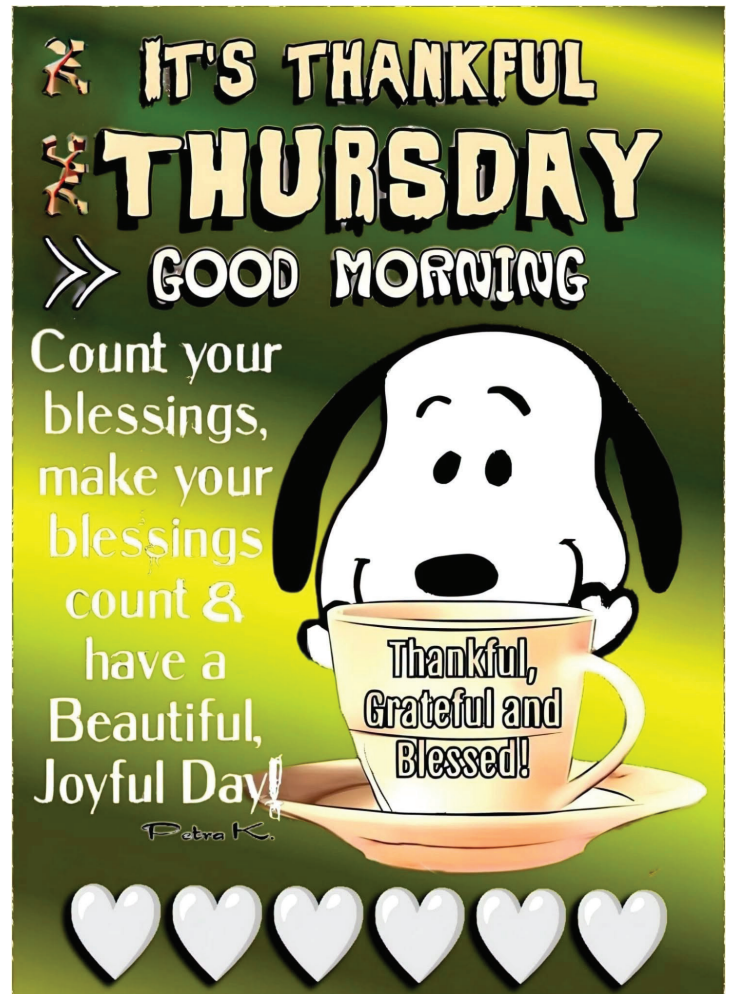


Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 1 of 73

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Hein Birthday Ad](#)
- [4- Mayo Clinic: Mayo Clinic Q&A: When to worry about numbness and tingling](#)
- [5- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [6- Gilbert, Shellenberger qualify for state cross country meet](#)
- [7- Fall River County Fatal Crash](#)
- [7- Names Released in Tripp County Fatal Crash](#)
- [8- South Dakota's Average ACT Composite Score Again Surpasses the National Average](#)
- [9- Season Mosquito Report](#)
- [11- Flags at Half-Staff Statewide in Honor of Deputy Katherine Ann Frank on Sunday and Monday](#)
- [12- Exploring South Dakota: Wilmot's Naval Hero](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Podcast: Pros and cons on a ballot question that could repeal SD's Medicaid expansion requirement](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: Positions on election hand-counting split candidates in South Dakota's secretary of state race](#)
- [20- SD SearchLight: Funding gap resolved for the only fair housing organization in the Dakotas](#)
- [21- SD SearchLight: The next act for the No Kings movement: early voting in the midterms](#)
- [23- SD SearchLight: Trump's DOJ demands California halt ballots to suspected noncitizens](#)
- [24- SD SearchLight: Nonpartisan government watchdog recommends automated activation of ICE body cameras](#)
- [25- SD SearchLight: 'More barriers than most': Group deploys volunteers to protect Native voting rights](#)
- [26- SD SearchLight: Social Security benefits increase will hit 3.6% in 2027](#)
- [26- SD SearchLight: Trump administration appeals judge's order blocking White House ban of 3 news outlets](#)
- [28- SD SearchLight: Protecting the state constitution, or protecting voters' right to change it: Amendment L explained](#)
- [29- SD SearchLight: Farm, fuel groups celebrate EPA proposals to reallocate small refinery exemptions](#)
- [31- Weather Pages](#)
- [35- Daily Devotional](#)
- [36- Subscription Form](#)
- [37- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [38- News from the Associated Press](#)



Community Calendar

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

Friday, Oct. 16

Senior Menu: Roast pork, baked potato, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Fruit buckle.
School Lunch: Meatballs, green beans.
Football at Aberdeen Roncalli, 7 p.m., Dacotah Bank Stadium

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 2 of 73

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.

Inflation Rise Continues

US prices rose 3.7% last month from September 2025, the latest Consumer Price Index report revealed yesterday. The report is the last of its kind before the November midterm elections, with polls showing the economy is voters' top issue.

Cost bumps were spread across most categories, including housing, clothing, and restaurant food, though groceries saw prices decline since August. The war in Iran has fueled cost increases, as oil prices climbed to over \$106 per barrel since August. The cost of diesel—which powers farms and the shipping industry, among other industries—has increased 70% since the start of the war.

The 3.7% rate was higher than analysts had expected and above the Federal Reserve's target goal of 2%. The bank has signaled at least one more interest rate hike may come this year, with the next Fed meeting scheduled for Oct. 27-28, days before Election Day. Stocks dropped on yesterday's news (S&P 500 -1.1%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq -1.9%).

Nord Stream Pipeline Trial

A former Ukrainian army officer went on trial in Germany yesterday for allegedly leading a state-sponsored operation to blow up the Nord Stream gas pipelines in 2022. The trial marks the first criminal proceedings over the explosions, which severed a major link in Germany's energy ties with Russia.

Serhii Kuznietsov faces charges of causing an explosion, damaging property, disrupting public service, and attacking civilian infrastructure, which is a war crime. The trial unfolds as public support for aiding Ukraine wanes across Germany. Around 42% of Germans think Berlin is supplying too many weapons to Ukraine, and nearly one-third of voters now back political parties that oppose sending more aid, according to recent polls. Germany is Ukraine's second-largest donor after the US, budgeting over \$12.3B to assist its ally in 2026.

Separately, Ukraine accused Elon Musk's SpaceX of imposing restrictions on its satellite internet network, Starlink, yesterday. The disruption occurred as Russian missiles struck Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

World's Oldest Shipwreck

Archaeologists say they have discovered the world's oldest known shipwreck off the southern coast of modern-day Turkey, dating to between 4,400 and 4,700 years ago.

The ship's wooden structure is gone, but dozens of ceramic vessels and stone anchors scattered around the site suggest it dates to around the same time as the Great Pyramid of Giza. Researchers believe the ship was nearly 33 feet long and sank while carrying cargo to Troy or Crete. It is one of roughly 420 significant wrecks found along the coast of southern Turkey over the last 15 years, underscoring the region's importance to maritime trade. Several of the vessels appear to have carried wine and olive oil, with some still containing residue despite having been between 65 and 78 feet underwater for over four millennia.

The Dokos shipwreck, found in the Aegean Sea and dating to about 4,200 years ago, was previously considered the world's oldest shipwreck.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 3 of 73

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Winnie the Pooh marks 100th anniversary since teddy bear's first book of stories on Oct. 14, 1926.
Houston Astros will not renew manager Joe Espada's contract after three seasons and two American League West titles.
Netflix lays off around 6% of its workforce, eliminating roughly 1,000 jobs and marking the company's largest cut to date.

Science & Technology

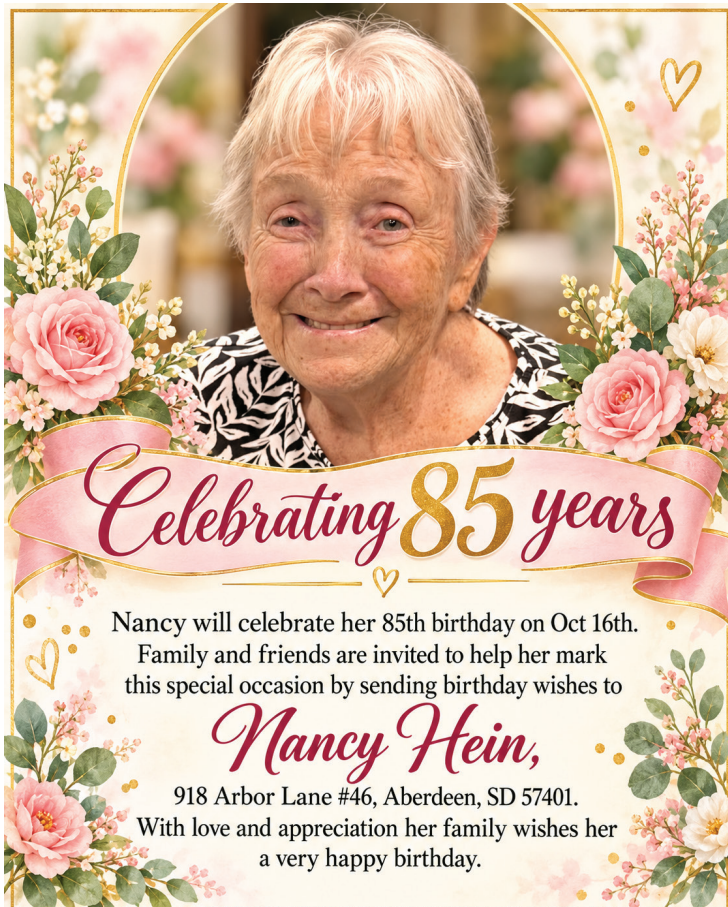
Overlooked brown fat linked to reduced risk of diseases like Type 2 diabetes and improves mental health, per landmark study; blood pressure medication may stimulate the healthy fat.
New dinosaur species identified from a fossil found roughly a century ago on England's Isle of Wight provides first evidence a mysterious group of carnivorous dinosaurs lived in modern-day Europe.
Dogs appear to link spoken sounds to shapes, a trait once assumed unique to humans; "bouba" is associated with round objects, while "kiki" is linked to spiky ones.

Business & Markets

Social Security Administration announces 3.6% cost-of-living adjustment, the largest hike in four years; payments will increase by roughly \$75 a month starting in January.
China reports its exports rose 36.3% last month compared with September 2025, including a 40% increase in exports to the US.
Bending Spoons shares soar 41.2% on news Berkshire Hathaway will invest another \$330M in the Italian tech company.

Politics & World Affairs

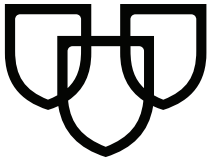
Iranian-backed Houthi rebels strike Saudi Aramco headquarters in the kingdom's eastern city of Dhahran, causing a limited fire but no deaths or injuries.
Justice Department seizes Rep. Ilhan Omar's (D, MN-5) phone, subpoenas family members amid investigation into her immigration paperwork.
Student-led protests in Albania over education costs, allegations of corruption erupt into violence as Education Ministry is reportedly set on fire.



Celebrating 85 years

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.

MAYO CLINIC



Mayo Clinic Q&A: When to worry about numbness and tingling

Mayo Clinic Staff

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: My spouse will tell me occasionally that their hands and feet “fall asleep,” and they experience numbness, tingling and a pins-and-needles sensation. Is this normal, or does it require medical attention?

ANSWER: Most people experience numbness or the familiar pins-and-needles sensation from time to time. Often, it’s harmless and happens because you’ve been sitting, standing or sleeping in a position that puts temporary pressure on

a nerve. Once you change positions, the sensation usually goes away within a few minutes.

However, these symptoms can sometimes signal an underlying medical condition. They can occur when a nerve is damaged, compressed or irritated. The nerve itself may not be functioning properly, a condition called neuropathy. In other cases, pressure on a nerve, such as in the spine or somewhere along its path through the arms or legs, can cause numbness and tingling.

Pinched nerves can occur in several places. Nerves can become compressed in the spinal canal, a condition known as spinal stenosis, or further along their path, such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

Other health conditions also can damage nerves. Diabetes is one of the most common causes. Diabetic neuropathy often begins in the feet, causing numbness, tingling or burning sensations that usually affect both sides of the body equally. Symptoms often spread in a pattern similar to wearing socks or gloves.

Vitamin deficiencies, kidney disease, heavy alcohol use, exposure to certain toxins and some medications, particularly chemotherapy drugs, also can contribute to numbness and tingling.

Anxiety and stress can trigger numbness or tingling, as well. During periods of stress, some people breathe more rapidly than usual, which can lead to tingling around the mouth or in the hands. Panic attacks also may cause these sensations.

You should schedule an appointment with your healthcare team if numbness or tingling:

- Becomes constant.
- Gets worse over time.
- Interferes with your daily activities.
- Occurs along with pain, weakness, balance problems or difficulty walking.

While many causes aren’t emergencies, persistent symptoms should be evaluated to identify and treat any underlying conditions. Some symptoms require immediate medical attention.

Sudden numbness affecting one side of the face, arm or leg, especially when accompanied by weakness, can be a sign of a stroke. If this occurs, call 911 or seek emergency medical care immediately.

You also should seek emergency care if you develop numbness in the groin or genital area, particularly if it occurs along with difficulty controlling your bladder or bowels, trouble urinating or weakness in your legs. These symptoms can indicate a serious problem, such as a spinal cord injury, that requires prompt treatment.

When numbness or tingling needs further evaluation, your healthcare professional will begin by asking detailed questions about your symptoms, including when they started, what makes them better or worse, and whether you have other symptoms such as pain or weakness.

A physical examination helps evaluate how your nerves and muscles are functioning. Depending on the findings, additional testing may be recommended. This could include imaging tests, such as X-rays, ultrasound or MRI, to look for structural problems around the nerves. Nerve studies, including electromyography, can help determine how well your nerves are sending and receiving signals.

For mild episodes related to body position, simply changing positions, improving your posture or gently moving the affected arm or leg may be enough. When symptoms are more persistent, physical therapy can help improve strength, mobility and function.

Other treatments may include medications to manage nerve pain, injections to reduce inflammation

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 5 of 73

around pinched nerves, or surgery when nerve compression is severe. Some nerve problems, such as those caused by spinal stenosis, may improve with treatment. Others, including diabetic neuropathy, are often permanent, so treatment focuses on managing symptoms and preventing further nerve damage.

The most important step is talking with your healthcare team. Identifying the cause early allows you to begin the right treatment and, in many cases, prevent symptoms from getting worse.

Occasional numbness and tingling that go away quickly after you change positions are usually nothing to worry about. But if symptoms persist, worsen, interfere with your daily life or occur with weakness or other concerning symptoms, don't ignore them. Early evaluation can help identify the cause and guide the most appropriate treatment.

Megan Everson, M.D., Neurosurgery, Spine Care, Mayo Clinic Health System, Eau Claire, Wisconsin



Volleyball

Groton Area
at Deuel

Thurs., Oct. 15, 2026



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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Varsity Match to Follow

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 6 of 73

Gilbert, Shellenberger qualify for state cross country meet

WEBSTER – Groton Area will send two runners to the South Dakota State Class A Cross Country Meet after Ruelle Gilbert and Riley Shellenberger earned individual qualifying spots at the Region 1A Cross Country Meet held Wednesday, Oct. 14, at the Webster Golf Club.

Gilbert, a junior, finished ninth in the girls' 5,000-meter race with a time of 21 minutes, 1.7 seconds, while Shellenberger, a sophomore, placed 14th in the boys' 5,000-meter race with a time of 18:50.3.

Under South Dakota High School Activities Association rules, the top 20 individual finishers in each Class A regional race qualify for the state meet, along with up to six runners from each of the top three qualifying teams.

The state meet is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 24, at Hart Ranch Camping Resort in Rapid City.

Gilbert was among 39 runners competing in the girls' division. Clark/Willow Lake junior Kamryn Nesheim captured the individual championship with a time of 19:27.6. Aberdeen Roncalli's Addison Cassady finished second in 19:40.6, followed by Milbank's Ella Koplin in third at 20:18.1.

