere for centuries to come."

When it came to questions, though, she was downright parsimonious. She allowed three questioners, then answered an additional one as she prepared to depart. The three called on during the briefing were Breitbart, Fox News and the Daily Mail, all of which have been friendly to Trump in varying degrees during periods of his two terms. And she said she would continue Leavitt's policy of bringing "new media" in — which has often meant outlets more sympathetic to Trump.

"We love new media and we want to be able to embrace it," she said. Currently, three major outlets — CNN, MS NOW and Politico — are fighting to regain White House access after Trump banished them last month, saying he didn't like their coverage and calling it "fake news."

How will Zacharia fare in coming days and weeks and, if it lasts, months? That, like so much else, depends on one thing: Donald Trump.

The late U.S. Sen. Howard Baker once famously said that, when being asked difficult things, handle it something like this: If you don't like the question being asked, just answer a different question. On Tuesday, a half-century later, Katie Zacharia found a different way in — pick three nonconfrontational questioners, then defer to your boss and say: The End.

Death toll rises to 6 as Hurricane Simon and Rachel remnants unleash floods in Mexico

By FRANCISCO JAVIER CRUZ and MARTÍN SILVA REY Associated Press

ENSENADA, Mexico (AP) — The death toll from Hurricane Simon and the remnants of Tropical Storm Rachel rose to six Tuesday after heavy rains triggered flooding and landslides along Mexico's Pacific coast,

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authorities said.

Simon was a Category 1 storm before strengthening Tuesday night and was nearly a major hurricane again, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami. Off Mexico's Pacific coast, Simon was bringing heavy rain to Nayarit and Sinaloa states, where authorities remained on alert for rising rivers and flooding. Over the weekend, the hurricane brought heavy rain to the southern state of Guerrero, killing one person.

But the worst damage was reported farther north, in the coastal city of Ensenada, Baja California, where flooding caused by Rachel's remnants killed at least five people.

The victims included a 13-year-old girl whose body was found Sunday, two women ages 30 and 35 and a 4-year-old boy whose bodies were recovered Monday, and an unidentified person found near a stream Tuesday, the state prosecutor's office told The Associated Press.

Five others remained missing in Baja California, including three in Ensenada and a father and son who went fishing Saturday in San Felipe, on the Gulf of California, and never returned.

About 300 military personnel, police and rescue workers searched along Ensenada's El Pipila stream Tuesday, while the Mexican Navy continued looking for the missing fishermen, state civil protection authorities said.

Floodwaters swept away vehicles, damaged homes and cut off access to some communities.

Johana Nuriulu, a resident of Ensenada's Buena Vista community, said the flooding began overnight, shortly after heavy rain knocked out electricity.

"We heard a loud noise that sounded like ocean waves, but very intense," she said. When she stepped outside, she discovered a nearby stream had overflowed.

"The water was sweeping everything away; it took a cabin ... animals, everything."

Elsewhere near Ensenada, Mexican soldiers used helicopters to rescue 32 people, including 13 minors, from Rancho Genesis, a camp for orphans staffed by missionaries.

The army said 22 of those rescued were foreign nationals. Baja California Security Secretary Gen. Laureano Carrillo said they included Americans and Germans.

Hurricane Simon moves along Pacific coast

Simon was moving parallel to Mexico's Pacific coast Tuesday, threatening more rainfall in Jalisco, Nayarit and Sinaloa.

The hurricane was about 125 miles (200 kilometers) west of Cabo Corrientes, Jalisco, with maximum sustained winds of 110 mph (175 kph), according to the hurricane center. The storm may strengthen overnight, but forecasts show gradual weakening Wednesday.

In southern Guerrero state, Simon's heavy rains toppled trees and utility poles, blocked roads and flooded homes in coastal communities, including the resort city of Acapulco, Gov. Evelyn Salgado said.

A 71-year-old person died when a wall collapsed in Chilpancingo, the state capital, she said.

Authorities also took preventive measures in the port city of Mazatlan, Sinaloa, ahead of the storm, national Civil Protection Coordinator Laura Velázquez said Monday.

Meanwhile, conditions were improving in the tourist destination of Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, where residents began resuming normal activities as the rain subsided.

State authorities ordered schools to reopen Tuesday, while operations at Puerto Vallarta's airport gradually resumed.

Tropical Storm Trudy was forecast to rapidly intensify into a hurricane Wednesday and a major hurricane by Friday in the Pacific Ocean, the hurricane center in Miami said Tuesday night. The storm was about 440 miles (705 km) south-southeast of Acapulco, Mexico, with maximum sustained winds of 45 mph (75 kph).

judge orders Trump administration to halt work on historic DC golf course until Oct. 26

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. District Judge Ana Reyes on Tuesday ordered a halt to tree-cutting at the East Potomac Golf Course until Oct. 26, putting a further pause on work at the historic D.C. course that has been part of President Donald Trump's plans to remake the city.

Reyes issued the order one day after a tense three-hour hearing in which she harshly criticized the government for having deceived her with its actions over the holiday weekend.

At the Monday hearing, Reyes ordered a 24-hour pause that could be extended to 14 days if necessary. It was limited to one day while the government tried to find a key Trump administration official to discuss why a massive tree-cutting at the park needed to occur over the holiday weekend, with little notification to plaintiffs in a lawsuit trying to halt renovation plans or the judge.

The judge also ordered during that period the government "must provide the court and plaintiffs three business days' written advance notice prior to making any irreparable modification to any permanent form or feature of the East Potomac Golf Course."

The DC Preservation League and two local golfers are the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

The co-counsel in the case, Democracy Forward, thanked Reyes for stepping in and halting what the group called the "mad rush" to turn the public recreation space into a high-end golf course. "We are pleased that the court intervened and will prevent additional work while we seek more lasting relief," the group said in a statement.

The Monday hearing and Tuesday order were prompted by the National Park Service ordering the cutting of hundreds of trees at the golf course after filing the court notification only minutes before the close of business on Oct. 9 on a holiday weekend, giving the plaintiffs little time to respond. At least 400 trees were cut down over the weekend with plans for several hundred more.

In explaining her order, Reyes said the court, based on limited information so far, concluded that government officials raced to undertake a tree management plan at the park "because President Trump demands haste on his redesign, and not because of some newfound zeal to implement a small part" of a 2019 National Park Service Cultural Landscape Report that suggested work was needed at the district's public golf courses.

The historic park, especially the golf course, caught the eye of Trump, who wants to turn it into a world-class golf venue. It's part of his grand vision for Washington, D.C., where he has multiple projects underway, including a \$400 million White House ballroom and the soon-to-begin construction of his triumphal arch. He began talking about the city's public courses in late 2025.

"When completed, this Course will have the ability to host Major Golf Tournaments, including The U.S. Open, The Ryder Cup, The PGA Championship, and other top PGA Tour events," Trump posted on social media in June.

The course has been the subject of multiple emergency hearings, including one in May in which Reyes was out of the country, because of concerns from the plaintiffs that the administration would move ahead with work despite the pending lawsuit. In each instance Reyes declined issuing temporary stop orders out of trust for the government's attorney in the case.

"Every single time I have given the government the benefit of the doubt and every single time I made absolutely clear that I want notice," Reyes said at Monday's hearing. "What has happened has cost the government all credibility with me."

Zelenskyy says Ukraine received no intelligence from partners about missiles headed to Kyiv

By HANNA ARHIROVA and JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine received no early warning from its partners about five Russian ballistic missiles that hit civilian infrastructure in the capital of Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday, as tensions rise between the Ukrainian leader and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Zelenskyy did not specify which partners he was talking about. He characterized the barrage as “particularly vile” and emphasized that receiving intelligence from partners about such attacks “helps save lives” and is “one of the most critical issues.”

“This is precisely what helps prevent people from being killed — when there is an early warning about ballistic missiles,” he wrote in a post on X.

Trump said the U.S. has not stopped sharing intelligence with Ukraine.

“We are helping them, and we are sharing intel,” Trump told reporters at the White House. “We want the war to end, so we’re working with them and with Russia on getting the war to end.”

More missiles struck Kyiv late Tuesday, targeting energy systems. Zelenskyy said again that the country received no early warning from partners.

“It is important that the world does not stay silent about this,” he posted on X. “And it is important that the United States really see what is happening and who is responsible for this war continuing.”