Florence/Henry's Sierra Keller placed fourth in 20:33.5, followed by Milbank's Macy Mueller in fifth at 20:35.5.

Aberdeen Roncalli captured the girls' team championship with 23 points, followed by Milbank with 33 and Florence/Henry with 50. Clark/Willow Lake finished fourth with 59 points, while Deuel was fifth with 64.

Groton Area's other girls' competitor, senior Ashlynn Warrington, finished 23rd with a time of 23:10.7.

In the boys' division, Shellenberger led Groton Area's four competitors with his 14th-place finish among 55 runners.

Milbank senior Jeter Scoular won the individual championship with a time of 16:49.1. Sisseton's Ryder Graff finished second in 17:22.0, followed by Deuel's Caden Hourigan in third at 17:31.7. Deuel's Sutton Benck was fourth in 17:48.4, while Florence/Henry's Austin Keller rounded out the top five in 17:55.2.

Deuel captured the boys' team championship with 22 points, followed by Sisseton with 35 and Aberdeen Roncalli with 61. Those three teams earned automatic berths in the state competition.

Groton Area eighth grader Grady Zeck finished 38th with a personal-best time of 20:34.8. Seventh grader Calvin Locken also recorded a personal best, finishing 43rd in 21:44.4, while sophomore Tate Johnson placed 47th with a time of 22:05.2.

Gilbert and Shellenberger will represent the Tigers against the state's top Class A runners when competition concludes the cross country season Oct. 24.

Fall River County Fatal Crash

What: Single-vehicle fatal crash

Where: U.S. 18 at mile marker 2, 10 miles west of Edgemont, South Dakota

When: 6:15 a.m., Wednesday, October 14, 2026

Driver 1: 59-year-old male from Scottsbluff, Nebraska, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2020 Freightliner Cascadia

Seat Belt Used: No

Fall River County, S.D.- A Nebraska man died today in a single-vehicle crash near Edgemont, South Dakota.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2020 Freightliner Cascadia was traveling westbound on U.S. 18 near mile marker 2. The Freightliner left the roadway, and the driver attempted to steer back onto the road. The truck overturned into the ditch and rolled. The driver was ejected from the vehicle and sustained fatal injuries.

The investigation is ongoing. All information released is preliminary.

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

Names Released in Tripp County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash

Where: U.S. 183 at mile marker 56, 18 miles south of Presho, South Dakota

When: 11:30 a.m., Monday, October 5, 2026

Driver 1: Clinton James Osterbur, 37-year-old male from Wood, South Dakota, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2022 Dodge Ram 2500

Seat Belt Used: No

Driver 2: Wayne Allan Soles, 67-year-old male from Winner, South Dakota, minor injuries

Vehicle 2: 1997 Freightliner FDL120

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Tripp County, S.D.- A Wood man died Saturday from injuries sustained in a two-vehicle crash near Presho, South Dakota on October 5, 2026.

Preliminary crash information indicates Clinton James Osterbur, the driver of a 2022 Dodge Ram 2500, was parked on U.S. 183's northbound shoulder while he removed a tire from a trailer. He returned to his vehicle and made a U-turn towards Winner. At the same time, Wayne Allan Soles, the driver of a 1997 Freightliner FDL120, was traveling southbound hauling gravel. The Freightliner collided with the Dodge. Osterbur was transported to a Winner hospital. He died from his injuries on October 10, 2026. Soles sustained minor injuries.

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's Average ACT Composite Score Again Surpasses the National Average

Pierre, S.D. – South Dakota's graduating class of 2026 achieved an average ACT composite score of 21.1, surpassing the national average ACT composite score of 19.2. For the sixth year in a row, South Dakota has exceeded the national average.

The ACT, traditionally known as the standardized test used for college admissions, goes beyond securing a seat in postsecondary education. It provides insight into students' college and career readiness, course placement, scholarships, loans, and financial assistance to pursue higher education.

Of South Dakota's 2026 high school graduates, 56 percent took the ACT, and three students earned a perfect composite score of 36.

Graduating Class Year	South Dakota Average	National Average
2021	21.6	20.3
2022	21.5	19.8
2023	21.1	19.5
2024	21.1	19.4
2025	21.0	19.4
2026*	21.1	19.2

** 2026 ACT composite scores may only reflect English, math, and reading assessments. Prior year composite scores are inclusive of science.*

Data as of 10/14/2026

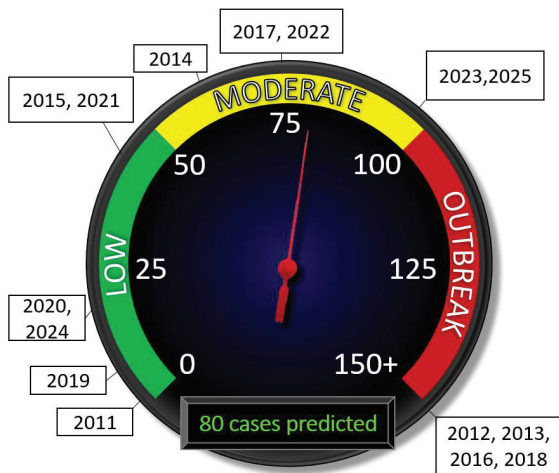
Division of Disease Prevention and Control

South Dakota Mosquito

SD West Nile Virus

- 55 human cases reported
 - 23 non-neuroinvasive cases
 - 32 neuroinvasive cases
 - 0 deaths
- 12 human viremic blood donor detections

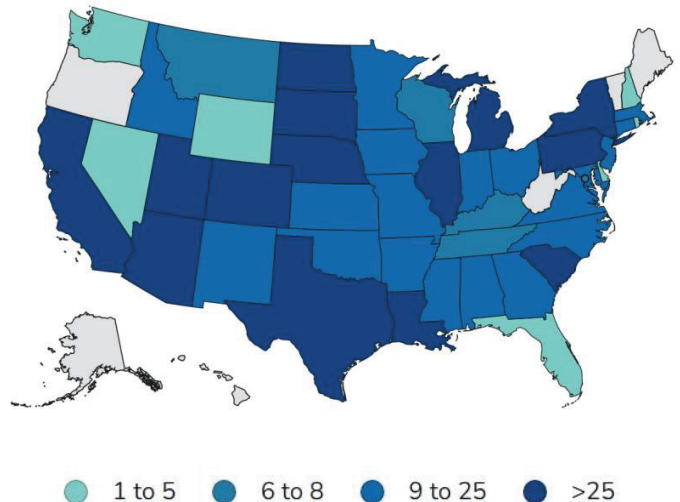
Current WNV SD Case Prediction:



US West Nile Virus

- 1,328 human cases reported
 - 1,004 of which are neuroinvasive

WNV Human Disease Cases Reported by State of Residence, 2026:



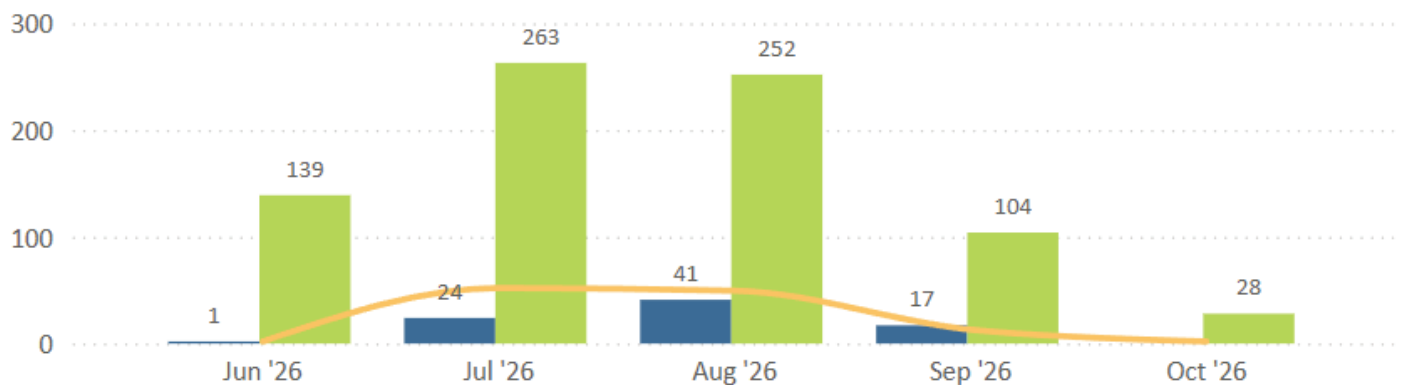
Data compiled from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. West Nile Virus: Current Year Data and Maps. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/west-nile-virus/data-maps/current-year-data.html>

SD Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2026

- Total sites collecting mosquitos: 59
- *Culex* Species Collected: 52,246
- Total mosquito pools tested: 869
- Percent positivity: 9.55%

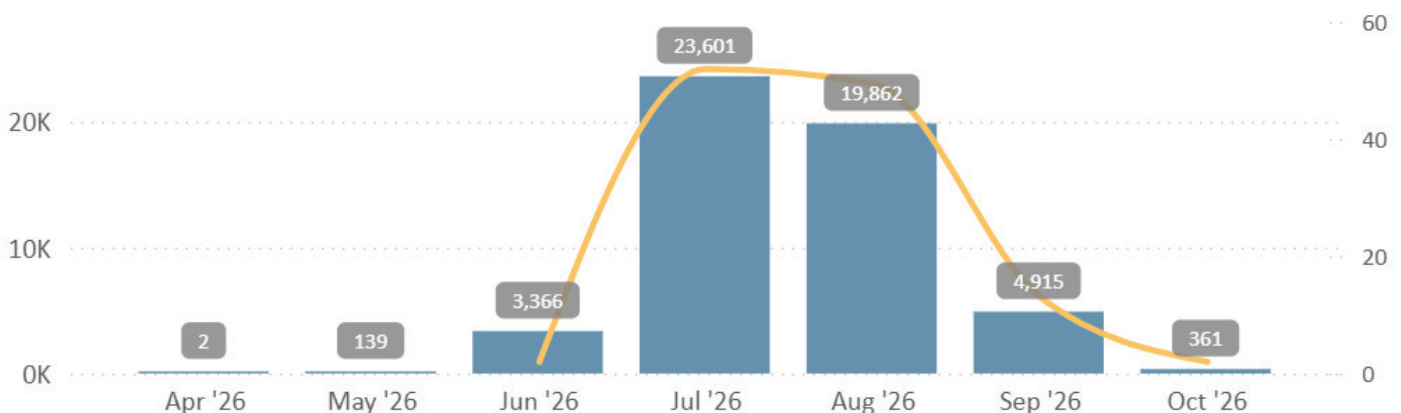
Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by Month and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative ● 5 Year Median Pool Count



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by Month

● Culex Species Collected ● 5 Year Median Pool Count





Flags at Half-Staff Statewide in Honor of Deputy Katherine Ann Frank on Sunday and Monday

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Larry Rhoden ordered that flags be flown at half-staff statewide from sunrise until sunset on Monday, October 19, 2026, in honor of Minnehaha County Sheriff's Deputy Katherine Ann Frank, who tragically lost her life in the line of duty. Katherine worked at the South Dakota State Penitentiary from September 2022 until being hired with the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office in June of 2024.

Governor Rhoden has also ordered flags be flown at half-staff statewide the day prior to the funeral services for Deputy Frank, Sunday, October 18, 2026, to honor her along with all the men and women who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

"Sandy and I are deeply saddened by the loss of Minnehaha County Sheriff's Deputy Katherine Ann Frank, who was shot in the line of duty," said Governor Larry Rhoden. "Please join us in praying for her family and friends — and for all those who put their lives in harm's way to keep our state strong, safe, and free."

A funeral service for Deputy Frank will be held on Monday, October 19, 2026, at 1:00 pm CT at the Denny Sanford Premier Center.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 12 of 73

Wilmot's Naval Hero

By Katie Hunhoff

Roberts County residents are standing a little taller this Veterans Day because they now lay claim to a Medal of Honor winner.

Naval hero Royce Williams, a Wilmot native, never spoke of his biggest adventure — not even to his wife, for 64 years. When his story was finally made public in 2016 — by Russians, no less — he became a senior celebrity. In February of this year, he became South Dakota's newest Congressional Medal of Honor recipient at age 100. We published a long feature article on him in our May/June 2026 issue.

His dramatic day unfolded the morning of Nov. 18, 1952, over Pacific waters off North Korea. It was his first mission as a Navy pilot. Williams and three other aviators launched their F9F-5 Panther jets from an aircraft carrier to provide cover for American ships. The flight leader and his wingman were soon directed to return to the carrier.

That left Williams and his wingman, Lt. Dave Rowlands, alone in the air over choppy seas. As they broke through thick clouds, seven Soviet MiG-15s contrails came into view. In an instant, the Soviet pilots attacked. Williams fired back, hitting a MiG that tailed off into the clouds. Rowlands pursued it.

The other 6 MiGs swung back, firing on the lone American. In a 2016 Naval interview, Williams said he spent "not a second on straight and level flight." His Panther jet, while a capable bomber, was outmatched by the MiGs' superior speed and climb rate. His only hope was to out-maneuver them.

He fired at every opportunity. When the Soviet leader and his wingman dived, Williams steered toward them.

"He turned away and the wingman rolled down on me and we went belly-to-belly as I raked him with a long burst," he recounted. "He stopped firing and went under me."

As Williams turned repeatedly, other MiGs came into his gunsight. He fired more rounds. He fired more rounds. Then his wing was struck. "The shell went into the engine area and messed up the hydraulic unit," he said. "I suddenly lost rudder and flaps and only had partial aileron control."

The final MiG trailed him until Rowlands reappeared; then the pilot flew away.

The fight had lasted 35 harrowing minutes. But the danger wasn't over. Williams could not control his damaged plane below 170 knots; normal speed for landing on a carrier was 105. Worse yet, 20-foot swells were rocking the USS Oriskany. Williams considered ditching the plane in the Sea of Japan but he knew he wouldn't survive its frigid waters.

Fortunately, the ship's crew positioned him perfectly and the Panther's tailhook caught the landing cable, jolting it to a halt.

Williams had fired all of his 760 rounds. Airmen counted 263 holes in his plane. Yet he walked away and told no one. Navy admirals and the Truman White House — and, some say, even Soviet leader Joseph Stalin — feared publicity could escalate Cold War tensions.

Weeks later, Williams was called to Seoul to discuss the incident with military officials. To his surprise, President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower was there to thank him personally. They shared a drink and agreed the story would remain classified.

Williams received the Silver Star in 1953 for his actions in Korea. A decade later, he served as a wing commander in Vietnam.

He married Camilla Foss, a childhood sweetheart from Clinton, Minn., where Williams' family had moved after leaving Wilmot in 1937.

In 2016, Russia declassified records from the Korean War, including a report of the 1952 dogfight. U.S.

EXPLORING SOUTH DAKOTA

WITH SOUTH
DAKOTA
MAGAZINE

By Katie Hunhoff



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Navy officials and veterans then began to talk about Williams' amazing feat.

After the declassification, Rear Admiral Doniphan B. Shelton called it "unmatched in the Korean War ... unmatched in the Vietnam War, unmatched ever since."

Wilmot's military traditions run deep. American Legion Post 64, one of the most active organizations in the town of 439, recently donated a television set to the Wee Wolves Day Care Center. The Legionnaires serve free popcorn at high school basketball games, collect toys for youth, sponsor an Easter egg hunt, provide Bibles and supplies to a Sunday School and publish an annual gun calendar.

Roger Butler, the Legion commander, says his post is working with 4-H youth and the Community Club to promote Wilmot's churches on signs along Highway 15. They also unveiled a new Veterans Memorial at the Wilmot Cemetery last spring.

Now they may have a new project. Their celebrated native son is only the eleventh soldier with South Dakota ties to receive the military's most prestigious award.