Remarks follow biting criticism from Trump

Zelenskyy’s remarks come days after Trump unleashed biting criticism of him, including comments that it was time for a new president in Ukraine and that Zelenskyy has not done enough to end the war. The criticism marks perhaps the lowest point in their relationship since their disastrous Oval Office meeting in February 2025.

Kyiv continues to rely heavily on Washington for military assistance, including U.S.-made Patriot missile-defense systems and intelligence.

The U.S. has the capability to immediately spot Russian ballistic missile launches. American officials have in the past notified Ukraine about launches to allow it to issue missile warnings to the public and to use air defenses against incoming missiles.

Asked whether Ukraine received an explanation for the lack of intelligence ahead of the overnight missile strikes, a senior Ukrainian official said it was described as a “failure,” suggesting it was the result of circumstances such as weather conditions rather than a deliberate decision. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to give an official statement on the matter.

Ukraine struggles to fend off aerial attacks

Russia’s war in Ukraine has not seen major shifts on the ground since last year, but Ukraine is struggling to fend off Moscow’s intensified aerial attacks that include speedy ballistic missiles and high-flying jet-powered drones.

Downing the missiles has been a challenge because of a shortage of Patriot missiles caused by the U.S.-led war in Iran. Russia’s Iskander short-range ballistic missiles take just a few minutes to reach targets in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy said Russia had attacked Ukraine with more than 100 weapons since Monday evening. A residential building in the northeastern city of Kharkiv was destroyed, killing four people despite an all-night rescue operation, he said.

Russia has increasingly used attacks on civilian infrastructure such as energy facilities to deny Ukrainians power, heat and running water during the 4½-year war, hoping to wear down public support for Ukraine’s response to Moscow’s full-scale invasion.

Zelenskyy says Ukraine is respecting energy ceasefire

Trump has blamed Ukraine’s earlier strikes on Russian oil refineries for record U.S. diesel prices — rather than the war in Iran. He struck a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday to import diesel from Russia in an attempt to bring fuel prices down ahead of U.S. midterm elections.

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Meanwhile, Trump claimed Sunday that Russia and Ukraine had agreed on an "energy ceasefire" in which both parties would refrain from striking each other's energy infrastructure. Russia has not confirmed the existence of such a deal. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said only that "contacts on this matter continue."

Zelenskyy on Tuesday said Ukraine had not struck Russian oil refineries or other energy sites in the two days since Trump announced the purported deal. He criticized Moscow for what he said were Russian attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities and infrastructure in the time since Trump's announcement.

"The facts show that the Russians do not consider themselves bound by what the President of the United States said," Zelenskyy said following the attack late Tuesday.

The claim that Ukraine has halted its strikes on energy sites could not be independently verified, but neither Russian officials nor media have reported Ukrainian attacks on oil refineries since the energy truce was announced.

Strikes on Kharkiv kill 4 and wound 41

Russian strikes across Ukraine caused injuries and deaths overnight Monday and into Tuesday. In addition to the four deaths in the apartment building in Kharkiv, 41 people were wounded in the city in one evening alone, Zelenskyy said.

A woman was wounded in a Russian strike on a private home in Kyiv's Darnytskyi district, the Kyiv city military administration said. A Russian drone hit a residential building in the village of Murovane, near the western city of Lviv, during a morning attack Tuesday, Lviv Mayor Andrii Sadovyi said.

One person was killed in the Fastiv district of the Kyiv region, and at least two others were hurt in a Russian attack on the area, said Tymur Tkachenko, head of the regional military administration.

A Russian drone struck an educational institution in the center of Rivne in northwest Ukraine, wounding 14 people, according to Oleksandr Koval, head of the Rivne regional military administration.

The Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement Tuesday that its forces launched strikes "against Ukrainian military-industrial facilities, logistics centers, railway and port infrastructure, as well as vessels involved in delivering military cargo to Ukraine."

The ministry also said a bulk carrier headed to the port of Mykolaiv with military cargo on board was hit in the estuary of the Bug River along the Black Sea.

The Russian Defense Ministry on Tuesday said its air defenses overnight shot down 604 Ukrainian drones over Russian regions and the Sea of Azov.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said 417 drones targeted the Moscow region. Most were downed far away, while 65 were intercepted as they approached the Russian capital.

A school, two private houses and a car were damaged in the attack in the Kaluga region southwest of Moscow, Gov. Vladislav Shapsha said.

Six Flags closes 9 North American roller coasters after families watch man fall to his death

By KATE BRUMBACK, RUSS BYNUM, KATHY McCORMACK and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Witnesses watched in horror as a man riding a roller coaster at Six Flags Over Georgia was ejected from his seat, almost seeming to hover above the car before hitting several people and falling to his death.

The nightmarish death prompted Six Flags to temporarily close nine similar coasters across North America. Police and a state agency that oversees ride inspections are investigating, but many questions remained Tuesday, including how the man fell out and whether there were problems with his restraints.

The man, a school employee from Atlanta, was killed Monday while riding Goliath, the park's tallest roller coaster with a first hill of 200 feet (61 meters).

"It looked like he was hovering because the car was moving underneath him," said Nick Mendenhall, who had just ridden Goliath with his son and was watching the coaster cars passing overhead.

The man fell headfirst back into the coaster, Mendenhall said, then was ejected from the ride on its

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final turn.

"It felt like slow-motion, but it happened in an instant," Mendenhall said. "I was just praying in those moments. I was praying: 'God, please let him stay in that car.'"

Goliath towers above the entrance at Six Flags Over Georgia just outside Atlanta with a series of hills and turns. It doesn't take riders upside down. There are no seat belts. Instead, riders are restrained with lap bars that pull down over their legs and waist.

In a theme park industry that it is constantly introducing new thrills, it's far from the world's tallest, fastest or wildest coaster.

One family watched as the man flew out of the roller coaster

The man who died was 42-year-old Hassan Jihad Ibn Kariem, according to Cobb County police. Investigators and park employees told investigators that he was thrown from the coaster before striking other patrons.

Officials have not released any other information about the people who were hurt.

Kariem worked as the information technology manager at a public charter school and before that was a technology teacher.

In a statement, the Wesley International Academy said it was devastated, saying Kariem's "dedication to our students, and commitment to our school community were evident in everything he did."

Summer Bates, who was at the park with her husband and three children, saw Kariem fall. "One thing I think that will stick with us is the sound of his body coming down," she said.

Bates said she and her family rode Goliath earlier in the day.

"My older two children rode on the cart ahead of us," she said. "I noticed they kept trying to push theirs down tighter. I assured them that they were OK. But once my husband, youngest child and I loaded our cart and headed up the incline, I quickly understood why my older two were messing with theirs. It just didn't feel secure and tight."

Amusement ride oversight varies by state

In the U.S., roller coasters and other rides at major amusement parks such as Six Flags are not regulated by the federal government. That responsibility falls to states.

Georgia's Office of Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner, which oversees annual ride inspections, is "conducting an in-depth and comprehensive review," of what happened, said Garrison Bennett, a spokesperson.

In California, the state approves new rides and ones that have been modified and either directly inspects them or relies on an annual inspection by the owner. Florida's largest theme parks are exempt from state safety inspections, unlike smaller venues and fairs. Instead, the largest theme parks like Walt Disney World and Universal conduct their own inspections and have their own protocols.

U.S. Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts has repeatedly introduced legislation to change the federal law that allows U.S. safety officials to regulate mobile rides but exempts major amusement parks.

Opponents of federal oversight say serious injuries and fatalities on amusement park rides are rare and often the result of riders not following rules.

Dennis Spiegel, a theme park consultant and past president of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, a trade group, said the industry has multiple layers of inspection.

Six Flags closes roller coasters elsewhere

Six Flags Entertainment Corp. temporarily shut down roller coasters at six of its theme parks in the U.S. and Canada. The parks were already scheduled for seasonal midweek closures on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Those rides include a second coaster named Goliath at Six Flags Magic Mountain in Southern California; Raging Bull at Six Flags Great America in Illinois; Nitro at Six Flags Great Escape in New Jersey; Fury 325 and Thunder Striker at Carowinds in North Carolina; and the rides Leviathan and Behemoth at Canada's Wonderland in Ontario, Canada.

The company did not say why those specific rides were shut down or what would be done before they reopen.

Bolliger & Mabillard, the Swiss company that manufactured the coaster and many others worldwide, said it is actively investigating and won't comment "until we have a better understanding of what happened." "Our thoughts are with the family and those affected," it said.

MI5 chief says Iran is targeting military sites and suspected plot at RAF Fairford is 'not unique'

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Iran is trying to hit military sites in Britain and the suspected plot to attack a U.S.-run military air base in September is "not unique," the head of the MI5 spy agency said Tuesday, as he warned that both Tehran and Moscow are expanding their attacks against the U.K.

Ken McCallum, who leads the U.K.'s domestic security service, said Tehran is seeking to intensify its attacks in Britain beyond the traditional targets of Iranians opposed to the country's Islamic authorities.

That has included arson and sabotage attacks on Jewish sites that Britain says were carried out by Iranian proxies.

McCallum said another "major shift this year has been Iranian ambitions to come at harder targets, like military sites."

The incident at RAF Fairford "is not unique. There have been other examples, not just in the U.K. but around the world," McCallum said.

His comments came as Iran summoned British Ambassador Hugo Shorter to warn it could "seriously reconsider" bilateral relations unless the U.K. provides evidence linking Tehran to the alleged plot. Tehran told the ambassador it was protesting what it called Britain's "irresponsible and destructive approach."

"The British government must provide documents and evidence supporting its accusations against Iran," Iran's Foreign Ministry said, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting.

McCallum delivered his annual speech outlining major threats to the U.K. as counterterror detectives investigate a suspected terror plot against the U.S.-run base in western England, which has been used to bomb Iran during this year's war.

Scores of residents were evacuated from their homes near the base on Sept. 27 as armed police officers and army bomb-disposal experts swarmed the rural area. Police later said they had found a quantity of an accelerant — gasoline — in three vans at the site, but no explosives.

Seven men in their 20s have been arrested and released on bail under investigation. In all, more than 50 people have been arrested over Iran-linked plots in the past year, McCallum said.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham said Monday that the apparent plot was "almost certainly" directed by Iran's Revolutionary Guard, or IRGC. Iran has denied involvement, although it has previously said that it considers any base used to attack its territory a legitimate target.

The U.S. pulled its bombers from RAF Fairford after the incident, and the Trump administration said it believed the base faced Iranian threats intended to kill as many American troops and destroy as many U.S. planes as possible.

British officials have not confirmed that, and McCallum said that, in the U.K., Iran has so far used low-level criminal proxies who lack the capacity to mount a sophisticated large-scale attack. But he said Iran's IRGC has shown stronger capabilities in countries closer to Iran, "so it would be foolish for a person in a role like mine to discount the possibility."

MI5 says AI could bring bioweapon risk

In a stark speech, McCallum argued that the U.K. faces a "new era of national security," with a generational shift equivalent to the 9/11 attacks a quarter century ago. He said the myriad threats to national security now range from "arson, sabotage, cyberattacks, coercion, violence" to "what online algorithms are feeding your teenagers in their bedrooms."

McCallum said his agency's work countering state threats — chiefly from Russia, Iran and China — has quadrupled in the past decade, and claimed that both Russia and Iran are escalating hybrid warfare campaigns against the U.K. and other European countries.

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He said Russia has been linked to attacks including an attempt to use an explosives-laden drone at Germany's Leipzig airport, and is "using tactics that stop short — though sometimes not much short — of conventional conflict."

Meanwhile, technology is racing ahead, with artificial intelligence "supercharging" the cybersecurity battle between attackers and defenders, he said.

McCallum said terror plotters have used artificial intelligence for reconnaissance and attacks, including AI-enabled drones. Even more concerning, he said, is "AI's potential to change the stakes on existing or even new bioweapons."

After the speech he told journalists at MI5's London headquarters that terror groups "would dearly love" to have chemical, biological or radiological weapons, but these are hard to obtain.

"One risk is that AI could enable dangerous knowledge to get into the hands of people we would all rather didn't have that knowledge," he said. "A second and different risk ... is the possibility that AI could generate novel pathogens not previously seen."

McCallum said MI5 has set up a new AI Threat Assessment Center to try to keep ahead of the risks.

"Human history has given us no experience of facing an actor which is smarter than we are. It is capable of outthinking us. This is genuinely novel, and deserves the serious attention it is getting, including in MI5," he said.

Washington resident charged with conspiracy in Canada school shooting is ordered detained

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A Washington state resident charged with conspiracy in one of the worst school shootings in Canada's history has been ordered detained pending further hearings in the case.

Melody Bryant, also known as James Cody Bryant, of Bellingham, Washington, was charged this month with conspiring to murder people in a foreign country. Investigators said she provided assistance to Jesse Van Rootselaar, who killed eight people and wounded 27 in the mountain community of Tumbler Ridge in February.

Bryant declined to report Van Rootselaar's plans, agreed to distribute a livestream of the attack, provided money and shared advice on how to delete online messages to keep the plot a secret, according to a criminal complaint filed this month in U.S. District Court in Seattle.

At a detention hearing Tuesday, Magistrate Judge Mary Alice Theiler said she did not believe there were any conditions — such as internet restrictions — that could ensure the safety of the community if Bryant were to be released pending trial.

Bryant has not entered a plea, and her public defender, Greg Murphy, said in court he has not yet been provided with evidence needed to evaluate the government's case against her.

Murphy argued for her release pending trial, noting that federal agents first interviewed Bryant just days after the attack and allowed her to remain free in the ensuing seven months.

Even after filing the complaint against her on Oct. 2, the government waited for four days to take her into custody, Murphy noted.

"There is no evidence that suggests any new danger to the community in the last seven months since the government first interviewed her," Murphy said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd Greenberg told the judge that the criminal charge carried a presumption that Bryant would be detained.

"The defendant was, over the course of months, in daily communication with someone who was planning a mass murder event in British Columbia," Greenberg said. "Bryant chose not to intervene."

Authorities say Van Rootselaar killed her mother and stepbrother at home before attacking a nearby secondary school in Tumbler Ridge, killing five children ages 12 and 13 as well as an educational assistant. Van Rootselaar was later found dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Tumbler Ridge in the Canadian Rockies is more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) northeast of Vancouver,

British Columbia, near the provincial border with Alberta. The provincial government website lists Tumbler Ridge Secondary School as having 175 students from Grades 7 to 12.

The families of victims are suing artificial intelligence company OpenAI in U.S. federal court, seeking to hold the ChatGPT maker responsible for failing to alert police to the shooter's alarming interactions with the chatbot.

Duane 'Keffe D' Davis gets 40 years to life in prison for orchestrating the murder of Tupac Shakur

By JESSICA HILL Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — An aging ex-gang leader was sentenced Tuesday to 40 years to life in prison for orchestrating the 1996 drive-by shooting of rap icon Tupac Shakur near the Las Vegas Strip.

The killing, rooted in a long-running gang feud, had gone unsolved for decades — captivating the public and tormenting Shakur's loved ones — until Duane "Keffe D" Davis started bragging about it in interviews and a memoir.

Davis, 63, was convicted in August of first-degree murder with the use of a deadly weapon. A former leader of the South Side Compton Crips, Davis stared blankly at Judge Carli Kierny as she imposed a penalty that, even with credit for time served, won't see him eligible for parole until he's at least 100.

"You don't get to take a man from his family, you don't get to take his very life, his whole future from him and just walk away from it, especially when that man is Tupac Shakur," Kierny said. "The world never forgot about him and his death and neither did Las Vegas."

Davis, whose lawyer said he will appeal his conviction, is the only person ever charged in Shakur's death. The late rapper's legend has only grown in the years since, and his songs continue to resonate with themes of hardship, love and Black struggles.

Tupac's family describes their loss

Shakur's sister, Sekyiwa "Set" Shakur, said it was hard listening over and over again to Davis describe how he hunted and killed her brother, cutting him down at age 25, just as his popularity as a musician and actor was peaking.

Gentle and kind, Shakur was his family's protector, she said. Had he survived injuries that included the loss of a lung, he would have left rapping behind and delved into activism, treading the path of luminaries like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., and perhaps even politics, she said.

"This man's life mattered," Sekyiwa Shakur said as family members cried in the audience.

Shakur's brother, Maurice "Mopreme" Shakur, said the killing has been "devastating, heartbreaking and sad" for him, his family and Shakur's fans.