Butler admits that he and many of his fellow Legion members and townspeople barely recognized Williams' name a year ago. "But I've only been here 29 years," he admits with a laugh, "so I'm sure others knew of him. We've just started to talk about how we can honor him here."

Williams, who turned 101 years old on April 4, attends Post 416 American Legion events at Encinitas, Calif. He ranks his dad's Wilmot American Legion cap among his prized possessions, and he welcomed the news of a possible memorial in his name, back home at his father's Post 64.

"If that happens," he says, "I'd bust my buttons!"



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Podcast: Pros and cons on a ballot question that could repeal SD's Medicaid expansion requirement

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

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

On November 3rd, South Dakota voters will decide on four proposed amendments to the state constitution, all placed on the ballot by state lawmakers. We'll be bringing you an explanation of each of those questions, and interviews with supporters and opponents, through Searchlight Report and our website at southdakotasearchlight dot com.

One of the questions, called Amendment I, asks voters to approve repealing the Medicaid expansion requirement in the state constitution if the federal government's share of expansion funding drops below 90%. There's also a dispute about the language of the amendment. The state's attorney general says it would trigger an immediate termination of expanded Medicaid if federal funding declines. The amendment's supporters say it would merely give lawmakers the opportunity to consider eliminating the expansion. You'll hear more about that later in this episode.

Medicaid is government-funded health insurance for people with low incomes. In 2022, South Dakota voters approved the expansion of Medicaid eligibility to adults with incomes up to 138% of the poverty level, and that was to make the most of a funding match from the federal government. The expansion is part of the state constitution, which means it can only be altered by voters.

About 30,000 people are enrolled in the expanded coverage, according to the state Department of Social Services. About 143,000 South Dakotans are enrolled in Medicaid overall.

Last year, lawmakers estimated that if the federal government reduces its support to 70%, the state would be on the hook for about \$72 million to sustain the expansion.

Later in this episode, you'll hear from Deb Fischer-Clemens, a nurse and Democratic former state lawmaker. She supports Medicaid expansion, opposes the amendment and wants you to vote no. But first, you'll hear from state Representative Will Mortenson, a Republican from Fort Pierre. He led the effort in the Legislature to bring the question to voters and wants you to vote yes.

MORTENSON: I think this is among the most important and fiscally responsible measures that the voters will be voting on this year. The voters, several years ago, authorized and directed that South Dakota enter into Medicaid expansion, making it that that healthcare would be provided by the government, not just to populations that were vulnerable — as it always had been to disabled folks or to pregnant mothers or elderly — but to able-bodied adults. That was a vote that South Dakota put forward several years ago and that was faithfully implemented by the Legislature, that was put through immediately and completely.

That vote and that measure was all under the premise that the federal government would be paying 90% of all of those costs and the state share, which is 10%, still resulted in tens of millions of dollars that we've been now spending on this program that couldn't go to schools, it couldn't go to nursing homes to help out the elderly, it couldn't go to helping out disabled folks. We've had to spend it on that expansion.

So what this says, and I think this is very respectful of the voters, it says that "Hey, if circumstances change, if the federal government no longer is providing 90% match, we should talk about this again." We should have a situation where we can look at, do we continue to cover every single person in the ex-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 15 of 73

pansion population? Are there populations we're more protective of, or less, or where do we provide that within the budget constraints?

I don't think anybody wants to see dramatic cuts to education. I don't think anybody wants to see dramatic cuts to nursing homes, but those are where we spend all of our money at the state level, and if the federal government dramatically reduces their share, that is what we will be facing. And so what this says is let's give ourselves some flexibility where we can look at our budget priorities if that federal match reduces. I want to be completely crystal clear. If the match reduces, this does not automatically get rid of Medicaid expansion. That is now a statutory measure. So it'll take the Legislature to change something, but I do think that changed circumstances require fresh analysis, and that's exactly what this measure would bring.

O'BRIEN:How do you respond to people who are concerned about the 30,000 people that are using and taking advantage of expanded Medicaid, and the fear that they could become uninsured?

MORTENSON: Yeah, well, I hope people aren't fearmongering on that because, again, it's absolutely crystal clear that if the voters approve this measure, that would not go away, day one. It would merely allow us to say, you know, are we going to keep full coverage for every one of those people? Are we going to dramatically cut education and nursing homes? Are we going to raise a lot of taxes? I mean, those would be the questions that would be before the Legislature if the federal government drops its match. Right now our hands are tied. Right now we will be looking at those cuts to education. We will be looking at those cuts to nursing homes or increasing taxes if this federal match changes. And so, I think that, you know, it's only fair and responsible for the state that if the federal government reduces its match, that we should be able to look at this again.

O'BRIEN:And you said, after Governor Rhoden's budget address back last December, that seeing the number of how much the state was spending on Medicaid as opposed to education was bleak. I guess, do you still feel that way and how are you seeing those budgetary concerns playing out now?

MORTENSON: I mean, I've always been one that thinks our budget should reflect our top priority, and for me that's our kids and our future. And this year, for the first time, I believe in state history, K-12 education was not our top budget number. That is, we were spending more money on Medicaid than we were on our kids, and I think that is a sad reflection. I think we should be investing more in our future than on some of these social welfare programs and so, you know, this is an aspect that's been growing leaps and bounds. It has outpaced, Medicaid spending has outpaced, increases in education dramatically. It's increased a lot faster than providing for state employees and law enforcement. It has been the big driver of increased spending over and above, well over and above any of those other budget priorities, and that's a, you know, I'll stand by it. I think that's a bleak thing for our state.

Now, I will finish with this. I've got a lot of respect for the voters of this state. I think that they are smart. They passed Medicaid expansion, and then a few years later we said, "Well, what do you think about Medicaid expansion for this expanded population with some work requirements?" They said, "Yeah, we think that'd be a good idea." You know, those haven't been implemented yet. Precisely in this situation, I mean, the Legislature hasn't done anything with that at this point.

In this case, again, I think it's entirely respectful of voters to say, hey, if circumstances change, and this isn't a 90 to 10 proposition, but the federal government makes it 50/50, and now the state has to pay hundreds of millions of dollars more. Should we look at this again? I think the voters can and will say yes to that and trust that, you know, that those budget priorities be metered out, as they've always been with education and nursing homes being right there beside these able-bodied adults, that we've decided to provide government healthcare for.

O'BRIEN:In 2024, South Dakota lawmakers asked voters to let them consider adding work requirements for the expansion population, which was approved. Since then, the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act has added work requirements for all Medicaid expansion-eligible adults. Starting in January, people in the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 16 of 73

expansion population will have to meet a requirement of 80 hours of work, school or community service each month, if they're not covered by an exemption.

As you heard, Mortenson says Amendment I would allow lawmakers to consider ending expanded Medicaid if the federal government reduces its funding. But the state's Attorney General, Republican Marty Jackley, says a drop in federal funding would trigger an automatic repeal of the program, if voters approve Amendment I.

Jackley is responsible for writing a title and explanation for the ballot. His title says the amendment QUOTE "repeals expanded Medicaid coverage" END QUOTE if federal funding drops below 90%, and the explanation he wrote says if that scenario occurs, the amendment QUOTE "ends the expanded Medicaid coverage." END QUOTE. He stood by that language when I interviewed him.

JACKLEY: I've got to follow the direction of the Legislature, and we did just that. When I do a title explanation and either a constitutional or a statutory explanation, I have a committee made up of, I think in this instance, it's five lawyers to review it. I work directly with them. We came up with the required short and concise title that says exactly what that constitutional amendment would do. That title, along with the body of the explanation, was available, was put out. There's a 10-day comment period. And the attorney general received not a single comment of concern regarding either the title or the body of it. And so it tells the voters exactly what it does, you know, and I'm comfortable with that.

O'BRIEN: Mortenson told me he wasn't aware of how Jackley's views and the ballot language differ with his own interpretation, until Searchlight asked him about it.

MORTENSON: I would say the attorney general's title and explanation are both a bit misleading on that because what it should have read in the title is, "An amendment to the South Dakota constitution that repeals the requirement of expanded Medicaid if federal funding drops below 90%." There are all sorts of things that are not required in the constitution that we do, right?

Think about, like traditional Medicaid, our current Medicaid program, which is a voluntary one, we don't have to do it, but we do it in partnership with the federal government, but there's no constitutional requirement that we be in traditional Medicaid. And so we can be in it, which we are statutorily, without the constitution requiring it. And so, in this case, I just think that that title and the explanation both overstate what this is going to do. What this will do, because there are statutes and I can give you the statute numbers if you give me a little bit of time, but they were all passed in 2021 or maybe 2022 after the ballot measure passed, but they implement all those things in statute, you know, I mean they signed us up to do all those things and they are on the books in statute and those aren't affected one up, down, or sideways by the constitutional amendment.

The constitutional amendment is just the mandate that in statute you must do these things. So of course you may do them. The government may do them if they want, and right now we have and so I would just say that the title and the explanation both overstate what this does. It would absolutely not immediately remove Medicaid coverage for the expansion population. That is 100% inaccurate.

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

Fischer-Clemens supports Medicaid expansion and opposes Amendment I. She interprets the amendment language as automatically triggering the elimination of Medicaid expansion if federal funding declines.

FISCHER-CLEMENS: Back in 2022, the voters of South Dakota approved the constitutional change to preserve Medicaid expansion, which authorized dollars from the federal government. Only 10% of dollars come from the state and 90% come from the federal government, and this is to deal with individuals whose income, for a family of three is, like \$37,000 for the year. And so it's really about people who do

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 17 of 73

not have the resources to pay for insurance, nor can they pay for their healthcare.

And so in 2022, as I said, we had worked for a few years to get this accomplished, but the voters of South Dakota supported the fact that we need to assure that our families, friends, and neighbors have access to healthcare at the appropriate time. And the fact that I'm a nurse, this was something that was critically important to me. And as I saw our South Dakota history, and what was happening with individuals, and that is that if you don't have money for insurance, you definitely don't have money to pay for your healthcare. Therefore, you do not do your preventative screenings, mammograms, prostate, cancer, all the different screenings.

You don't, you just don't do it. You don't go see your doctor on a regular basis. And if you did see your doctor and they ordered a prescription of some kind for whatever was ailing you, you probably can't afford to buy the prescription. That is hugely concerning families, neighbors, friends if they cannot get their healthcare. That impacts you as well in two different ways.

One, it is that my health insurance is gonna go up because the healthcare systems in South Dakota need to and have to provide care and service to individuals that show up at the emergency room, which is the most expensive care there is. And so, that is another whole challenge that we face, and people are talking about the expensive cost of healthcare.

And I think when they say that, they're concerned about it because of their insurance for those that have insurance. And the reason why insurance costs keep going up is that the cost of healthcare has had to go up because of those individuals who can't afford healthcare. And because they can't afford it, they then delay care, delay treatment, delay seeing a physician, probably don't have a physician until they're very sick. And then they go to the emergency room, which is the most expensive care. And in many cases, probably have to be admitted or go through extreme testing, etcetera, which is expensive.

If you eliminate these 30,000 people — 30,000 people are on Medicaid expansion in the state of South Dakota — and if you eliminate those people's ability to seek healthcare, we will see issues for others as well.

O'BRIEN: One of the supporters of this measure, back in 2025, Senator Casey Crabtree, had said that if the federal government reduces its support to 70%, the state would be kind of on the hook for about \$72 million to continue to sustain that Medicaid expansion. Do you see those budget concerns also reflected in South Dakota?

FISCHER-CLEMENS: Absolutely. I'm all about budget concerns. Now, I think that statement would result in more concerns, more questions, more discussion. The health systems, the physicians, providers, clinics across the state would get involved in these discussions and we would figure it out. But I agree, that would be a huge problem, and certainly we don't want that to happen. But, we also don't want to eliminate this with the possibility that even a 1% cut could get that accomplished. So, yes, there would need to be some serious work done in that world, but we did it for years, before 2020, right?

But we left people out, and so, the cost of healthcare was going up because they required more healthcare and more cost. So there's a double edge to this sword. There's no doubt about it. But at this point in time, it is a constitutional amendment that was supported by the people of the state of South Dakota. And so, using that argument that if they drop it to 70%, let's wait to see if they do something like that.

O'BRIEN: OK, so when you're looking at the attorney general's language regarding constitutional Amendment I compared to the legislative process and kind of what they had pushed through to put on the ballot, what are you, I guess, what are you noticing? Do you have any concerns about that?

FISCHER-CLEMENS: It really says that the proposed constitutional amendment ends the expanded Medicaid coverage if the federal funding for expansion drops below 90%, and that's really what will happen. Thirty thousand South Dakotans will be without coverage. It's, you know, what we've said all along, it's that simple. If the people of South Dakota change their votes and say that they want to get rid of

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 18 of 73

Medicaid expansion for 30,000 people. That's what would happen if they vote for this amendment.

O'BRIEN: From what you're telling me, that means if the federal government drops their support to 89%, it would just automatically end that?

FISCHER-CLEMENS: That's .. I've gone back and looked at all the different documents, et cetera and I, yeah, that's exactly what would happen. I guess I'll say that I was hopeful when we started working on this that it would be something that maybe legislators ... but they had, like I told you before, they had 6, 7 years to do this. So, as I think about it, I don't believe that they will do anything. It's gonna be a done deal. It'll be gone.

O'BRIEN: OK, and that 6, 7 year period, that was that push to even just get expanded Medicaid available to folks, right?

FISCHER-CLEMENS: Correct.

I think as legislators, they believe they would then have a voice, but I don't believe they would use their voice because they had the opportunity in the past and didn't. They're suggesting that they would have a voice and I suppose it's true, but these guys were not supportive of Medicaid expansion, so I can't envision that they would... I mean, I don't know. I don't know what they're thinking, but, technically, yes, the amendment passing will, if it drops even at 0.1%, it would take it out of the Constitution and then Medicaid expansion.

It's, it's the way it is, and, and that's, that's been our thinking, but I also had been hopeful, and, but now I'm changing my mind on that.

The bottom line is 30,000 South Dakotans, that are the working poor — and they are working, they have to be working, they have to have an income — would lose their insurance coverage. So, preventative care would go away for those folks, emergency room costs would go up for when they get sick. They just wouldn't have the same opportunities that people with insurance have. And it's unfair.

That's why we put it in the constitution. We wanted fairness for people who are working and they are hardworking South Dakotans who are working in businesses that can't afford to provide insurance for them.

So this is their opportunity and their way to assure that they have good quality healthcare, like, like most people in South Dakota do.

O'BRIEN: Constitutional Amendment I will be on the ballot for voters on November 3rd. A "yes" vote is for removing expanded Medicaid as a requirement in the state constitution if the federal government's share of funding drops below 90%. A "no" vote leaves the expansion intact, regardless of the federal share.

Early voting for the election is underway, and the voter registration deadline is October 19th.

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

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

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

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

Positions on election hand-counting split candidates in South Dakota's secretary of state race

One has supported eliminating vote tabulation machines, while two others support existing systems

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota voters are selecting a new person to oversee elections in the state, with a choice between a candidate who has supported hand-counting and the elimination of vote tabulation machines, or candidates who say they want to support an election system that's working well.

Republican Heather Baxter, Democrat Terrence Davis and Libertarian Tamara Lesnar are the nominees for secretary of state, an office that not only oversees elections but also manages campaign finance reporting, business filings, lobbyist registrations and other administrative functions.

The current officeholder, Monae Johnson, was elected in 2022 and sought another term but lost her bid for the Republican nomination at the party's state convention during the summer. Baxter defeated Johnson with 59% of the party delegates' votes, and Johnson has since endorsed Davis.

The election is Nov. 3, advance voting is underway, and the voter registration deadline is Monday.

Heather Baxter

Baxter, of Rapid City, has been serving as a state representative for the past two years but lost a primary race on June 2 and has since focused on the secretary of state race.

She is a small-business owner from a well-known family in the Black Hills, where her late grandfather Korczak Ziolkowski started the Crazy Horse mountain carving. Her business experience has included running a tanning facility, women's day spa and fitness center. She currently works as a strength and flexibility coach for elderly people, offering services at home or in assisted living centers.