An unsolved mystery for more than two decades

Davis spoke briefly in court, telling the judge he wanted pictures and other items that police took from his house. Asked if there was anything else he wanted to say, Davis said: "No, I'm good."

Davis was charged after giving interviews and publishing a tell-all memoir in 2019 detailing what he said was his role in the infamous shooting.

On the night of Sept. 7, 1996, Shakur was in the passenger seat of a black BMW with music mogul Marion "Suge" Knight when a white Cadillac pulled up at a red light. Shots erupted. Shakur was hit multiple times and died six days later, while Knight survived.

In his memoir, Davis explained he was seeking retaliation for Shakur and his entourage beating up Davis' nephew hours before the shooting. He said he was in the passenger seat of the Cadillac and passed the gun to the backseat, where shots were fired. Davis spoke to detectives years before but avoided prosecution because of an agreement he made with law enforcement.

During the weeklong trial, prosecutors relied on Davis' own statements to law enforcement and documentarians. They argued Davis orchestrated the shooting and provided the gun used in Shakur's death, which was the result of a rivalry between the South Side Compton Crips and Mob Piru. Davis' defense attorney pointed to a lack of physical evidence that connected his client to the 30-year-old crime, and he

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portrayed Davis as a liar who was trying to make money.

After nine days of hearing testimony in August, the jury deliberated for three hours before turning over the guilty verdict.

Insufficient evidence to charge anyone else

One Shakur fan, rapper Din "Lil Therapy" Malone, said justice is "halfway done" and wants to see other people charged.

"I've been grieving for 30 years plus," he said at the courthouse Tuesday. "I still got a frog in my throat from crying."

The three other people allegedly in the Cadillac with Davis have died. They included Davis' nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson, whom Davis said was the one who pulled the trigger.

Another name that has come up: Sean "Diddy" Combs. Witnesses testified at Davis' trial that the imprisoned music mogul used members of the South Side Compton Crips for security for his label, Bad Boy Records.

Davis alleged in his book and public statements that Combs offered him money to kill Shakur and Knight. Combs, who is serving a four-year prison sentence after being convicted of prostitution-related offenses, has repeatedly denied any involvement in the death of Shakur.

Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson has said his office doesn't have enough evidence to charge anyone else. If more information comes to light, he said, prosecutors can always consider filing additional charges.

"While no amount of time in prison can bring Tupac back, we hope this sentencing brings some measure of closure and peace to his family after nearly 30 years," Wolfson said in a statement. The case, he said, "is a reminder that no matter how much time passes, our commitment to seeking justice never wavers."

Cornell suspends fraternity parties, gives state police role in investigating campus assault reports

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

Cornell University suspended parties at fraternity houses until next year and is giving state police a role in investigating reports of sexual assault on campus in the school's latest response to outrage over its handling of a gang rape allegation.

The measures announced Tuesday by Cornell President Michael Kotlikoff include a suspension of all parties and social events at Interfraternity Council houses through the end of the 2026-27 academic year and a new "zero tolerance" policy that would immediately suspend chapters for violations.

"These measures will provide time for a thorough review of fraternity life at Cornell to determine whether and how it can safely continue," Kotlikoff wrote in a letter to the campus community.

Cornell has more than 20 active Interfraternity Council fraternities. The council did not immediately respond to an email request for comment. It's unclear whether the restrictions extend to off-campus parties.

It's not the first time Cornell has cracked down on fraternity parties. The university temporarily suspended them in 2022 after reports of a sexual assault and students being drugged at fraternity-affiliated housing.

Cornell also tightened fraternity safety rules in 2019 after freshman Antonio Tsialas was found dead in a gorge following an alleged hazing incident. A year earlier, a fraternity was placed on probation over a contest in which members competed to have sex with women they considered overweight.

Cornell plans alternatives to fraternity parties

Cornell said it will solicit input about "the development of safe social alternatives" to Greek life party culture and direct university resources toward those alternatives.

Kotlikoff also committed to adding a case manager to the school's Office of Civil Rights to help those who report sexual misconduct on the Cornell campus navigate the process, and to working with New York State Police to allow its criminal investigators — who are independent of Cornell — to investigate allegations.

Crimes reported on Cornell's campus are generally investigated by campus police, a department that has full law enforcement powers but is controlled by the university.

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The campus police force operates independently from municipal police in Ithaca, New York, where the university is located. Its officers investigated the 2024 gang rape allegations and presented their initial findings to the Tompkins County district attorney, who declined to prosecute within weeks of the woman making her first report to police.

New York's governor removed the district attorney from the case this month after a public outcry over the lack of charges.

The investigation is now being led by New York Attorney General Letitia James, while Cornell has hired former Deputy U.S. Attorney General Sally Yates to conduct an independent review of the university's response.

A state police spokesperson declined to comment.

A gang rape allegation sparks scrutiny of Cornell's response

In a lawsuit filed in September, the woman alleged that she was drugged and sexually assaulted by multiple fraternity members after attending a party at the Chi Phi house in October 2024.

She said she was pressured to use drugs and that other men entered the room while she was incapacitated. She also alleges that Snapchat messages describing her as sexually available to anyone at the house circulated among fraternity members without her knowledge.

Cornell closed the fraternity chapter and disciplined several students following an internal investigation, but no criminal charges have been filed. The seven men accused in the woman's lawsuit have all denied her allegations, either saying that the sexual activity was consensual or that they weren't involved.

Andrew Miltenberg, a lawyer for one of the men accused in the woman's lawsuit, criticized the restrictions announced Tuesday as a sweeping response to problems that extend beyond fraternities, arguing that universities promote Greek social life but distance themselves from it when controversies arise.

"Greek life has become the convenient target," he said in an emailed statement. He warned that parties could simply move off campus, where there would be less oversight. "Changing the address doesn't change the behavior."

Cornell faces broader pressure for reform

Kotlikoff's announcement came a day before Cornell's Faculty Senate was to take up a proposed resolution expressing no confidence in the administration's ability to effectively address sexual assault on campus.

Paul Ortiz, a Cornell labor history professor who is the lead sponsor of the resolution, said Tuesday that he welcomed the new measures but regretted that it took student protests, media coverage and the suffering of people like the woman suing the university over an alleged gang rape to prompt action.

"That the administration is only acting the day before they might be held accountable in the faculty senate is deeply troubling," Ortiz said in an email to The Associated Press, adding that he believes the no-confidence resolution is "more important than ever."

"The key point to understand is that scores of students, staff, faculty and alumni have approached the sponsors of the resolution to emphasize to us that the Jane Doe case is but the tip of the iceberg," he continued. "Students and alumni have shared experiences of being raped at Cornell."

"These women testify that they were frightened to report assaults because they felt that Cornell has at times treated rape as more of a 'PR problem' than a heinous crime," Ortiz said.

In his Tuesday letter, Kotlikoff acknowledged that sexual violence extends beyond fraternities, saying Cornell must also confront a campus culture of excessive drinking and drug use and expand education about students' responsibility to intervene when others are at risk.

Cornell also plans to add victim advocates and expand sexual violence prevention programs, he said, calling the actions "first steps toward systemic change on our campus."

"We will take all necessary steps to address the conditions that led to Jane Doe's experiences, and those of other survivors," he said.

US hits Bank of America with \$1.2 billion fine, saying it violated money laundering, sanctions laws

By PAUL WISEMAN and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Treasury Department said Tuesday that it's imposing \$1.2 billion in fines on Bank of America for allegedly violating anti-money laundering and sanctions laws.

The fines on America's second-biggest bank amount to the third-largest in the department's history.

"When a bank of this size fails to meet its anti-money laundering and sanctions obligations, the consequences extend far beyond its own walls, exposing the entire U.S. financial system to significant illicit finance risks," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement. "Today's actions send a clear message that even the biggest financial institutions are not above the law."

Treasury said Bank of America also reached an \$11.6 million settlement with the department's Office of Foreign Assets Control over "apparent violations of numerous sanctions programs, including on Iran, Russia, narcotics, and global terrorism."

In a statement, Treasury said its Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) assessed the \$1.2 billion penalty for Bank of America's "failure to mitigate and report priority national security risks, including Chinese Money Laundering Networks and illicit finance along the southwest border."

The penalty includes \$750 million that will go to the U.S. Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the largest fine ever imposed by that federal bank regulatory agency.

Treasury said that Bank of America "admits that it willfully violated" the 1970 Bank Secrecy Act, which requires banks to help the government detect and prevent money laundering.

"Financial crime compliance is serious, and we are responsible for getting it right," Bank of America said in a statement. "We worked with regulators to reach these penalty resolutions stemming from violations cited in the previously reported 2024 (Comptroller of the Currency) Consent Order and FinCEN's investigation."

"We have invested billions of dollars in technology and dedicated thousands of employees to combat financial crime, and our team is far along with and committed to completing the work required to address the issues raised by our regulators."

The latest action is the third-largest penalty ever issued by the Treasury Department, behind a roughly \$4 billion settlement in 2023 with Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, and an approximately \$3 billion settlement with Canada-based TD Bank the following year. Both those historic actions happened as part of the Biden administration's focus on anti-money laundering and efforts to promote compliance with the then-emerging virtual currency industry.

Months later, Binance founder and CEO Changpeng Zhao, was sentenced to four months in prison over charges that he looking the other way as criminals used his platform to move money connected to child sex abuse, drug trafficking and terrorism.

Cyberattacks hit European supermarket chains and disrupt refrigeration systems

By ANGELA CHARLTON and DEE-ANN DURBIN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Cyberattacks disrupted European supermarket chains, affecting refrigeration systems at hundreds of stores in France and forcing a major grocer to shut down websites serving customers in Europe and the United States.

French Finance Minister Roland Lescure told Parliament on Tuesday that about 700 of the country's 10,000 supermarkets were affected. He said there was no risk to France's food supplies but acknowledged that the attack "touches the heart of our food security."

"It was a wake-up call for everyone," he said.

Separately, Dutch supermarket giant Ahold Delhaize said Tuesday it was working to restore systems it had shut down following what it described as a security issue. The company said its stores — including Albert Heijn in the Netherlands, Delhaize in Belgium and Stop & Shop, Food Lion and Giant in the United

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States — remained open, but the websites for those brands remained offline Tuesday.

Ahold Delhaize said it had no evidence that customer or employee data had been stolen.

The Paris prosecutor's office said Tuesday that its cybercrime unit was investigating the large-scale attack in France, including the extent of damage caused by spoiled food and reported fires. According to BFM-TV, hackers forced a continuous defrost cycle and set temperatures as high as 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) on stores' refrigeration systems.

French supermarket group Groupement Mousquetaires, which operates more than 4,000 stores across Europe, said 300 of its Intermarché and Netto stores were impacted. Some refrigerated and frozen food display cases remained out of service Tuesday.

Dominique Schelcher, CEO of French grocery chain Cooperative U, said 80 of the company's 2,000 stores were affected. Most managed to prevent disruptions to refrigeration, but some had to discard food, he said in a post on X.

"Targeting equipment essential to the preservation of fresh products is an attack on the French food supply chain. It is unprecedented, extremely serious, and unacceptable," Schelcher said.

Carrefour and Monoprix supermarkets were also impacted.

Suppliers say French systems may have been outdated

The French government's cybersecurity agency said Tuesday it was "aware of numerous compromises" involving refrigeration system remote control modules made by Danish company Danfoss as well as U.S.-based Copeland.

Danfoss said Monday that most affected systems were older products that no longer received software or security updates, and that it was working with affected customers to limit the damage.

"Danfoss has long advised customers to keep supported systems updated with the latest firmware, as well as to operate behind a firewall," the company said.

In an August report, U.S. cybersecurity firm Claroty identified vulnerabilities in the Danfoss AK-SM 800A and Copeland XWeb Pro platforms, which are used to manage refrigeration infrastructure in supermarkets, warehouses and other facilities.

For example, Claroty said "numerous controllers" using the Danfoss system were directly accessible from the public internet, leaving them wide open for cyberattacks. But it noted that Danfoss and Copeland had since fixed the vulnerabilities.

Copeland said Tuesday that a vulnerability had been identified in "a discontinued, end-of-life generation of controllers," and that it was working with impacted customers.

Christopher Whyte, an associate professor of homeland security and emergency preparedness at Virginia Commonwealth University, said it's "not too difficult" to carry out such an attack.

"It looks like almost certainly what happened here was these controls were left open to the broader network being used by the supermarket," Whyte said.

Similar attacks on water systems, power infrastructure and other kinds of physical operations have been fairly common for years, often coming from Iran and other state actors, Whyte said. Over the summer, Minnesota and Michigan reported cyberattacks on their states' water systems.

Whyte said attacks on refrigerator systems are not unprecedented. Last month, Stars and Stripes reported that three military agencies were investigating refrigeration outages at U.S. military commissaries that occurred within days of each other. The Associated Press left a message Tuesday seeking comment on that case with the U.S. Army's Criminal Investigation Division Cyber Field Office.

But Whyte said the scale of the French attack, and the fact that there appeared to be no ransom demand or stealing of information, made this situation unusual.

AI could make cyberattacks more frequent, experts say

It was unclear Tuesday whether the French cyberattack involved artificial intelligence. But advances in AI have contributed to an increase in cybersecurity incidents, said Varun Chandrasekaran, an assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering at the University of Illinois' Grainger College of Engineering.

Chandrasekaran said there's also a possibility that the attack happened because of an experiment an AI lab was doing — like what happened with OpenAI's breach of an Australian health department website last

month. He said people should absolutely expect an increase in such cyberattacks in the future thanks to AI.

But Chandrasekaran said AI could also be useful in preventing such hacks.

"Right now it seems like a lot of the defensive countermeasures people have are quite passive," Chandrasekaran said. "What we need is a proactive defender, like another AI model sitting on the defender side that's trying to counter whatever the attacker AI is doing."

US stocks edge back from their record following the first big batch of profit reports for the summer

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The first big batch of summertime profit reports from U.S. companies made waves on Wall Street after topping analysts' expectations, but many canceled each other out. That left U.S. stock indexes little changed near their records on Tuesday.

The S&P 500 edged down by less than 0.1% and pulled a bit further from its all-time high set last week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 180 points, or 0.3%, while the Nasdaq composite dipped 0.2%.

Those modest moves masked some big swings happening underneath the market's surface.

Goldman Sachs, for example, jumped more than 4% at the start of trading after the bank delivered a profit for July through September that blew past analysts' expectations. But its stock quickly erased all of it and then flipped between gains and losses before finishing with a dip of 0.2%.

Goldman Sachs benefited in the summer from strong growth for its business that offers loans to clients for trading stocks, among other things, even as CEO David Solomon said it's dealing with a "complicated operating environment" created by lots of uncertainty.

Expectations are high for profits across all kinds of U.S. companies. Analysts are forecasting overall growth of nearly 30% for companies in the S&P 500 during the summer from a year earlier, according to FactSet. If they're correct, it would be the third straight quarter of growth better than 25%.

And companies need to hit those high numbers to justify the record-setting runs for their stock prices despite the many worries on Wall Street about high inflation, increased pressure from the bond market and the war with Iran.

UnitedHealth Group's stock swung sharply even though it reported stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. The healthcare company also raised its forecast for profit over the full year of 2026.

After rallying as much as 5.6% shortly after trading began, it erased all of it and finished with a dip of 0.2%.

More firmly in the losing column was Wells Fargo, whose stock dropped 3.1% after the bank reported weaker revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected, even though its profit topped Wall Street's estimates. CEO Charlie Scharf cited weaker revenue from its venture capital investments, among other things.

But Scharf also gave a potentially encouraging signal about the broader economy and future profits for companies across industries. He said that "our data shows that our consumer and business customers are doing well." That's despite uncertainty about the economy and recent surveys showing Americans have become more discouraged about their finances.

At the country's biggest bank, JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon highlighted "elevated asset prices" as one of the potential risks for the economy. He also mentioned high inflation, rising interest rates and "geopolitical conditions."

"These forces may be manageable, but we remain prepared for a wide range of outcomes," he said.

JPMorgan Chase's stock flipped between gains and losses through the day before finishing with a drop of 0.9%. It reported a weaker profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected, but it also gave a forecast for net interest income in the current quarter that topped Wall Street's estimate.

Outside of earnings reports, some of the sharpest action was for stocks in the computer chip industry.

Worries have been high for a while about whether chip stock prices have shot too high in the frenzy

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around artificial-intelligence technology, and concerns climbed further following reports that China's memory chipmaker CXMT is making advances that could challenge industry heavyweights. That includes companies like Micron Technology of Boise, Idaho, and Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix of South Korea.