Baxter's campaign website says she supports "improved hand-counting" methods. She co-sponsored state legislation to prohibit the use of automatic tabulating machines to count votes.

Baxter told South Dakota Searchlight she supported that bill because some counties use outdated software and laptops that don't meet federal election standards; therefore, "we shouldn't be using these tabulators."

"And that's why I was willing to support that," she said. "If we're not compliant, let's get rid of them."

But if elected, Baxter said she would take a different approach. She said that if she found county auditors using outdated software, for example, she would have "a sit-down conversation" with them.

Baxter said she likes hand-counting because "you can see the voter intent." She gave an example of a voter scribbling out a first choice and circling an intended one, and a hand-counter spotting the issue "where a machine didn't read that."

Those sorts of positions helped Baxter defeat Johnson at the Republican convention. Activists who had previously supported Johnson had become frustrated that Johnson did not implement some of their preferred changes, including a move away from electronic tabulation. Some of those same people testified in favor of the 2025 bill to ban tabulation machines.

Baxter told Searchlight she would focus on ensuring counties comply with state and federal requirements while giving county auditors greater local control over their elections.

"The biggest misconception is that I'm going to go in and just completely get rid of these machines when I don't even have that in my wheelhouse of what I'm allowed to do," Baxter said.

She said the Legislature, rather than the secretary of state alone, would have to implement such a change.

Baxter said she wants to meet with auditors to identify inconsistencies in how counties are instructed to administer elections, and to hear from business owners about how the secretary of state's office could work better.

"Transparency and accountability are not a burden. They're the job," Baxter said.

Terrence Davis

Davis, of Sioux Falls, is a former South Dakota and Tennessee state trooper who is pursuing a doctoral degree in law and policy. He worked as an intake specialist with East River Legal Services prior to the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 20 of 73

campaign. He was born in Peoria, Illinois, and said he experienced homelessness and grew up in a low-income environment.

Davis is a Democrat arguing that the secretary of state should be treated as an administrative job, not a vehicle for partisan politics. He said that's what Baxter is doing.

"South Dakotans like boring politics," he said. "They just want the system to work the way it's designed to work and to find solutions if there's an issue."

Davis said his first priority would be rebuilding trust in the office through more timely responses to county auditors, members of the public and the media. He also wants to improve the secretary of state's website and strengthen relationships with county auditors.

Davis said his clearest policy disagreement with Baxter is over her support for hand-counting and her criticism of electronic tabulation. He favors using technology alongside human oversight.

"With that being said, it doesn't mean we cannot improve, but I think it should be a very gradual, measured approach," Davis said.

Davis said Baxter has been pivoting away from her anti-election-machine stance, which he said is ultimately motivated by "the whole situation surrounding the 2020 election," referring to President Donald Trump's false claim that the election was fraudulent.

Davis is pitching himself to voters who might normally vote Republican. He pointed to his past as a registered Republican and described himself as someone who sits in the middle on many issues.

"Look beyond 'Democrat,' and look at a person for the skill set, for what they want to offer all South Dakotans," Davis said.

Tamara Lesnar

Lesnar, of Grenville, is a former compliance officer at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, where she was responsible for holding traders accountable for violations. She now runs a small business selling collectibles.

Lesnar is running on the Libertarian ticket, rejecting what she called a power struggle between the state's two major parties that leaves voters behind.

She is not new to South Dakota politics. Lesnar ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate as the Libertarian candidate in 2022 and for the South Dakota House in 2024.

Lesnar's campaign website highlights priorities including protecting voting rights, reducing government burdens on businesses and making state government more responsive.

Lesnar also said she supports continuing to use voting tabulation machines. She sees no compelling reason to eliminate them, she said, and widespread hand-counting would require more labor than local election offices can provide.

Lesnar has ideas to use technology in new ways. She proposed databases that would allow residents to anonymously indicate their preferences on issues before state lawmakers vote.

"I'm more about direct democracy," she said.

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

Funding gap resolved for the only fair housing organization in the Dakotas

BY JACK DUR

A long-awaited federal grant has come through for the only fair housing organization in the Dakotas, resolving a monthslong funding gap that led the group to furlough half of its staff.

The Grand Forks-based High Plains Fair Housing Center had been waiting on the \$425,000 final installment of a three-year Fair Housing Initiatives Program grant initially expected in May. But the delay extended over the summer, leading the center to furlough four of its eight staff last month.

A notification reached center Executive Director Michelle Rydz on Saturday that the grant money was

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 21 of 73

in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's financial system for disbursing funds, she said. The grant starts Thursday.

Three of the center's four furloughed staff can come back. The fourth took a job with Legal Services of North Dakota, a partner organization, Rydz said.

The High Plains Fair Housing Center assists people within the scope of the federal Fair Housing Act, which prohibits people from being treated differently because of a protected characteristic, including race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status or disability. The center investigates, mediates and resolves housing discrimination complaints, and assists with accommodations.

The center's intake line suffered most during the grant lapse "because we just didn't have the resources to be able to contact as many people as possible, and so people were waiting longer," Rydz said. It's unclear whether anyone lost their housing as a result, she said.

She credited North Dakota's congressional delegation for stepping in, making calls and following through.

"I think that they realize the importance of High Plains in the housing ecosystem in terms of keeping people housed and providing those advocacy services," Rydz said.

In a statement, U.S. Rep. Julie Fedorchak, R-N.D., said when she learned of the funding delay, her office immediately reached out to HUD and the White House to get answers and push for a timely resolution.

"I know this funding gap had real consequences, and I'm glad we could get this issue resolved and the center fully staffed again," she said.

HUD did not respond to a North Dakota Monitor email for comment.

In 2025, the center fielded 958 total calls, more than one-third of which related to allegations of housing discrimination. The others dealt with landlord-tenant matters or general inquiries.

The center reached 204 resolutions for clients, about half of which were done without having to file a complaint.

In the last year and a half, the center has handled about 100 calls in South Dakota, which has no in-state fair housing organization. The center will be able to resume taking calls from South Dakota, Rydz said.

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

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

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

The next act for the No Kings movement: early voting in the midterms

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The No Kings movement that has brought millions to the streets across the United States three times since the start of President Donald Trump's second term is staging its next event at the polls.

Organizers across hundreds of advocacy groups will pull together thousands of events nationwide Saturday to encourage early voting in this year's midterm elections. Voting is already underway in dozens of states, and roughly 5.1 million ballots — both in-person and mail — have been cast, according to the University of Florida's Election Lab.

Saturday's "No Kings: Vote Early Day of Action" events include marches and walks to the polls where early voting is already underway and open on the weekends. Also planned are gatherings that offer live music, food and assistance for voter registration, car pool sign-ups and information on how to become a poll observer.

"The best way to prevent any funny business from this administration after Election Day is to make sure that our turnout is massive — so clear, and so overwhelming that our victory for democracy is impossible to question," Alma Couverthie, a senior organizer with the advocacy group Common Cause, said at a Wednesday morning press conference in front of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 22 of 73

Common Cause is one of the nearly 320 organizations coordinating the events under the direction of nine national steering committee groups.

"There is no time to sit on the sidelines. We need everyone. So I urge you, make your plan to vote early. Don't trust in the way you voted before. Check again. Make sure you know where you're going, how you're going, and who you're bringing with you," Couverthie said.

This one is different

Ezra Levin, co-founder and co-executive director of Indivisible, one of the nine steering committee groups, said Saturday's events will be distinct from previous No Kings Day rallies in June and October 2025, and March 2026.

"It is different in the sense that No Kings One, Two, and Three were designed to send a message that the American people were not simply going to sacrifice their constitutional rights, that they were willing to stand up," Levin told States Newsroom during an Oct. 9 interview.

The message of the three marches was "well sent," he said, as each successive one expanded in numbers. It started with 5 million attendees across 2,100 individual events nationwide on June 14, 2025, to more than 7 million at 2,700 events on Oct. 18, 2025, and then reached 8 million across 3,330 events on March 28, 2026, according to organizers.

With Trump at historic low approval ratings, and with an "electoral wipeout" likely ahead if polls are on target, Levin said No Kings messaging "is largely completed" and that action is the next step.

"The goal of No Kings on October 17 is therefore not just to protest and get attention to the fact that people aren't afraid to stand up, but to use this tool that is available to us right now in October, and it is a different constitutional right, not just the constitutional right to organize and make your voice heard — but your constitutional right to vote," Levin said.

As of Wednesday, more than 2,500 events were scheduled for Saturday in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, according to No Kings organizers.

Deirdre Schifeling, chief political and advocacy officer for the ACLU, said the civil liberties organization has been training thousands of volunteers to assist voters in knowing their rights and what to do if they encounter issues at the polls.

"We know that the best way to protect our freedom is to act free. That means showing up at the polls and making sure that your neighbors can show up too. See you at the polls on Saturday," Schifeling said at the Wednesday press conference.

Joining forces

Other concerted efforts to do what organizers call "get out the vote" are joining No Kings events Saturday to amplify and strengthen their messages, leaders say.

Bishop William Barber, Repairers of the Breach founder and co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign, has been organizing 1,000 marches nationwide to the polls in an effort he announced in July as "Love Forward Together."

So far, Barber's campaign has organized 652 marches in 428 locations across the United States, according to Repairers of the Breach.

Standing before the U.S. Supreme Court Wednesday alongside No Kings organizers, Barber said the overall goal despite the campaign or group "is about people being conspicuous in their courage and in their commitment."

"There is no competition. We have one competition. We are competing against a low voter turnout that can no longer exist in this democracy if we are to have a democracy, and if we are to have a democracy that serves all the people," Barber said.

The Interfaith Alliance will be more than 10 days into a 15-state "The Vote is Sacred" bus tour Saturday when it stops in Charlotte, North Carolina, to join a "No Kings: Vote Early Day of Action" event.

Rev. Paul Brandeis Raushenbush said the tour is about mobilizing faith communities to be "trained up" to recognize possible illegal interference at polling places.

"Unfortunately, this administration has threatened to disrupt. ... We are going to bring the nonviolent

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 23 of 73

spiritual mobilization that has been with us, and we're going to be trained up all across the country," Raushenbush said during an Oct. 6 interview with MS NOW's "The Rachel Maddow Show" after the tour's stop in Kansas City, Missouri.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment, but referred States Newsroom to a statement from a Republican National Committee spokesperson.

"From Virginia to Louisiana, Democrats have tried to manipulate congressional maps for political gain. Republicans are restoring the rule of law, protecting fair representation, and making it easier to vote and harder to cheat," according to the statement from Ally Triolo, the RNC's election integrity communications director.

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

Trump's DOJ demands California halt ballots to suspected noncitizens

BY JONATHAN SHORMAN

The U.S. Department of Justice is demanding California not count ballots from voters it says are suspected noncitizens, a move by the Trump administration to apply last-minute pressure as voting begins in the midterm elections.

The Justice Department on Tuesday gave California election officials 48 hours to remove voters on a list contained on a thumb drive provided to Los Angeles County, the most populous county in the country. The DOJ also wants election officials to withhold mail ballots from these voters.

The demand appeared in letters to the California Secretary of State's Office and the Los Angeles Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. The DOJ gave the state until noon Eastern on Thursday to comply, threatening legal action if that deadline is not met.

The letters set the stage for a courtroom confrontation between the Trump administration and the largest state in the country ahead of Election Day. The Justice Department's demand marks an extraordinary effort to dictate to state officials who will be allowed to cast a ballot even as voting is underway.

"The United States hopes that you share our commitment to ensure that only American citizens participate in our federal elections. Allowing noncitizens to vote cancels citizen votes," R. Trent McCotter, an acting deputy U.S. attorney general, wrote in a letter to California Democratic Secretary of State Shirley Weber.

Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk Dean C. Logan said in a statement that his office received the thumb drive, along with a handwritten note containing a password. Workers in the office did not seek to open the thumb drive, which would have violated data security protocols, he said.

He said he would work with Weber and the state attorney general to determine next steps.

"Maintaining accurate voter registration records is a fundamental responsibility of our office," he added. "Federal and state laws are clear on how voter eligibility is established – and any action to remove a voter from eligibility must be based on verifiable information, not assertions of unconfirmed data matching."

In a statement late Wednesday, Weber said the DOJ's actions "only serve to cause chaos and fuel public distrust in our elections."

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom's press account on social media called the Trump administration's actions "completely unacceptable and inappropriate."

Questions linger

It's not clear whether the Justice Department plans to send letters to additional states. The Justice Department provided copies of the letters to States Newsroom on Wednesday but didn't answer a question about whether other states would receive them.

In the letters, McCotter asked California election officials to segregate the mail ballots of the suspected noncitizens until their citizenship status is determined. The individuals shouldn't be sent mail ballots if they haven't already been sent one, McCotter added, and any returned ballots should not be tabulated until

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 24 of 73

citizenship can be determined.

McCotter did not say how many individuals are on the DOJ's list or how the federal government came to believe they aren't citizens. He wrote that the Justice Department would "seek emergency relief" if California didn't comply.

Voter roll changes prohibited during election season

Federal law prohibits most states from conducting systematic purges of voters less than 90 days before an election. If the Justice Department sues to force California to remove the suspected noncitizen voters, a judge would likely grapple with whether the DOJ-provided list represents the kind of mass removal that's not currently allowed.

Voting rights groups and Democratic election officials, as well as some Republicans, have warned that Trump may try to interfere in the midterm elections. If Republicans retake control of the U.S. House or Senate, the final two years of the president's term could be mired in investigations and legislative gridlock.

Federal courts have uniformly blocked the department's efforts to force states to turn over their voter rolls, including sensitive personal information such as driver's license and Social Security numbers. And a federal judge last week ruled against the DOJ's use of voter data even from states that voluntarily provided the information.

The U.S. Supreme Court also blocked Trump's attempt to restrict voting by mail through the U.S. Postal Service, leaving the president with few remaining avenues to assert authority over elections, which are administered by the states under the U.S. Constitution.

"Donald Trump's attempt to invalidate votes in California is an attack on every voter across the country. The president is abusing his position in a callous attempt to take away the power of everyday people, but here in California we're not going to let him," Jonathan Paik, a leader with Can't Stop California, a nonpartisan voter mobilization group, said in a statement.

Trump has long complained about California elections, especially the speed of ballot counting in the state. California's long count is a well-known feature of its elections, with election officials given about a month to process and tally all ballots and doesn't indicate fraud.

The Justice Department has followed Trump's lead in scrutinizing California's elections. The top federal prosecutor in Los Angeles has linked suspicions about California's elections to the state's refusal to turn over its unredacted voter roll.

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.

Nonpartisan government watchdog recommends automated activation of ICE body cameras

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection need to improve oversight and guidance for federal immigration officers' use of body-worn cameras, according to a Wednesday report from independent federal investigators.

Officials with the Department of Homeland Security, however, resisted a recommendation in the report from the Government Accountability Office that ICE change its current policy, in which agents choose when to manually turn on body cameras, as opposed to automatic activation.

In a response to GAO, the department — which oversees both agencies — argued that automatic activation on a body camera presents a risk to ongoing operations, such as recording sensitive interactions with informants or victims or inadvertently filming bystanders.

GAO said that statement was insufficient. "However, DHS's response did not include information on environments where automated activation could be effective, or other controls that could help ensure compliance with activating cameras when required by policy," according to GAO.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 25 of 73

Multiple shootings

The report came after multiple high-profile cases of federal immigration officers shooting and killing people during interactions and enforcement actions, prompting calls for wider body camera use.

GAO made seven recommendations to the Department of Homeland Security to update its guidance for body cameras.

The department agreed with six, but disagreed with implementing automated camera activation controls, arguing that ICE's current policy is sufficient. CBP does have automatic camera activation, which means the body camera turns on and starts recording when a weapon is drawn or emergency lights are turned on.

"Without reliable control activities, ICE risks gaps in documentation and video evidence that can make reviews of incidents more challenging," according to GAO.

After federal immigration officers killed two U.S. citizens in January during an aggressive deportation drive in Minneapolis, the Trump administration directed body cameras to immigration agents.

In June, there were two back-to-back killings of immigrants in Texas and Maine that prompted border czar Tom Homan to announce that during traffic stops at least one ICE officer will wear a body camera.

Democrats have also pushed for all federal immigration officers to wear body cameras in the wake of the killings and violent interactions from agents that were recorded by bystanders.

Thousands of body cameras distributed

GAO investigators found that as of April, ICE issued 4,800 body cameras, splitting them evenly between its deportation wing of Enforcement and Removal Operations and the investigative law enforcement arm of ICE, Homeland Security Investigations.

And in June, CBP issued approximately 11,500 cameras, mostly to Border Patrol.

But GAO found problems in the cameras' deployment.

"Most CBP and ICE offices have not developed specific operational guidance that explains how personnel should use, or not use, cameras under their unique operational circumstances," according to the report. "The lack of guidance at this operational level increases the risk that CBP and ICE personnel will fail to use the cameras as required under policy."

DHS agreed to the recommendations from GAO that the leaders of ICE and CBP should update their body camera program to include changes in requirements and costs and plan for any contingencies based on current risk.

The department also agreed that CBP and ICE should implement goals to ensure effectiveness for the body-worn camera program and that both agencies should ensure their sub-agencies are also given proper guidance on the expectations and appropriate uses of the body cameras.

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

'More barriers than most':

Group deploys volunteers to protect Native voting rights

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

A nonprofit legal organization focused on Native American rights is sending legal volunteers to observe polling places in South Dakota and six other states with sizable Native American populations.

The Native American Rights Fund will send nearly 300 attorneys, law students and volunteers to polling places for the Nov. 3 election in South Dakota, Alaska, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota and Wisconsin. The volunteers will observe to ensure election rules are followed, and to document barriers Native voters encounter. Organization attorneys can also provide legal counsel.

Earlier this year, the organization released a report that analyzed federal election data from the last three elections and found that counties with large Native American populations reported larger declines in new voter registrations, higher registration rejection rates, lower voter turnout and higher mail-in ballot

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 26 of 73

rejection rates than national averages. South Dakota had the most counties included in the report and the third-largest Native American population of any state studied.

Native voters who face difficulties obtaining or casting a ballot may contact the organization at 866-OUR-VOTE or vote@narf.org, said Senior Staff Attorney Jacqueline De León in a news release.

"There are any number of steps where voters can encounter obstacles — and thanks to years of underfunded election infrastructure throughout Indian Country, Native voters are forced to confront more barriers than most," De León said.

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.

Social Security benefits increase will hit 3.6% in 2027

BY STATES NEWSROOM STAFF

WASHINGTON — The Social Security Administration announced on Wednesday that recipients will receive a 3.6% increase in benefits in 2027.

The cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, will begin for 72 million Social Security beneficiaries in January. It will apply for Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, recipients beginning on Dec. 31.

Some individuals receive both types of benefits. SSI provides payments to 7.3 million people with limited income and resources.

The COLA is based on continuing inflation, as recorded in the Consumer Price Index from the third quarter of 2025 through the third quarter of 2026.

On average, Social Security retirement benefits will increase by about \$75 a month, the agency said.

Tax rates to fund the program will stay virtually unchanged, at 6.2% of income up to a certain amount. The cap will increase slightly from \$184,500 this year to \$192,300 in 2027.

Social Security is facing a shortfall, with payments to recipients outpacing tax collections.

Without congressional action, that will mean benefits will automatically begin to decrease in 2032. Candidates in key U.S. Senate races this year, whose six-year terms would mean they'll be in office when the benefits cliff arrives, have stayed relatively quiet on the issue.

Trump administration appeals judge's order blocking White House ban of 3 news outlets

BY ASHLEY MURRAY AND JANE NORMAN

WASHINGTON — A federal judge late Tuesday extended a block on a Trump administration ban of press passes for three news organizations, which will allow them to continue to enter the White House grounds while a legal challenge to the ban, including a Wednesday appeal filed by the administration, plays out.

U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly in a 26-page order rejected Department of Justice arguments that the revocation of passes for CNN, Politico and MS NOW was based on the administration's concern over reporting that endangered national security.

"First, there is no evidence in the record that President (Donald) Trump made the decision to revoke Plaintiffs' hard passes on national security grounds from the get-go, nor at any time has he directly stated that national security was the reason for his decision. When he announced the ban with his post on September 18, he did not mention national security," Kelly wrote.

Kelly also said the news organizations were likely to succeed on their claim that the White House unlawfully retaliated against them for exercising their First Amendment rights. He noted that a previous court decision bars government officials from subjecting individuals to retaliatory actions after the fact for having engaged in speech protected by the amendment.

"President Trump's own comments suggest that he intended the revocation of Plaintiffs' hard passes

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 27 of 73

to alter their reporting on him, bolstering the case that his action here is sufficient to deter a reporter of ordinary firmness from reporting in the same way she had before," Kelly said.

He said the news organizations were also likely to succeed in their argument that they were denied due process by the administration.

Kelly granted the news outlets' request for a preliminary injunction, which Trump already has said the administration will appeal. It replaces a temporary restraining order, also granted by Kelly, that expired Tuesday.

The administration on Tuesday afternoon filed a notice to Kelly that it had appealed his ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

The notice of appeal did not contain any legal arguments. The court ordered the administration to submit a brief outlining its case by Nov. 13. The news organizations' response is due by the end of November.

Kelly's ruling came a little over three weeks after Trump banned CNN, MS NOW and Politico. The president announced the measure via his social media platform on Sept. 18, "a result of their constant 'reporting' FAKE NEWS!" he wrote.

The White House press office followed with letters Sept. 22 to the three outlets citing national security concerns and allegations of misinformation as reasons reporters' press passes were revoked.

Trump's order ousted 78 journalists from the three outlets, according to a court filing.

In a show of solidarity, major television networks that rotate distributing video coverage from the White House suspended video feeds over the next several days.

The three news outlets sued the White House in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on First Amendment grounds and alleged the ban caused irreparable harm to the organizations.

Kelly temporarily ordered the White House to restore press access on Sept. 24 to the three banned outlets.

Kelly, who appeared skeptical during an initial hearing, wrote in the eight-page temporary order that the media outlets were likely to succeed in the case, and that the journalists were denied their due process rights before their passes were confiscated.

Michael Velchik, senior counsel in the civil division of the Justice Department, had argued on Sept. 23 that access to the White House "is a privilege not a right."

Kelly was nominated by Trump during his first term and confirmed by the Senate in September 2017 by a vote of 94-2.

In response to a request for comment, the White House confirmed in a background statement not attributed to an individual that the decision will be appealed.

"The Fake News has no place demanding a spot in the President's Oval Office. The lies they smear are a disservice to the American public and tear at the very fabric of our Democracy. They're completely capable of reporting from directly outside. We intend to appeal this misguided decision," the statement said.

Theodore J. Boutrous Jr., the lawyer for the news outlets, said they were grateful for Kelly'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. "Since then, the President has repeatedly, candidly, and consistently admitted in public that he banned our clients from the White House to punish reporting he doesn't like and to try to force journalists to cover him in ways he prefers. 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."

Kelly also noted in his ruling that Trump could be right in his concerns about the nature of reporting on him, and that there were instances in which a national security argument would succeed.

"Still, 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," he said.

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

Protecting the state constitution, or protecting voters' right to change it: Amendment L explained

Ballot question would require future amendments to receive 60% approval

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

A question on South Dakotans' ballots in the Nov. 3 election pits two philosophies against each other: One says it's too easy to clutter up the state's constitution with policies that don't belong there, and the other says voters need the power to amend the constitution with a majority vote when lawmakers fail to adopt policies that voters want.

Amendment L is one of four ballot questions voters are considering in the state's general election.

The ballot question deals with state constitutional amendments, which only voters can approve. Lawmakers can place amendments on the ballot, and so can citizens if they collect enough signatures from registered South Dakota voters.

Ballot questions need a simple majority from voters to pass, but Amendment L would change the threshold for future amendments to 60%.

In recent years, voters have approved constitutional amendments expanding Medicaid eligibility and legalizing recreational marijuana (although the marijuana amendment was subjected to a lawsuit and invalidated by judges), among others. Policies should not be part of the constitution, said state Rep. John Hughes, R-Sioux Falls, who sponsored the 2025 resolution that lawmakers passed to put Amendment L on this year's ballot.

He said policies should be proposed and debated as regular laws, and the constitution should only contain foundational provisions like the structure and powers of government.

"Amendment L is a recognition that, through proper voter education, we will see the wisdom of reserving our state constitution as a permanent structure that, by and large, should stay the same and not be changed," Hughes said.

In the Legislature, Hughes' resolution to put Amendment L on the ballot received support from entities including the Foundation for Government Accountability, a Florida-based think tank whose website says it supports work requirements for the beneficiaries of social welfare programs, annual recertification for unions and the securing or elimination of ballot drop boxes to protect what it calls election integrity, among other issues. It also opposes what it describes as "far-left" efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

Similar attempts to raise the threshold for voter approval of ballot questions have been rejected by voters in past elections. In 2018, voters defeated Constitutional Amendment X, which would have raised the approval requirement for constitutional amendments to 55%. Constitutional Amendment C failed in 2022. That measure would have required 60% voter support for ballot questions that increase taxes or fees or require the state to spend \$10 million or more in a measure's first five years of implementation.

Chase Jensen, a senior organizer with the nonprofit Dakota Rural Action, opposes Amendment L. He said Republican lawmakers want to prevent voters from approving amendments — like the one requiring Medicaid expansion, which passed four years ago — that the lawmakers don't like. Citizens petitioned the Medicaid expansion amendment onto the ballot after Republican lawmakers refused to adopt the expansion.

He added that lawmakers should have heeded voters' prior rejection of similar attempts to raise the bar for approving ballot questions.

"The fact that if the majority agrees on something, that's how it should be, that's a pretty fundamental American idea and South Dakotan idea," Jensen said. "We've been pretty clear already — we don't like this, and that is not going to change."

Groups spending money to oppose Amendment L include The Fairness Project, which has spent about \$260,000 on advertising so far, according to mandatory reports filed with the South Dakota Secretary of State's Office. The Fairness Project is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that says it is "dedicated to advancing social and economic justice via ballot measures."

Complete reports of spending for and against the amendment won't be available until Monday, which is

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 29 of 73

the deadline for campaign finance reports from ballot question committees.

A “yes” vote on the ballot question will require all future amendments to receive 60% support from voters to be added to the state constitution. A “no” vote would keep the threshold at a simple majority.

Early voting is underway. The voter registration deadline is Monday.

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.

Farm, fuel groups celebrate EPA proposals to reallocate small refinery exemptions

BY CAMI KOONS

Farmers and biofuel producers in Iowa are celebrating a proposal from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin to reallocate renewable fuel requirements from which small refineries received an exemption.

The move ensures that renewable fuel blending standards set by the EPA are maintained after small refineries — that prove they would receive “disproportionate economic hardship,” by complying with the renewable fuel standards — receive exemptions from EPA.

At the end of August, EPA fully or partially exempted nearly 30 small refineries from the 2025 renewable fuel standard obligations, but also said it planned to reallocate 100% of the fuel exempted from the small refineries.

Fuel producers satisfy EPA's annual renewable fuel standards by either blending renewable fuels, like ethanol or biodiesel, into their products or by purchasing credits to offset the gas they produce.

Zeldin, as part of his tour through Iowa, proposed two possible avenues to reallocate the renewable identification numbers, or RINs, while in Peosta Tuesday.

The first option would spread the more than 770 million RINs worth of exempted renewable fuel equally across 2026 and 2027 compliance years, while the second option would add the exempted RINs to the 2027 compliance year.

Zeldin's visit, and the announcement, follows several stops in Iowa from Trump administration officials ahead of the November midterm election where Iowa has a slate of highly competitive races. The EPA news release on the proposal included statements from Iowa's all Republican congressional delegation, the majority of whom are on the ballot.

Biofuel producers, and farmers growing biofuel feedstocks, have opposed the small refinery exemptions in the past. Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird has urged feds to investigate the refineries to ensure they aren't manipulating the program.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, has said passing a law to allow year-round access to E-15 fuel would likely require compromises on small refinery exemptions to get enough votes to move forward.

The Iowa Corn Growers Association said in a statement Tuesday that growers met with Zeldin while he was in Iowa to again ask for the exempted gallons to be reallocated. Iowa Corn Growers Association President Steve Kuiper said the move from EPA sends “a strong market signal that energy independence matters, while supporting farmers and biofuels producers.”

Lee Brooke, the Iowa Soybean Association president, also thanked EPA for the move toward reallocation, which he said comes as farmers are “navigating a challenging farm economy.”

“This proposal offers the potential for greater certainty and much-needed domestic demand for soybeans if finalized later this year,” Brooke said in a statement. “We're encouraged by this step forward and urge the EPA to finalize the rule swiftly to help provide the market certainty farmers need.”

Iowa Renewable Fuels Association President Monte Shaw also called for EPA to finalize the rule.

“Today is a great first step, and we thank Administrator Zeldin and the EPA for sending a strong signal

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 30 of 73

to farmers and biofuels producers that these gallons matter," Shaw said in a statement. "Fully reallocating the lost gallons will ensure the robust 2026-2027 RFS blending levels remain intact, thereby supporting Iowa's biofuels plants and providing the market certainty our industry needs to keep growing."

Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig said a strong renewable fuel standard and reallocating the small refinery exemptions would be "an important step toward delivering the certainty our farmers and biofuel producers need to invest and grow."

According to a news release from EPA, the agency is accepting public comments on the proposed reallocation rules until Dec. 4.