Micron fell 3.6% and was the single heaviest weight on the S&P 500. South Korea's Kospi stock index tumbled 5.5% for its worst day in nearly two months.

Bumble, meanwhile, leaped 56.6% after the app company that helps people make relationships said it agreed to a \$1.3 billion, all-cash buyout by Ithaca Holdings.

All told, the S&P 500 edged down by 1.79 points to 7,805.45. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 180.45 to 51,670.10, and the Nasdaq composite fell 41.52 to 27,204.38.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased after oil prices fell. The yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped to 5.21% from 5.24% late Friday. Trading in the U.S. bond market was closed Monday for a holiday.

Yields sank following a 0.9% dip for the price of a barrel of Brent crude oil to \$105.69. Oil prices have been yo-yoing because of uncertainty about when the war with Iran will allow the global energy industry to return to normal.

Congo's confirmed Ebola cases exceed 9,000 as containment efforts falter

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Confirmed cases in Congo's Ebola outbreak have surpassed 9,000, with more than 4,300 deaths, as health authorities struggle to contain an outbreak spreading across seven provinces, according to government figures released Tuesday.

The Health Ministry reported 9,066 confirmed cases and 4,381 deaths, with the death toll approaching half the number of confirmed cases.

The rising death toll has alarmed health workers and authorities, with a large share of recorded deaths occurring outside treatment centers. The latest report recorded 88 new cases and warned that "community transmission remains a concern."

The outbreak has created new hot spots as it spreads to more communities, with 65 health zones across seven provinces now affected.

Officials say the confirmed cases account for only a third of all cases, with many going undetected. The outbreak involves the rare Bundibugyo virus, for which there is no approved vaccine or treatment.

Efforts to contain the virus have been impaired by several factors, including fighting between government forces and rebel groups, which has created one of the world's direst humanitarian crises, widespread disregard for health precautions, intense population movements and shortages of medical supplies and treatment centers.

The outbreak has surpassed Congo's 16 previous outbreaks in scale and is on track to top the 2014-2016 West Africa regional outbreak that killed 11,000 people.

"I feel that the government is overwhelmed by events. But there is nothing else to say. The government needs to fully shoulder its responsibilities to ensure the effectiveness of the response against Ebola," said Samuel Buju, a resident of Bunia, the provincial capital of Ituri, one of the outbreak's hot spots.

Last week, Kenya became the second country after Uganda to report an Ebola case imported from Congo, deepening concerns about the virus spreading across borders.

Florida executes a prisoner who killed his cellmate in hopes of getting a death sentence

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

STARKE, Fla. (AP) — A Florida prisoner who said he killed his cellmate specifically to get on death row was executed Tuesday, nearly 18 years after the attack.

James Robertson, 63, declined to offer any last words before receiving a three-drug injection and was pronounced dead about 10 minutes later. It was a stark contrast to the failed execution of Christa Pike

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in Tennessee two weeks ago, where she was rushed to the hospital after surviving two lethal doses of pentobarbital.

Robertson's execution, the first in Florida since Pike, comes at a time of escalating attention on the death penalty in the United States. The Pentagon said last week that it would livestream the firing squad execution of Fort Hood shooter Nidal Malik Hasan, drawing criticism from both Republican and Democratic lawmakers.

"Florida has a sound lethal injection process and protocol," Jordan Kirkland, a state Department of Corrections spokesperson, said at a news conference before the execution. Although he couldn't speak to Tennessee's lethal injection procedure, he said Florida would make sure its process was "humane and dignified."

Florida executes people by injecting them with a sedative, a paralytic, and a drug that stops the heart, according to the Department of Corrections.

Robertson wanted to be executed

Robertson had pleaded guilty to first-degree murder for strangling Frank Hart while he slept in 2008, and waived all appeals. He told investigators that he did it so he wouldn't have to live out his days in prison.

Hart was killed just eight days before he was due to be released, his daughter, Rebecca Hart, told reporters at Florida State Prison. She stressed that her father was not just a piece of Robertson's story.

"When someone you love is taken from you in such a violent way, the world keeps moving, even when a part of yours feels like it has stopped," she read. "Other people go on with their lives, but you carry your loss into every tomorrow."

Robertson was 17 years old when he went to prison in 1980 for burglary and assault. Years of convictions for escape, battery and weapons while in prison kept adding time to his total sentence. Hart had been sent to prison in 2003 following a sexual battery conviction.

A rare reprieve leaves another Florida prisoner on death row

Robertson was supposed to be one of two executions carried out by Florida on Tuesday, but Gov. Ron DeSantis withdrew a death warrant last week for William Lee Thompson. The Republican governor did not provide a reason but had temporarily stayed the execution last month pending a psychiatric evaluation.

Records show this was the first time DeSantis withdrew a death warrant. Thompson, 74, will remain on death row, and a new death warrant could be signed in the future. His attorneys say he has dementia and failing health, and they want him transferred to a medical facility.

DeSantis is the third Florida governor to sign a death warrant for Thompson. Bob Graham and Bob Martinez both scheduled executions for Thompson in the 1980s, but years of appeals and stays allowed him to avoid the electric chair, the state's method of execution at the time.

Thompson was convicted of first-degree murder, kidnapping and sexual battery in the 1976 killing of 23-year-old Sally Ivester.

Florida has the nation's busiest death chamber

DeSantis oversaw 19 executions in 2025, more than any other Florida governor in a single year since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. Robertson was the state's 17th execution of 2026, with two more already scheduled, not counting Thompson.

DeSantis, who leaves office in January, has made few public comments about the unprecedented number of executions but explained previously that his goal is to bring justice to victims' families who have waited decades for the death sentences to be carried out.

William Reeves, 77, is scheduled to be executed on Oct. 20, followed by Jesse Guardado, 64, on Nov. 5. Reeves was convicted of fatally shooting a deputy after dropping a gun in front of the law enforcement officer in 1986. Guardado was convicted of robbing and killing a woman in order to buy drugs in 2004.

A total of 47 people were executed in the U.S. in 2025. Besides leading all other states last year, Florida has carried out more than half the 31 total executions in the U.S. so far this year. In July, Florida executed two prisoners in one day, the first state in nearly a decade to do so.

Trump's ambassador to Greece, Kimberly Guilfoyle, resigns after allegations of improper conduct

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House publicly asked for U.S. Ambassador to Greece Kimberly Guilfoyle's resignation on Tuesday as she faced mounting accusations of improper conduct, and she announced within two hours that she was quitting, ending days of talk and speculation about her professional fate. Guilfoyle insisted that she would "vigorously defend" herself.

President Donald Trump's administration had said earlier Tuesday it had asked Guilfoyle to leave her post after she faced severe criticism over allegations she engaged in improper and possibly illegal conduct before and during her tenure in Athens.

That revelation came in response to a question to freshly minted White House press secretary Katie Zacharia at her first media briefing Tuesday morning. Zacharia said Guilfoyle "has been a wonderful asset to the team, and we wish her well."

"She went to Greece. She was doing a good job, but we didn't like what we were reading," Trump said just after Guilfoyle's resignation, which was posted on her X account. He said he had not spoken to her but "she will not be there."

Guilfoyle's departure comes after its possibility was previewed to The Associated Press over the weekend and Trump registered his unhappiness on Monday at reports about her alleged conduct. Those comments came a day after the AP, citing a senior U.S. official, reported that Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio were "extremely pissed off" by Guilfoyle's reported conduct.

Guilfoyle denies the accusations and cites her 'decades of public service'

In a series of stories dating to late last month, The Wall Street Journal has reported questionable conduct by Guilfoyle, including an alleged threat to a host country official, accepting improper gifts and services and offering to use her influence inside the Republican administration in return for the payment of a large credit card bill.

Guilfoyle addressed the accusations directly in her resignation post on X, saying, "These allegations are false, and I intend to vigorously defend my name, my reputation, and my integrity."

"I have dedicated my professional life to fighting for justice, standing up for what is right, and defending the values that make America exceptional," she said. "I will not allow false accusations to define my decades of public service."

In a statement released late Sunday, Guilfoyle's lawyers denied that she had done anything wrong and claimed that the money she was seeking from a Trump donor was payment for services — public appearances and speaking engagements that predate her ambassadorial nomination — that had not been paid.