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

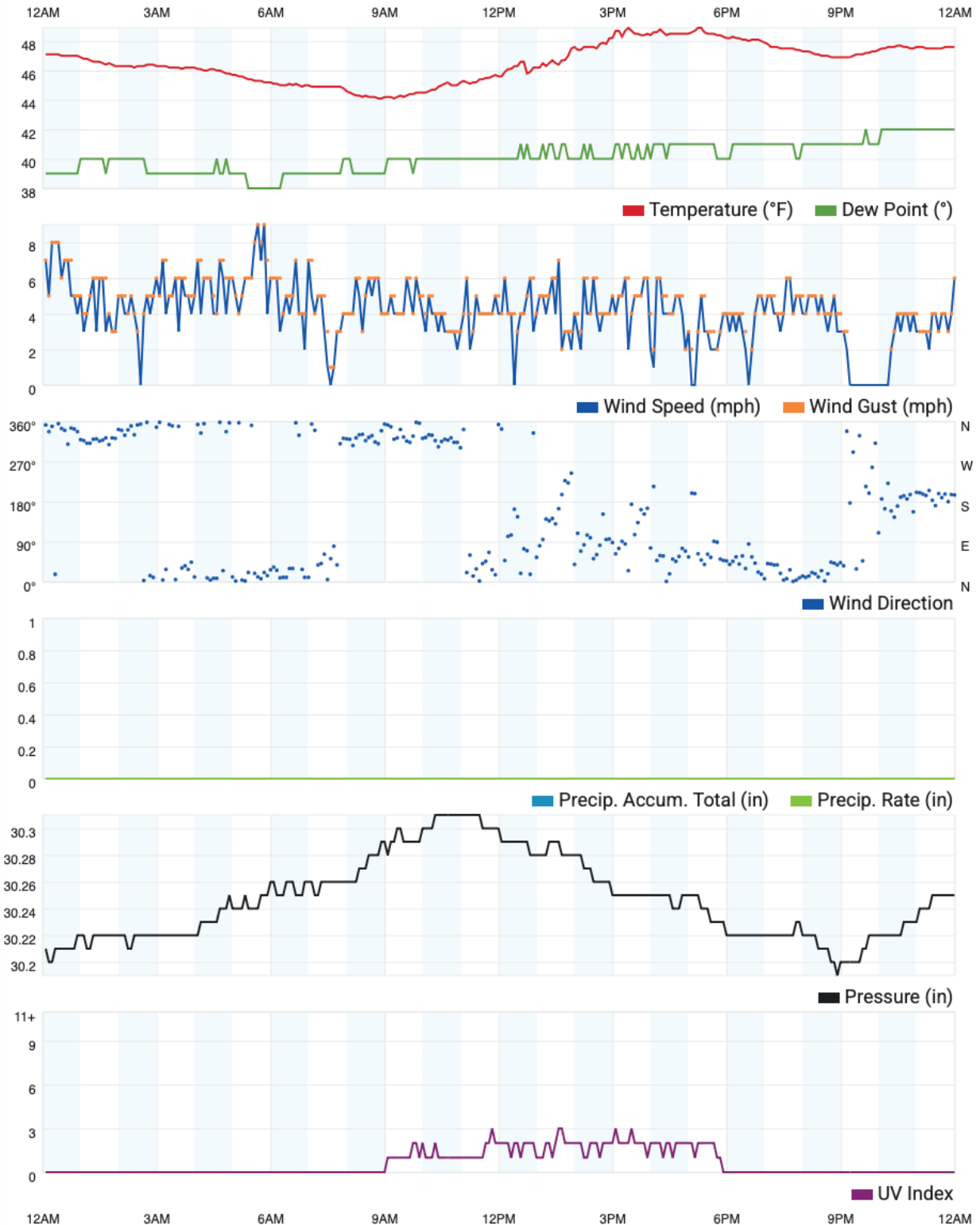
Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 31 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

October 14, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 32 of 73

Thursday



High: 56 °F

Breezy.
Chance
Showers then
Partly Sunny

Thursday Night



Low: 37 °F

Chance
Sprinkles and
Breezy

Friday



High: 51 °F

Partly Sunny
and Breezy
then Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 33 °F

Areas Frost
then Clear

Saturday



High: 65 °F

Sunny then
Sunny and
Breezy



Gusty Northwest Winds Developing Today

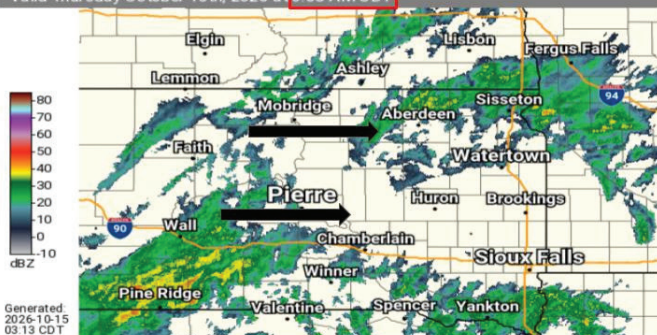
October 15, 2026
3:28 AM CDT

Morning light showers to deal with first

- **Morning showers** ending from west to east, **amounts generally less than 0.25in.**
- Northwest winds will increase from west to east across the area today behind a passing cold front.
- Gusts will range from **40 to 55 mph** for most areas by afternoon, strongest over central SD where a **Wind Advisory is in effect.**
- Winds don't subside until Friday afternoon/evening.

Radar Reflectivity

Valid Thursday October 15th, 2026 at 3:08 AM CDT



Generated:
2026-10-15
03:13 CDT

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

Maximum Wind Gust (mph) Forecast

	10/15 Thu						10/16 Fri						
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	13↗	29↗	39↗	41↗	41↗	39↗	39↗	39↗	36↗	29↗	20↗	15↗	9↗
Britton	15↗	28↗	38↗	39↗	39↗	40↗	43↗	44↗	40↗	31↗	23↗	17↗	9↗
Chamberlain	10↗	23↗	39↗	46↗	46↗	44↗	39↗	44↗	41↗	33↗	25↗	20↗	9↗
Clark	9↗	22↗	37↗	44↗	43↗	40↗	41↗	43↗	41↗	37↗	28↗	21↗	10↗
Eagle Butte	30↗	46↗	51↗	55↗	56↗	52↗	47↗	39↗	31↗	24↗	14↗	17↗	21↗
Eureka	21↗	40↗	44↗	48↗	48↗	47↗	44↗	39↗	31↗	24↗	16↗	16↗	13↗
Gettysburg	18↗	38↗	45↗	48↗	49↗	47↗	43↗	38↗	33↗	28↗	20↗	16↗	14↗
McIntosh	32↗	49↗	54↗	56↗	56↗	54↗	43↗	35↗	24↗	17↗	15↗	22↗	24↗
Milbank	6↗	18↗	28↗	36↗	36↗	33↗	37↗	39↗	39↗	38↗	28↗	22↗	10↗
Miller	14↗	31↗	41↗	46↗	46↗	43↗	43↗	40↗	39↗	32↗	23↗	17↗	9↗
Mobridge	22↗	41↗	44↗	48↗	53↗	53↗	49↗	43↗	35↗	23↗	16↗	15↗	18↗
Murdo	18↗	41↗	54↗	56↗	56↗	53↗	51↗	46↗	38↗	31↗	23↗	16↗	13↗
Pierre	13↗	37↗	47↗	49↗	51↗	52↗	49↗	45↗	39↗	30↗	21↗	15↗	13↗
Redfield	10↗	28↗	40↗	45↗	44↗	41↗	40↗	40↗	37↗	32↗	24↗	17↗	9↗
Sisseton	10↗	25↗	33↗	37↗	38↗	38↗	43↗	45↗	45↗	40↗	26↗	20↗	9↗
Watertown	8↗	22↗	32↗	40↗	40↗	39↗	41↗	45↗	44↗	40↗	29↗	23↗	12↗
Webster	13↗	24↗	35↗	39↗	40↗	38↗	40↗	41↗	39↗	35↗	25↗	20↗	12↗
Wheaton	10↗	17↗	28↗	33↗	33↗	33↗	40↗	41↗	40↗	35↗	25↗	20↗	10↗

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A system moving across the Plains will bring light rain to portions of the region this morning, ending from west to east. While the rain comes to an end, we'll see northwest winds increasing from west to east behind a passing cold front. Gusts will increase to 40 to 55 mph across much of the area by afternoon, with the strongest gusts across central SD where a Wind Advisory is in effect. Winds are not expected to diminish until later in the day Friday. Chilly overnight lows are also anticipated tonight and again Friday night, with temperatures dropping into the 30s.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 33 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 49 °F at 3:25 PM

Low Temp: 44 °F at 9:11 AM

Wind: 9 mph at 3:48 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 88 in 1958

Record Low: 15 in 2018

Average High: 60

Average Low: 34

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.13

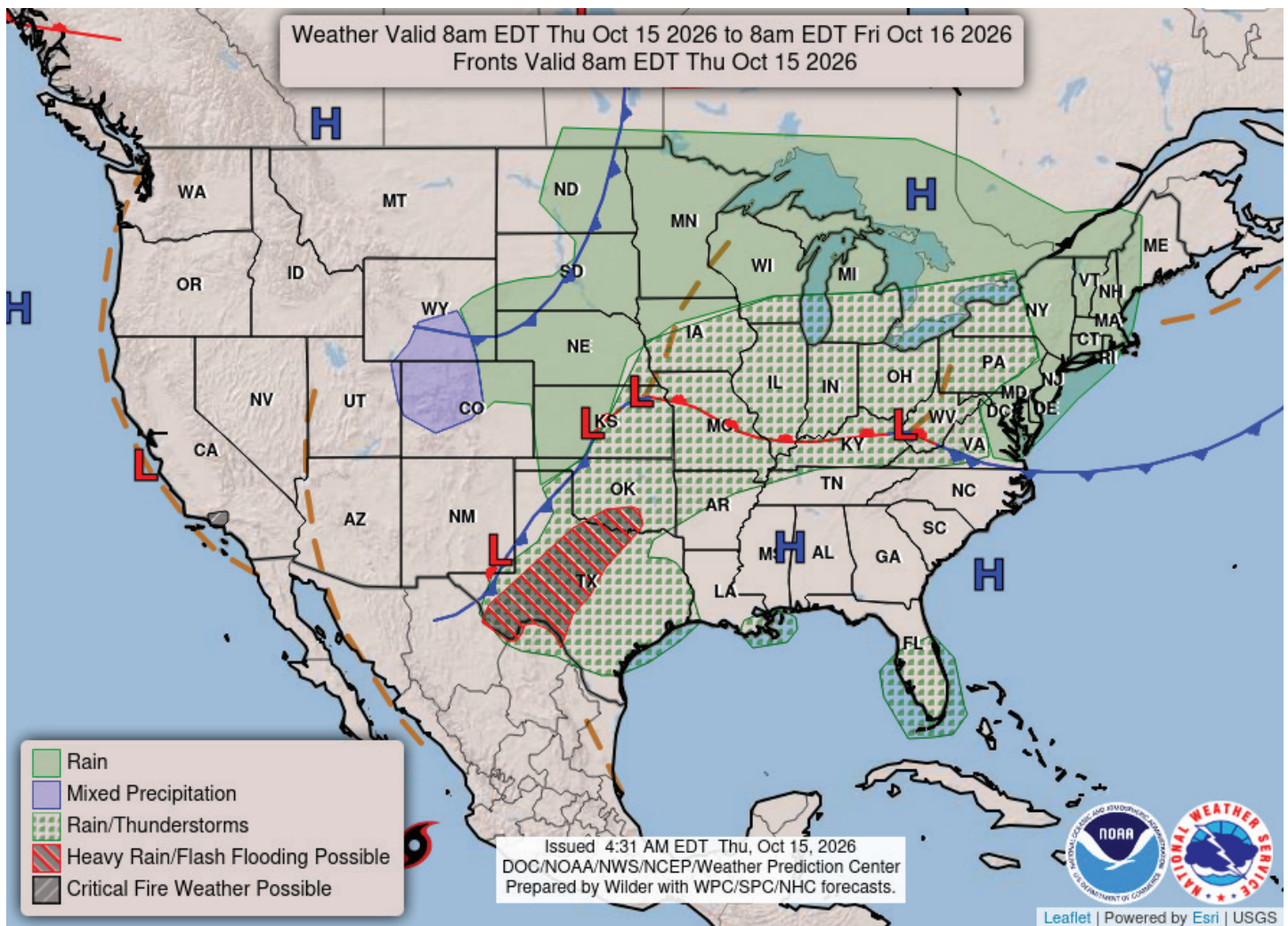
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 19.46

Precip Year to Date: 22.08

Sunset Tonight: 6:47 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:49 am



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 34 of 73

Today in Weather History

October 15, 1880: A violent early season blizzard devastated Minnesota and the Dakotas. Winds gusted to 70 mph at Yankton, SD, and snow drifts 10 to 15 feet high were reported in northwest Iowa and southeast South Dakota. Canby Minnesota reported 20 feet high snow drifts from this storm. Saint Paul, MN, reported a barometric pressure of 28.65 inches on the 16th. Piles of snow, which remained throughout the severe winter to follow, blocked railroads. The winter of 1880-81 is vividly portrayed in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Book: The Long Winter.

October 15, 1992: Snow fell throughout the day across the north-central and northwest part of the state with 2 to 6 inches occurring. There was a separate report of 7 inches near Harding in northwestern South Dakota.

1608: Evangelista Torricelli, the Italian physicist and mathematician who invented the barometer, was born on this day. In 1644, Evangelista Torricelli built the first barometer with mercury.

1954: By 11 pm on the 15th, Hurricane Hazel had reached and crossed the waters of Lake Ontario, still sporting sustained winds as high as 60 mph. Hazel took direct aim at the heart of Toronto as it roared past at 49 mph. Toronto saw heavy rainfall before Hurricane Hazel on the 14th. The previous storm, in combination with the hurricane, resulted in significant flooding.

1966 — Iowa experienced its worst late season tornado of record. In just one minute a twister tore through the town of Belmond leveling 75 percent of the businesses, and 100 homes, causing more than eleven million dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1984: The Monday Night Football game in Denver, Colorado, was played in a raging blizzard. 15 inches of snow fell with up to 34 inches reported in the nearby mountains. The Air Force Academy canceled classes for the first time in its' recorded history.

1987: Beginning on the night of October 15th, an unusually strong weather system caused extremely high winds in the United Kingdom. This storm became known as the Great Storm of 1987. It was the worst storm to hit the UK since the Great Storm in 1703.

1987 — Unseasonably cold weather continued in the eastern U.S., with thirteen cities reporting record low temperatures for the date. The low of 34 degrees at Montgomery AL was their coldest reading of record for so early in the season. Lows of 32 degrees at Harrisburg PA and 34 degrees at Parkersburg WV marked their third straight morning of record cold. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — The cold high pressure system responsible for the record low temperatures in the eastern U.S. began to move out to sea, giving way to a trend toward "Indian Summer". Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced golf ball size hail at Altamont KS and hail two inches in diameter at Yates City IL. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Hurricane Jerry made landfall at Galveston, TX, at 6 30 PM (CDT). Winds at the Galveston Airport reached 75 mph, with gusts to 100 mph. Tides along the island were six to eight feet, and rainfall totals ranged up to slightly more than six inches north of Beaumont. Three persons were killed when their vehicle was blown off the Galveston seawall into the pounding surf. Total damage along the Upper Texas Coast was estimated at fifteen million dollars. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Lower Michigan during the late morning. Two persons were injured when a tree fell on their camper at the Traverse City State park. While strong northerly winds ushered much colder air into the central U.S., unseasonably warm weather continued in the south central and eastern U.S. The afternoon high of 82 degrees at Bluefield WV was a record for October. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 35 of 73



Daily Devotion

The Faithfulness of God

Living a truly honorable life is possible only when we build our foundation on the Lord.

1 Peter 2:12-17: 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.

17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

God's faithfulness is the bedrock of the Christian life. Peter wrote his first letter to believers scattered across the Roman Empire, people living as strangers in a culture that often misunderstood and mistreated them. And yet his counsel wasn't to withdraw or retaliate. It was to live such honorable lives that even their critics would have nothing to say against them (1 Pet. 2:12).

That kind of life is possible only when we're anchored in something steadier than our circumstances. Peter could call believers to honor governing authorities, love other believers, and fear the Lord because he knew the One they served. God had been faithful to Israel through centuries of exile, occupation, and uncertainty. He had been faithful to send His Son. And He would be faithful still.

Scripture reminds us that the Lord's lovingkindnesses never cease and His compassions never fail; they are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). This is the foundation Peter is building on. We don't honor God and others because we're trying to earn His care; we do it because His care is sure.

When the world feels unsettled, we can rest in this: The same God who sustained His people through every age sustains us now. His faithfulness makes trust possible.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 36 of 73

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 37 of 73



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.14.26

13 22 27 34 35 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 32 Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.13.26

11 12 15 40 66 17

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$403,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 17 Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.14.26

6 10 14 29 34 9

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,250,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 32 Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.14.26

6 8 17 25 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$91,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 47 Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.14.26

11 17 37 58 69 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 16 Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

10.14.26

3 34 37 42 46 20

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$600,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 16 Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Ex-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is returning to federal court to face torture allegations

NEW YORK (AP) — Former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife return Thursday to a New York courtroom to face a rewritten indictment accusing them of leading a state-sponsored campaign of repression that tortured scores of victims, including three Americans.

Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were expected to plead not guilty in Manhattan federal court to charges added to a drug trafficking indictment brought months earlier against the two. They were seized from their Caracas home by the U.S. military in a nighttime raid in January.

Attorney Barry Pollack said when the charges were announced last week that Maduro, 63, denies them and “looks forward to his day in court.”

According to the rewritten indictment, Maduro oversaw a violent torture system that beat, asphyxiated, and delivered electric shocks to its victims. He is accused of personally recommending torture methods, receiving updates on specific victims’ treatment, and threatening to kill one prisoner’s child as a form of psychological torture.

Flores, 69, a former attorney general, helped develop the repressive system and ordered the torture of some specific people, the indictment alleges.

Maduro, who served as Venezuela’s president from 2013 until his capture in January, has been under investigation for years by the International Criminal Court over allegations of crimes against humanity, tied to his crackdown on opponents. He has always denied wrongdoing.

Earlier this year, Maduro and his wife pleaded not guilty in the U.S. drug case, which said they conspired to flood the U.S. with cocaine. Their attorneys say the case should be dismissed on immunity grounds because they were the leader and first lady of a foreign country.

The revised indictment covers allegations of torture stretching back to Maduro’s ascent to power in 2013, when he took over as president from his mentor Hugo Chávez, who died of cancer that year.

Ukraine resumes attacks on Russian oil refineries, officials say, after brief truce

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian drones attacked a refinery in Russia’s Ryazan region early Thursday, hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that a brief truce spurned by Moscow was over amid deepening tensions with Washington.

The drone strike started a fire at the refinery about 300 kilometers (180 miles) southeast of Moscow, Russia’s Defense Ministry and Ryazan Gov. Pavel Malkov said. Russia’s Astra online news outlet posted what it said was a photograph of the blaze.

A senior Ukrainian official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to speak publicly confirmed that Ukraine had hit the refinery.

Zelenskyy complains about U.S. behavior in recent days

The strike could further complicate Kyiv’s relations with U.S. President Donald Trump, which have soured again in recent days.

Zelenskyy was outraged by Russia’s continuing aerial bombardment of his country’s energy infrastructure in apparent defiance of Trump’s demand on Sunday for both sides to halt those attacks. The Ukrainian government said that it was heeding the ceasefire.

Zelenskyy complained that, despite going along with Trump’s demand for a truce, Ukraine in recent days was denied the usual Western intelligence on Russian ballistic missile strikes and limits were placed on its use of U.S.-made Starlink communication terminals.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 39 of 73

The Ukrainian leader said that his patience had run out. He said in an interview with the Financial Times published Thursday that Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries would resume. "We're done," he was quoted as saying.

Trump made a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin to import Russian diesel, despite international efforts to sanction Russia for its invasion and diplomatically isolate Putin.

Zelenskyy slammed the agreement, saying it would allow Russia to press on with its full-scale invasion of Ukraine that began more than 4½ years ago. U.S. efforts under Trump to end the war have made no progress.

Zelenskyy said in an interview late Wednesday with Piers Morgan on the British journalist's YouTube show that he felt betrayed by Trump's deal with Putin, the energy ceasefire announcement and the Starlink operational issues.

"Really, yes, between us," Zelenskyy told Morgan when asked if he felt betrayed by the American president. "Our country has to survive, and we count on our real partners, strategic partners, the United States and President Trump."

He said that the U.S. behavior "was really strange and what was not like between partners but that they switch off Starlink, so some actually crazy steps between us."

Starlink speed limits affect Ukraine's ability to defend itself

In the same interview, Zelenskyy said that "we are losing a strong partner" in the United States.

He said that "it's painful when President Trump chooses one side, not our side. But we are OK that he's in the middle."

Zelenskyy said someone is pushing Trump into a stance that is "not the right side of history."

The Starlink speed limits choked Ukrainian efforts to defend itself and hit back against Russia, Kyiv officials said.

Elon Musk noted on X that the military version of Starlink is controlled by the U.S. military and Trump.

The absence of Western intelligence leaves Ukraine more vulnerable to Russian ballistic missiles. Trump has said the U.S. hasn't stopped sharing intelligence with Ukraine.

Russian strike in Ukraine kills 3 civilians

Three people were killed and six others injured after the Kirovohrad region of central Ukraine came under a Russian drone attack lasting more than 10 hours, Ukraine's Emergency Services said Thursday.

Zelenskyy said on X that between midnight and Thursday morning Russia launched more than 850 drones at Ukraine, adding that the barrage came "precisely at a time when the speed of our defensive capabilities is being artificially restricted."

Russian aerial attacks hit 15 Ukrainian regions, he said.

"It is obvious that Russia deliberately chose to escalate its attacks after receiving sanctions relief and seeing attempts to pressure Ukraine," Zelenskyy said. "It is important that everyone in America stand not with the aggressor, but with our efforts to protect lives, end this war and guarantee security."

Ukrainian air defenses stopped 536 Russian drones during a large-scale overnight attack, the Ukrainian Air Force said, but impacts were recorded at 31 locations.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that air defenses downed 166 Ukrainian drones overnight. It said that its forces hit two vessels carrying military cargo.

A tech sell-off drags Asian stocks lower as markets in South Korea and Japan sink

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian shares fell sharply Thursday with markets in South Korea and Japan sinking, as a sell-off of technology shares deepened after U.S. stocks fell on hotter-than-expected inflation data.

U.S. equity futures were mixed.

South Korea's benchmark Kospi index lost 7.9% to 5,532.74. It plummeted more than 16% over the past month and was well below the 9,000 mark that it crossed in June at its all-time high driven by optimism

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 40 of 73

over the global artificial intelligence frenzy.

Samsung Electronics slid 11.4% and South Korean memory chipmaker SK Hynix plunged 12%.

Japan's Nikkei 225 tumbled 5% to 64,340.84. OpenAI investor SoftBank Group lost 9.4%. Chip equipment maker Tokyo Electron dropped 7.8%, and memory chipmaker Kioxia Holdings lost 13.1%.

Taiwan's Taixex, which also benefited from the AI boom, fell 3.4%. Its leading chipmaker Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., or TSMC, dropped 2% ahead of its earnings report. TSMC reported on Thursday better-than-expected profit for the latest quarter and the company said AI demand remains "very strong."

"The problem for heavily technology-weighted markets such as Korea and Taiwan, to a lesser extent Japan, is that any risk to perceived AI spending growth may lead to slower demand growth for chips and equipment," said Lorraine Tan, director of equity research for Asia at Morningstar.

"The key issue is a possible mismatch between market's growth expectations for the tech sector and what may eventuate," she said.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 1.4% to 23,982.04. The Shanghai Composite index slipped 2% to 3,692.18.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged down 0.1% to 8,719.70.

The declines followed losses on Wall Street on Wednesday. The S&P 500 dropped 1.1%, the Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 0.1%, and the technology-heavy Nasdaq composite slipped 1.9% as AI-related stocks fell.

Nvidia lost 3.2%, Broadcom gave up 3.1%, and Advanced Micro Devices, or AMD, declined 5.7%.

The U.S. reported Wednesday that the consumer price index rose 3.7% year-on-year in September, up from 3.4% in August and worse than what economists had expected.

Stocks have also faced downward pressure from surging bond yields and a volatile bond market. Yields on longer-term U.S. Treasuries have jumped over inflation worries fueled by the global energy shock driven by the Iran war and continuously rising U.S. government debt.

But the bond sell-off appeared to have eased significantly early Thursday. The yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury was at 5.11% after briefly jumping to above 5.32% Wednesday. It had reached 5.35% earlier this month as it hit its highest level since 2002.

Oil prices fell as tensions and uncertainties surrounding global oil supply and the situation in the Middle East dragged on. Brent crude, the international standard, declined 1.6% to \$104.34 per barrel. That's still elevated compared with the approximately \$72 per barrel level before the start of the Iran war in late February.

Benchmark U.S. crude was 1.2% lower at \$93.98 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar fell to 157.94 Japanese yen from 158.33 yen. The euro was trading at \$1.1211, up from \$1.1157.

School roof collapse kills at least 29, injures more than 50 in Pakistan

By RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — The roof of a private school collapsed in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar on Thursday, killing at least 28 children and a teacher and injuring more than 50 other people, authorities and a hospital official said.

All of the children killed or injured at Al-Khair school were age 13 or younger, Lady Reading Hospital spokesman Mohammad Asim said. Some of the injured were in critical condition, he said. The hospital declared an emergency as medical staff treated the wounded.

Hours after the collapse in Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, rescue officials said that everyone trapped beneath the rubble had been pulled out and crews were clearing the debris.

Mahwish Zaman, an injured teacher speaking from a hospital bed, said that the three-story school had an estimated 1,200 students enrolled in nursery through fifth grade. She told The Associated Press that she was in her classroom when the roof collapsed and felt as if the sky had fallen. She regained conscious-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 41 of 73

ness in the hospital.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Gov. Faisal Karim Kundi expressed sorrow over the collapse and sought a report from the relevant authorities about the cause. He directed officials to provide the best possible medical care to the injured children.

According to witnesses, residents were among the first to reach the school in a congested neighborhood in central Peshawar. Rescue workers arrived within minutes of being alerted, according to accounts from the scene.

A resident, Samiullah Khan, said that he rushed to the school after learning of the collapse and helped rescue three girls. Khan said his son, who attends the school, survived because he had stepped out of his classroom to drink water.

A resident, Mohammad Khan, said that rescuers carefully removed debris, trying to reach children and staff feared trapped beneath the collapsed roof. Outside the school and at the state-run Lady Reading Hospital, anguished parents sought information about their children, unsure whether they had survived.

Peshawar police chief Saeed Ahmed said that the school's owner had been arrested. He said that the building was structurally weak.

The provincial government said that the school occupied a three-story building and that a committee had been formed to investigate the cause of the roof collapse.

The provincial government spokeswoman, Samar Haroon Bilour, said that the government directed hospital officials to provide prompt medical care to the injured children and praised rescue workers for their swift response. She said that the government was using all available resources to bring those trapped beneath the rubble to safety.

In Islamabad, President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed sorrow over the deaths and offered condolences to the bereaved families in separate statements.

"The entire nation shares the grief of the affected families in this hour of sorrow," Zardari said.

He also called for a comprehensive investigation into the collapse and stressed the need to ensure school buildings meet safety standards to prevent similar tragedies.

In July, a roof collapsed at a tutoring center under construction in Lahore, killing four schoolchildren.

Building collapses are common in Pakistan, where construction standards are often poorly enforced. Many structures are built with substandard materials, and safety regulations are frequently ignored to reduce costs.

Pope Leo XIV's cancer diagnosis raises questions about the future and the very recent past

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — When Pope Leo XIV was elected after the pained finale of Pope Francis' pontificate, there was hope that a younger, healthier pope would be able to guide the Catholic Church for quite some time before age and ailments slowed him.

Leo's lung cancer diagnosis announced Tuesday has thrown a question mark into that scenario and his pontificate. Already, the president of Peru is suggesting Leo's upcoming Latin America trip may have to be changed.

The Vatican on Thursday said the pope had spent a second peaceful night in Rome's Gemelli hospital, where he is expected to recover for about a week.

"He got out of bed and had breakfast," the Vatican said in the brief statement.

Vatican watchers say the 71-year-old's diagnosis could have other unintended effects, not all of them negative. It could propel Leo to accelerate his own agenda, which to date has been slow and deliberate. It also could galvanize support for him, bolstering his efforts to unify the fractured Catholic Church.

And most poignantly for his own ministry, the diagnosis has placed Leo squarely among the "fragile" and "vulnerable" who have emerged as his central focus. In his preaching, writings and interactions with ordinary faithful, people who are wounded take center stage.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 42 of 73

"There's something really beautiful in that even the most powerful person in the church is broken," said Natalia Imperatori-Lee, associate professor of theology at Fordham University. "He's been so, so eloquent on how our fragility is also a source of our strength."

The relatively young pope was chosen last year

Leo was 69 when he was elected in 2025, relatively young compared with the two popes who immediately preceded him.

Pope Francis was 76 when elected in 2013 and already had part of one lung removed as a young man. Francis battled respiratory and mobility problems throughout his pontificate and died in 2025 after a lengthy hospitalization for double pneumonia.

Pope Benedict XVI was 78 when elected in 2005 and retired after eight years because he simply couldn't go on anymore.

Leo was elected in large part because he was seen as someone who would be around long enough to stabilize and unify the church after Francis' turbulent papacy, and get the Vatican's finances, in particular, into order. He brought a youthful vigor to the papacy, bounding up the stairs of St. Peter's Square and zipping off to the country each week to play tennis and swim.

"It's a big question mark on the investment that many people have made on this pontificate: an emotional investment, a political investment, even a financial investment," said Massimo Faggioli, a theologian at Leo's alma mater, Villanova University in Pennsylvania.

He noted that Leo has emerged as a powerful counterweight to the Trump administration in preaching a message of peace as the U.S. and Israel launched a war on Iran. He has become a respected moral authority on the need for safeguards on artificial intelligence.

And yet "even the pope gets the 'emperor of maladies' — cancer," he said.

But assuming Leo recovers fully — and oncologists say his type of lung cancer has the best prognosis — Leo could emerge even stronger as a global figure.

"The mystique of the survivor is very strong in our culture," Faggioli said.

Doctors on Wednesday said his recovery was proceeding normally. He walked around his hospital room, celebrated Mass and did respiratory physiotherapy while well-wishers outside recited the rosary praying for his recovery.

"He has always been very serene, kind and joyful, and he hasn't lost that attitude even though the news came as a surprise," said Tiziano Perrini, a Roman who came to Gemelli hospital to pray for the pope Wednesday. "So my perception hasn't changed at all; in fact, perhaps it makes us feel closer to him."

A recent visit to Lourdes is now seen in a different light

But if the future is uncertain, Leo can draw from the recent past to help get through it.

During his Sept. 25-28 visit to France, Leo followed in the footsteps of millions of pilgrims who flock to the shrine in Lourdes each year to drink its spring water and pray for miraculous cures for all that ails them.

The Vatican hasn't said when Leo learned that doctors suspected he had a cancerous mass in his lungs. Before Tuesday's surgery, he underwent a series of preoperative tests, including a biopsy under general anesthesia during a separate, secret hospital visit and a PET scan.

There are suggestions that Leo might have known something even before leaving for France and that he scheduled the surgery for Tuesday — typically his day off — "because he wanted to keep as much as possible the commitments he made," said Giovanni Maria Vian, the former editor of the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano.

All of which makes Leo's visit to Lourdes all the more significant, if he had a hint then that he, too, was among the sick.

Leo arrived at the shrine in the evening of Sept. 26 and immediately went to the Grotto of the Apparitions where alleged visions of the Virgin Mary were reported over a century ago. He performed the "three gestures" of the Lourdes pilgrim seeking a cure: He drank from its springs, lit a candle and touched the rock.

The next day, he celebrated Mass before 150,000 people, many of them sick, denounced laws allowing assisted dying and threw himself into a crowd of people in wheelchairs. After an exhausting day and

seemingly struggling himself, Leo walked among the sick carrying a torch in an emotional torchlit procession at night.

Leo told reporters en route home from France that he witnessed “almost miracles” in Lourdes “walking with, accompanying so many people who are sick and suffering and seeing how the grace of God’s presence manifested in many different ways, touches people’s hearts, transforms their lives.”

He didn’t include himself in their ranks, but he took away the lesson of Lourdes.

“Being in a place, especially like Lourdes where people are searching for something much deeper and understanding that their lives, even in the midst of sickness or disability or pain of different kinds, their life has meaning,” he said.

Cornell president pressed by faculty frustrated by his handling of fraternity rape allegations

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and TED SHAFFREY Associated Press

ITHACA, N.Y. (AP) — Cornell University President Michael Kotlikoff faced angry members of the school’s faculty Wednesday at a meeting that underscored deep frustration over his administration’s handling of a woman’s report that she was gang raped at a fraternity house in 2024.

Kotlikoff acknowledged some missteps, but also defended his leadership as he took questions from the university’s Faculty Senate before it debated a no-confidence resolution in his administration.

The meeting was closed to the media, but in an audio recording obtained by The Associated Press, Kotlikoff asked for more time to implement reforms and push for cultural changes in student social life.

He insisted experienced leadership was necessary to confront problems “that are not simplistic, they’re not easy, they can’t be brushed aside with a wave of a hand.”