The lawyers, David Schwartz and Jesse Binnall, also rejected allegations of impropriety related to Guilfoyle's travel on private planes, saying that before every such trip she "sought, obtained and followed State Department guidance and followed the Department's travel regulations."

They did not immediately return calls Tuesday.

The allegations began surfacing weeks ago

After defending Guilfoyle following the first report, Rubio declined to comment publicly on the growing allegations. Last week, Rubio said: "Our ambassador has been a strong ambassador here."

But after another report appeared later, Rubio — speaking Thursday before leaving Athens — berated journalists for asking about the allegations. He said that he didn't know if they were true and that he would not respond if he could not confirm them.

"You guys walk around thinking that because some source told you something and you reported it, it's the gospel. It's not the gospel. It's not the gospel for me. That's not the way we do things," Rubio said at the foot of his plane as Guilfoyle, who was there to see him depart, looked on.

A second U.S. official, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss personnel matters, said the State Department's inspector general was looking into the allegations, which first began surfacing in

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the Journal late last month and have since multiplied.

The second official could not say if a formal IG probe had begun. Inspectors general often conduct informal inquiries into complaints against staffers, and many times those inquiries do not result in a full-on investigation, which can result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. The State Department has declined to comment on a potential IG investigation.

There was no immediate response to Zacharia's statement from the Greek government or Cabinet members.

Ahead of Tuesday's announcement, Greek opposition parties had called on the Foreign Ministry to summon Guilfoyle to respond to the allegations made against her. "This, most importantly, is an issue of national dignity," Sia Anagnostopoulou, a former deputy foreign minister, said in parliament Friday. Foreign Minister Giorgos Gerapetritis responded that Guilfoyle had been treated "the same way as every other ambassador" and argued that an official summons had not been necessary.

Hours earlier, Guilfoyle had posted photos of her meeting this week with the Spanish ambassador to Athens as well as birthday wishes for Lara Trump, the president's daughter-in-law, accompanied by Dua Lipa's "Dance the Night," from the 2023 soundtrack of the movie "Barbie."

Greece has taken on an increasingly important and influential role because of its geographic location in Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly on energy issues as the war with Iran has spiked global oil prices. Besides the vast number of Greek-registered oil tankers that regularly ply the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea, Greece is well positioned to be a pipeline conduit for liquefied natural gas imports into the Balkans and beyond.

As the U.S. ambassador to Greece, Guilfoyle had put an emphasis on energy issues, although her close association with executives in that sector was part of what got her into trouble.

Democrats call for an investigation

The top two Democrats on the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations committees, Rep. Gregory Meeks of New York and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, as well as the ranking member on the House Committee for Oversight and Government Reform, Rep. Robert Garcia, D-Calif., have already called for an investigation into Guilfoyle.

Since late September, the Journal has detailed numerous accounts of questionable conduct by Guilfoyle. Its first report said that she had told guests at a reception that the United States could undermine the Greek government if it chose to, promoted the business interests of one particular Greek construction and energy company and allowed its lobbyist into private diplomatic meetings.

While Rubio was in Athens, the Journal reported — citing text messages — that Guilfoyle had asked a Trump donor and supporter to pay a \$100,000 credit card bill just before her confirmation hearing, promising him access to administration officials if he did.

The Journal then reported that Guilfoyle had been enraged about not being invited to a Greek-themed event at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, earlier this year and demanded to attend while boasting about luxury travel to France with energy company executives.

Another report, from the British tabloid The Daily Mail, said that Guilfoyle had alienated staff at the U.S. Embassy in Athens and had pushed the bounds of behavior appropriate for the top representative of the U.S. government to Greece.

Guilfoyle is a former Fox News Channel host and California prosecutor who was married to Democrat Gavin Newsom when he was San Francisco's mayor, before he became California's governor. She later was engaged to Trump's son Donald Trump Jr.

Katie Zacharia, Trump's new White House press secretary, makes a brief appearance before reporters

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Katie Zacharia, the new White House press secretary, faced reporters for the first time on Tuesday for a very brief turn at the lectern, taking a handful of questions before abruptly wrapping it up.

Zacharia, a conservative commentator who most recently worked for President Donald Trump's social media company, was named to the job on Friday, succeeding Karoline Leavitt, who left in August and is taking a job with Fox News Channel.

Zacharia told reporters her goal is to "amplify" what Trump is doing and that the president is "his own best spokesperson."

She quickly proved that Tuesday, appearing for only 14 minutes and taking questions from just three outlets before telling reporters they could ask the president their questions on the South Lawn when he departs on a campaign trip.

"In fact, I am going to end it because President Trump is heading out to Marine One for our historic trip to Alaska, and we can ask him all of the questions out there," she said.

As the Republican president left the White House for his trip, more than an hour after the briefing's abrupt end, he praised Zacharia's performance to reporters.

"I thought she did excellent. She did very good," he said, as Zacharia stood behind him.

Before taking the questions, Zacharia read slowly from an opening statement that began with a focus on Trump's recent campaign rallies and his policies on energy, tariffs, immigration and more since he returned to office.

In naming Zacharia, who has a law degree from Pepperdine University, Trump described her as "a loyal and brilliant supporter, right from the beginning." She briefly worked as a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security earlier this year and has been a commentator for Fox News and Newsmax.

She told reporters she viewed her role as press secretary to be no different than the way she advocated for Trump while outside the government.

"I get to do what I was doing on the outside already, which was hoping to amplify, multiply and expand upon President Trump's incredible agenda for the American people," she said.

She also thanked Trump and said, "I have wanted to work for him for a very long time."

She took her first question from Breitbart News, the right-wing outlet that has become more influential in the Trump era, and committed to keeping the "new media" rotation created under her predecessor to bring additional media outlets into news briefings and the White House press pool.

But Zacharia did make some big news: she said Trump had asked for the resignation of Kimberly Guilfoyle, the U.S. ambassador to Greece, after a series of reports alleging she has engaged in improper and possibly illegal conduct before and during her tenure in Athens.

"She has been a wonderful asset to the team and we wish her well," Zacharia said.

Supreme Court will review asylum case of Nigerian man who cooked meals for terrorist leaders

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed on Tuesday to consider if a Nigerian man is ineligible for asylum because he cooked meals at a camp for leaders of a group that the U.S. government considers to be a terrorist organization.

The high court, granting a request by President Donald Trump's administration, will hear arguments on whether Izuchukwu Ozurumba's cooking job for leaders of the Unknown Gunmen qualifies as providing "material support" for a terrorist group.

The Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to review a decision by the Richmond, Virginia-based

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4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to vacate Ozurumba's removal order. The Republican administration says the 4th Circuit decision conflicts with rulings by at least three other circuits and, if upheld, will hamper the government's ability to deport immigrants with terrorism ties in many other cases.

"Providing meals to a terrorist organization's members is no less a material form of support than providing gasoline for its vehicles," they wrote.

Ozurumba testified that he didn't know the true purpose of the camp until after he started working there. The Unknown Gunmen is believed to be a group of separatists operating in southern Nigeria. Ozurumba's lawyers say the group's leaders forced him to work without pay and repeatedly threatened him after he escaped from the camp.

His attorneys further argued that there is no circuit split for the Supreme Court to resolve. "No federal court has adopted the government's rule, under which any interaction with a terrorist organization, no matter how attenuated or inconsequential, qualifies as 'material' support," they wrote.

Ozurumba fled the camp near his home in Lagos, Nigeria, and traveled to Venezuela before entering the U.S. illegally in July 2023 and surrendered to Border Patrol. Several months later, an immigration judge ordered Ozurumba to be deported to Nigeria.

A divided 4th Circuit panel decided that Ozurumba's work at the camp didn't constitute material support of terrorism. The majority opinion says it appears that he was "simply a captive laborer" whose work had nothing to do with terrorist activities.

Passenger train derails in central Pakistan, killing at least 5 people and injuring 35

MULTAN, Pakistan (AP) — A passenger train derailed in central Pakistan early Tuesday, killing five people and injuring 35 others, police and a Pakistan Railways spokesman said.

The train was traveling from the southern port city of Karachi to the northwestern city of Peshawar when it derailed in Sher Shah city in Punjab province, railway spokesman Kaleem Akhtar said.

Rescuers recovered all four bodies and evacuated the injured from the train's 14 cars, he said. The injured were taken to a hospital for treatment, but one died before he could be transported, rescue officials said. Emergency responders and paramedics were dispatched to the scene, he said.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief in separate statements and urged authorities to provide the best possible medical care to the injured.

Train accidents are relatively common in Pakistan, where the railway system has suffered from decades of underinvestment, outdated tracks and aging signal systems. In 2023, ten cars of a passenger train derailed in southern Pakistan, killing 30 people and injuring more than 90 others.

Trump says he cares for Americans. They think he's more focused on his wealth, an AP-NORC poll finds

By BERNARD CONDON and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Most Americans think Donald Trump is profiting off the presidency in unethical or illegal ways and is focused more on his wealth than helping people like them, a new AP-NORC poll finds.

As Trump's family business pulls in record money from new ventures helped by his policies, the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that when it comes to allegations that Trump is profiting from the presidency, about 6 in 10 U.S. adults believe he is either illegally profiting or doing something unethical but not illegal. Only about 2 in 10 think the Republican president is doing nothing wrong, while a similar share say they don't know enough to say.

At the same time, just over half of Americans say Trump has prioritized his personal financial interests "a lot" since returning to the White House, while only about one-quarter say he puts the same emphasis on the country as a whole. Few U.S. adults, about 1 in 10, say he's focused "a lot" on people like them.

"His wealth increases," said 87-year-old retiree Barbara Thaxton, an independent from Summerfield,

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Florida, "but the people in the country are just barely getting by."

Trump derided the issue of conflicts of interest at the start of his second term, telling The New York Times that "I found out that nobody cared." Unlike in his first term, he's lifted a self-imposed ban on his family striking private-sector deals overseas and started several new crypto businesses.

The poll results suggest that most U.S. adults think growing his personal fortune has been a focus for Trump in his second term, at least to some extent. Only about one-quarter of U.S. adults say he's prioritizing his personal business interests "only a little" or "not at all," including less than half of Republicans.

The White House says Trump is not profiting, but most Americans see red flags

The White House has repeatedly dismissed accusations that Trump and his family business are benefiting financially from his office as a fake problem, stating categorically that he has zero conflicts and acts only in the interest of the country.

In a required federal disclosure of his financial holdings that Trump filed in June, he reported taking in more than \$1 billion from new crypto businesses after he loosened regulation on the industry.

One of his biggest crypto ventures got a half-billion-dollar investment after he was elected from a United Arab Emirates business tied to the royal family. It also got help from a cryptocurrency company founded by a Chinese billionaire in trouble with the law in the U.S.

On the real estate side of the business, the Trump Organization has struck eight foreign deals in the first year of his presidency, including many in authoritarian or one-party states with influence over private business and eager to keep Trump happy, U.S. tariffs low or the U.S. military protecting it — or all three.

Overall, about 4 in 10 U.S. adults say Trump is doing something illegal, while about 2 in 10 think he's doing something unethical but not illegal. Democrats are especially likely to believe he has broken the law, with about 8 in 10 saying that.

Oscar Delgado, a 50-year-old Democrat who voted for Trump in 2024 because he thought he could improve things, now accuses Trump of "turning greedy."

"He's not putting the country first," said Delgado, who lives in Lansing, Michigan, and works in a Ford metal stamping factory. "I wanted a change, but I didn't expect this change."

Republicans are less convinced Trump is doing something wrong

Independents and Republicans are much less convinced than Democrats that Trump is breaking the law. Only about 3 in 10 independents and about 1 in 10 Republicans say he's doing something illegal. About 2 in 10 independents and a similar share of Republicans think his behavior is unethical but not illegal.

Most Republicans think he is doing nothing wrong or say they don't know enough to judge.

"His family has probably benefited, but I don't think he has," said Republican Audra Pelsue, 52, dismissing Trump critics as too angry to see straight. "It's Trump derangement syndrome."

Pelsue, a manager at a laundry machine maker from Syracuse, New York, sees a double standard among Trump critics, pointing to what she says was insufficient outrage over President Joe Biden's son.

"Look at Hunter Biden!" she said, referring to his position as director at Ukrainian energy company Burisma when his father, a Democrat, was vice president. "It was OK for Biden kids to benefit, but it's not OK for Trump's?"

Most Americans think Trump puts his financial interests ahead of the country's

Even if they don't think his behavior is illegal, Americans are much likelier to say Trump is prioritizing his personal business interests, compared with the country overall or people like themselves.

Just over half, 56%, of U.S. adults say Trump has put "a lot" of emphasis on his personal businesses since taking office again, while a similar share, 54%, say this about the business interests of his friends and family.

In contrast, only about one-quarter of Americans say he's prioritized the country as a whole "a lot" since returning to the White House, and even fewer, about 1 in 10, say he's focused "a lot" on people like them.

Republicans are likelier to think Trump has prioritized the country, with about half saying he's put "a lot" of emphasis on this since taking office, while about one-quarter say he's given that amount of focus to his personal business interests. But only about one-quarter of Republicans say he's emphasized people like them "a lot."

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John Bartus, a Republican from Twin Falls, Idaho, notes that Trump has agreed to donate his salary, which comes to \$400,000 a year.

"It seems like his business interests are a part of his life, but it doesn't seem like he lets that interfere with what's going on in the country," said Bartus, a 67-year-old part-time supermarket worker. "He puts it on the back burner."

But Lisa Fernandez, a Democrat from Edinburg, Texas, said Trump is using the power of the presidency but not in ways to help others.

"He's exploiting it for his own needs and his family and making a profit off the people who he is supposed to be serving," said Fernandez, 57, a retired math teacher. "His whole reason for being is to enrich himself and take what he can take without consequences."

Today in History: October 14 **Chuck Yeager breaks the sound barrier**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 14, the 287th day of 2026. There are 78 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 14, 1947, U.S. Air Force Capt. Chuck Yeager flew a Bell X-1 rocket engine-powered aircraft over a California desert, becoming the first person to break the sound barrier. In 2012, Yeager marked the 65th anniversary of that flight by breaking the sound barrier anew at age 89, this time in the backseat of an F-15.

In 1066, Normans under William the Conqueror defeated the English at the Battle of Hastings.

In 1586, Mary, Queen of Scots, went on trial in England, accused of committing treason against Queen Elizabeth I. (Mary was beheaded in February 1587.)

In 1910, aviator Claude Grahame-White flew his biplane over Washington, D.C., and landed it on West Executive Avenue, next to the White House.

In 1944, German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel took his own life rather than face trial and certain execution for allegedly conspiring against Adolf Hitler.

In 1964, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1964, in one of the greatest upsets in Olympic history, American Billy Mills, an Oglala Lakota, won the 10,000-meter race at the Tokyo Summer Games, setting a new Olympic record.

In 1981, the new president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak (HOHS'-nee moo-BAH'-rahk), was sworn in to succeed the assassinated Anwar Sadat.

In 1986, Holocaust survivor and human rights advocate Elie Wiesel was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 2008, a grand jury in Orlando, Florida, returned charges of first-degree murder, aggravated child abuse and aggravated manslaughter against Casey Anthony in the death of her 2-year-old daughter, Caylee. (She was acquitted in July 2011.)

In 2012, skydiver Felix Baumgartner became the first human to reach supersonic speeds in a free fall, leaping from a helium-balloon capsule 24 miles up in Earth's stratosphere. Baumgartner reached a record 843.6 mph speed before his parachute opened and he landed safely in the New Mexico desert.

In 2017, a truck bombing in the heart of Mogadishu killed more than 500 people in the capital of Somalia. A U.N. envoy to the nation, long reeling under decades of violence by warring factions, called it the deadliest terrorist attack ever in Africa.

In 2024, a SpaceX rocket launched NASA's Europa Clipper spacecraft on a mission to Jupiter's moon Europa to determine whether conditions there could support life; the spacecraft will arrive in 2030.

Today's Birthdays: Former White House counsel John W. Dean III is 88. Fashion designer Ralph Lauren is 87. Football Hall of Famer Charlie Joiner is 79. Golf Hall of Famer Beth Daniel is 70. Musician Thomas Dolby is 68. Fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi is 65. Actor Steve Coogan is 61. TV host Stephen A. Smith is 59. Country singer Natalie Maines (The Chicks) is 52. Actor Chang Chen is 50. Singer Usher is 48. Actor-comedian Jay Pharoah is 39. Actor Rowan Blanchard is 25.