Replacing a president isn’t the right way to address the situation and would harm Cornell’s reputation, Kotlikoff said.

Kotlikoff also left open the possibility of sweeping restrictions on Greek life, saying Cornell needed to determine whether fraternities could operate safely. On Tuesday, Kotlikoff announced a ban on fraternity parties through the end of the academic year.

“If, at the end of the day, fraternities cannot exist in a safe environment and we can’t be convinced that they can be safe, then we should make that decision,” he said, adding that the university should rely on research and evidence rather than emotion.

After Kotlikoff departed, a string of faculty speakers said they had lost confidence in the administration’s ability to combat sexual assault on campus.

“The faculty were extremely angry. They gave him a hard time, I think appropriately so,” said Richard Bensel, a professor of government.

Some Faculty Senate members warned that a hasty no-confidence vote would do little to address the underlying problems.

Debate was expected to continue Oct. 28, followed by electronic voting.

A no-confidence vote by the faculty would be largely symbolic, but could send a message to the university’s trustees, who ultimately decide how the university is run and who leads it.

Accuser’s lawsuit has roiled campus

A woman identified in court documents by the pseudonym Jane Doe filed a lawsuit last month alleging that seven Chi Phi fraternity members sexually assaulted or exploited her in October 2024 and that Cornell mishandled her complaints.

All of those men have denied her allegations, saying either that their interactions were consensual or that they weren’t involved.

The criminal investigation by Cornell’s police department stalled after the local district attorney quickly decided that no crime had occurred.

At the time, Kotlikoff publicly addressed what he called “deeply disturbing” allegations, suspended the fraternity and said criminal and university investigations were underway. He subsequently convened a

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 44 of 73

presidential task force to examine how Cornell handles sexual assault.

But in an interview with The New York Times published Tuesday, Kotlikoff said he never followed up to learn what had happened to the woman or the criminal investigation.

Asked by a faculty member whether he read the Cornell Police Department's report on the rape allegations, Kotlikoff acknowledged that he had not, but said that was because the police investigation was confidential and university policy is that top administrators shouldn't have a role in criminal investigations.

"I really reject the idea that I had no interest in it or was not concerned about it," Kotlikoff said.

Kotlikoff denied that he wasn't aware that students had been expelled or suspended as a result of the university's Title IX investigation, but acknowledged that, until recently, he didn't know the woman had dropped out of Cornell.

Faculty describe 'contentious' meeting

"The institution is split in significant ways," said Grant Farred, professor of Africana Studies and English, describing those in the humanities as feeling they had enough information to proceed while those in the sciences wanted more data.

Iris Packman, a research and policy expert at Cornell's Climate Jobs Institute, said she felt Kotlikoff got "defensive."

Labor history professor Paul Ortiz, lead sponsor of the no-confidence resolution, said the debate was animated by the perception that the administration wasn't doing enough to address "a perpetual ongoing crisis."

Anne Marie Brady, a senior extension associate at Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, said she welcomed Kotlikoff's recent announcement that state police, rather than campus police, will temporarily handle investigations of sexual assaults, but she questioned the timing, a day before the Senate debate.

Professor who reported harassment says it nearly cost her career

For Ariana Kim, an associate music professor at Cornell, Kotlikoff's acknowledgment that he had not followed up on the woman's case was "appalling."

A Grammy-nominated violinist, Kim told The Associated Press that when she first started at Cornell a decade ago, she experienced bullying and sexual harassment by senior colleagues. Cornell, she said, failed to properly document her complaints and never clearly informed her of what disciplinary action, if any, had been taken.

"I was asked what I had done to provoke the situation," she said.

Kim said her efforts to avoid colleagues who had harassed her later became a point of criticism during her tenure review. In one instance, a professor cited her unwillingness to accept his advice and her avoidance of him when he voted against granting her tenure.

Kotlikoff became the university's interim president in July 2024 and took the job permanently last year.

He's faced challenges including a dining and custodial workers strike, ire over his decision last year to pay \$60 million to settle Trump administration civil rights investigations, and accusations from activists that his administration stifled campus protests.

Everyone has the same question in the midterms — where's the beef? (And how much does it cost?)

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

In the midterm elections, meat is on the menu.

As Democrats and Republicans argue over high prices and the Iran war, they're also having a food fight over who's the most red-blooded carnivore.

The latest example came this week in Mississippi, where Democratic Senate candidate Scott Colom released a video with a snippet of Republican Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith saying that if consumers are upset over high beef prices, "you know you have so many proteins to choose from."

The video cuts to a man grilling burgers who says, "Pick another protein? I'd rather pick another senator instead."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 45 of 73

The Mississippi race is somewhat unusual because it's the Democrat hammering the Republican over beef. Elsewhere, Republicans have branded Democrats as vegans or otherwise opposed to meat, trying to show that they're culturally out of step with voters, hostile to local cattle industries or just not manly enough.

In Texas, Republicans seized on an old interview in which Democratic Senate nominee James Talarico boasted that his campaign, then for the Texas statehouse, was going vegan. Talarico has since been publicly scarfing down barbecue to rebut allegations that his dietary choices mean he's not a real Texan.

In Colorado, Republicans have gone after Democratic congressional candidate Manny Rutinel for his activism against meat production and factory farming. In college, he was photographed shirtless with a banner for the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals around his chest. In 2021, Rutinel founded Climate Refarm, which advocated for cutting down on the use of meat and has signed onto letters advocating for raising taxes on meat and dairy. He also supported a 2024 ballot measure to ban a lamb slaughterhouse in Denver, which failed.

Rutinel, 31, is now running against Republican Rep. Gabe Evans in Colorado's 8th district, which includes a vast swath of the northeastern part of the state dotted with ranches, dairy farms and meat processing facilities, including the headquarters of beef production titan JBS Swift. Republicans have hammered Rutinel over advocating veganism, to the point that the conservative media group Daily Wire this week released an undercover video of a campaign official saying Rutinel eats meat "as little as possible."

Rutinel, who's made a point of publicly eating steak tacos on the campaign trail, scoffed at such arguments. "I don't think Coloradans care about what's on my plate, I think they care more about what's on theirs," Rutinel said in an interview after a recent campaign stop.

Evans said the issue goes beyond Rutinel's meal preferences. "I don't care what he eats personally," Evans said in an interview. "I care that he wants to use the power of the government to make everyone eat that way."

Republicans have gone after two other Democratic House candidates on meat — hammering Lindsay James in Iowa's 2nd district, an area filled with hog farms, for supporting "meatless May" in a 2020 Facebook post, and Amish Shah in Arizona's 1st district for his longstanding vegetarianism and animal rights activism.

Also in Iowa, Republican Senate candidate and current Rep. Ashley Hinson slammed her opponent, state lawmaker Josh Turek, for opposing a bill banning lab-grown meat from being sold in the state. "He'd rather have meat that comes from a lab than from our family farms," she said at a campaign appearance.

Democrats have hammered on meat as well, but mainly just as one of the staples that cost more under Trump, squeezing voters' pocketbooks. Trump has tried to lower prices by opening U.S. markets to beef imports, especially from Argentina, which is governed by a close Trump ally.

However, those moves have angered U.S. producers as prices have remained stubbornly high, creating a potential weakness in Republican-leaning states where Democrats hope to gain ground this year. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average pound of ground beef cost \$6.79 last month, up from \$5.55 in January of 2025, when Trump returned to office.

That was the dynamic that Hyde-Smith, a cattle rancher and former state agriculture commissioner, was addressing in her interview that was clipped in Colom's video. The prosecutor — who also delivers the "pick another senator" line in the spot — is running a longshot challenge in Mississippi.

A spokesman for Hyde-Smith's campaign argued that the Democrats deserve blame for high prices. "It is Scott Colom who supports Biden-era policies that drove up inflation," said Nathan Calvert.

With anger spreading over Iran war, Democrats hope to flip Republican seats with veterans' help

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The doorbell chimed "The Star Spangled Banner" as retired Col. Lou Christensen stepped inside the large house on the northeastern edge of Colorado Springs. The registered Republican and 28-year Air Force veteran was doing something he never expected to do — attending a party for a Democratic congressional candidate.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 46 of 73

"The legislative branch needs to put up guardrails from President Trump," said Christensen, 70. "We need another branch of government that stands up and says, 'Uh, boss, that's not constitutional.'"

Christensen is backing Jessica Killin, a fellow veteran, over first-term Republican Rep. Jeff Crank in Colorado's 5th Congressional District, a conservative stronghold that includes five military facilities. The district is a longshot for Democrats but they're investing money here for the first time in years, counting on an unpopular war with Iran and upheaval in the armed forces to put more seats in play as the party pushes for control of the U.S. House of Representatives. Democratic candidates who previously served in the military are also running in Florida, South Carolina and Virginia districts with significant veteran populations.

Although veterans hold all sorts of political beliefs, the population overall leans right — nearly 6 in 10 voted for Trump two years ago, according to AP VoteCast. Trump won Colorado's 5th by 9 percentage points that year, and nearly one out of every nine people there is a veteran, according to federal statistics, making it one of the most veteran-heavy seats in the country. The district is home to NORAD, Fort Carson and the Air Force Academy.

"I know there's a bunch of veterans in the room, so I don't have to tell you where we are with foreign policy," Killin told more than two dozen voters who gathered on a recent Friday evening. "For the first time in history, now the global community thinks more of China than of the United States."

Iran war, Hegseth unsettle some veterans

One of the only comparable seats in terms of veteran population is in Virginia's 2nd Congressional District, centered in Virginia Beach and similarly dotted with military bases, with the massive Naval Station Norfolk just outside its boundaries.

Unlike Colorado's 5th, elections in Virginia's 2nd have zig-zagged back and forth over the last decade. Democrat Elaine Luria, a retired Naval Commander who deployed to the Middle East and Western Pacific and led a unit of 400 sailors over the course of her military career, ousted a Republican incumbent in 2018. She held the seat for two terms before Republican Jen Kiggans, a former Navy helicopter pilot, defeated her in 2022.

Now Luria is back for a rematch, hammering Kiggans and Trump for the Iran war that she called "an expanding economic crisis" as well as a geopolitical blunder. In an interview, she criticized Kiggans for voting against resolutions intended to halt military action without congressional approval.

Kiggans, whose 10 years of service included two deployments to the Persian Gulf, said she hopes the war can soon be brought to a close. But she argued that Luria, through her criticism, has "chosen the side of Iran."

"It's like the Democrats are now siding with the Iranians and not standing with our military," she said in an interview.

Paul Krekorian, a Navy veteran and retired grade school teacher in Virginia Beach, said he worries the war may become a "quagmire" for Trump. But he still decided to support Kiggans because Democrats "have gone socialist."

Still, plenty of veterans were casting early ballots for Luria, citing their frustration at Trump and his administration.

"I think we are less safe, not just because of the war in Iran, but because of the leadership or the lack of leadership we have," said Phyllis Mihalas, a self-described independent and retired Army lieutenant colonel. She described Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth as "an enormously incompetent man whose ego consistently gets in the way."

Democrats bet on veteran candidates

Democratic veterans are trying to make that argument in other races for Republican-held seats. In South Carolina's 1st Congressional District, Democrat Nancy Lacore, a former Navy vice admiral, is running against Republican lawyer Jennifer Honeycutt. Lacore was fired by Hegseth last year.

In Florida's 13th Congressional District, retired Army Brigadier Gen. Leela Gray is challenging Republican Rep. Anna Paulina Luna. And in Florida's 7th Congressional District, Bale Dalton, a former Navy Aviator and NASA chief of staff, is running against Ryan Elijah, a Republican and local news anchor.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 47 of 73

In Colorado Springs, the Republican incumbent, Crank, is in his first term in Congress. Though his father and father-in-law are veterans and his son-in-law is currently in the Army, Crank has never been in the military.

A onetime aide to a longtime congressman representing the area, Crank ran the Colorado chapter of the conservative group Americans For Prosperity and then served as Colorado chairman of former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley's bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024. He ran for the open congressional seat against a Trump-backed candidate and won the Republican primary, sparking some suspicion among Trump supporters about whether he'd be a team player for the president.

Now Killin's campaign is airing an ad slamming Crank for voting with Trump "100% of the time."

In an interview, Crank scoffed at the charge but said it wasn't his style to pick public fights with Trump. "I'm going to try to check the president where I think he's wrong," Crank said, such as Trump moving U.S. Space Command from Colorado to Alabama.

'Don't let it be for nothing'

Crank said that one of the first casualties from the Iran war was stationed at Ft. Carson in Colorado Springs, and it fell to him to call the fallen soldier's father. "He basically said to me, 'Don't let it be for nothing,'" Crank said. He added: "We're reluctant to go, but once we're there, let's get the job done and go home. And I think that's how people in my district feel."

Mike Gould, a retired lieutenant general who once ran the Air Force Academy, agreed. "What our president did, taking on Iran the way he did, was exactly the right thing to do," said Gould, who supports Crank.

Killin grew up in Colorado Springs and quips that she was the lone Democrat in her elementary school class. She joined the Army in the late 1990s and rose to captain, serving in the Balkan war before joining USAA, the company that provides insurance and banking services to members of the military and veterans.

At the house party, Killin said she was worried about what Trump had done to the country — and that Crank wasn't trying to stop it. "I grew up in an era where the Department of Defense was apolitical and the Department of Justice was apolitical," Killin said.

It was a theme that many other veterans sounded during the gathering, which was held in the home of an Air Force veteran and former Reagan administration official just a few miles from the Air Force Academy. One former Army Ranger worried about Hegseth's attempts to infuse the military with conservative Christian cultural ideas. A newly discharged veteran worried about how he'll find work. And Michael Stewart, a 75-year-old former Marine, made a confession about the level of his disgust over the Iran war.

"This is the first time," Stewart said, "I've wanted to see my country lose."

Trump defends gifted Air Force One from Qatar and makes 2nd Amendment pitch as he campaigns for GOP

By WILL WEISSERT, MIKE CATALINI JONATHAN J. COOPER and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press KALISPELL, Mont. (AP) — President Donald Trump used a Western campaign swing on Wednesday to pitch Republicans as vigilant supporters of gun rights and to defend his acceptance of a luxury jet from Qatar to use as Air Force One.

At an evening rally in Montana, Trump hewed close to the kind of attack lines that his party wants to hear as the president travels the country, and he warned that the Second Amendment would be "under siege" if Democrats win in November's midterm elections.

But his message was more off script earlier in the day as he visited an economically struggling corner of rural Arizona. Trump opened his remarks there by describing how the new jet parked behind him was a gift from the Qatari royal family.

"When you're given gifts, you take 'em, right?" Trump told the crowd in Bullhead City. "When they give you a 747 you say two words: 'thank you.'"

Trump's comments came during the second and final day of a Western swing, part of a midterm roadshow designed to rally the Republican Party ahead of Nov. 3 elections that will determine control of Congress. His first stop was Alaska on Tuesday, where he announced Taiwan would purchase gas from a proposed mega-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 48 of 73

gas project there and pardoned two Alaskans who had pleaded guilty in 2022 to Clean Air Act violations.

The president continued to bestow favors in Montana, where he announced a new military testing range that had been sought by the state's Republicans.

"Montana will help ensure the American military always reigns supreme," he said.

As Americans grapple with persistent concerns about the cost of living, Trump often reverts to some of his personal priorities, including renovation projects in Washington or trappings of the presidency, including the luxury jet.

Trump accepted the new plane last year despite strong criticism, including from some of his staunchest Republican supporters.

Trump zeroes in on guns while campaigning in Montana

Trump's visit to Western Montana's 1st District was aimed at boosting House candidate Aaron Flint, a former aide to retiring Republican Rep. Ryan Zinke, who was Interior secretary in Trump's first-term Cabinet.

Flint's opponent is Sam Forstag, a Democratic labor union leader and Forest Service smokejumper, a specialized firefighter who gets to fires by aircraft and parachute.

Forstag has said he supports expanding voluntary safe storage of firearms for people in a mental health crisis, but he describes himself as a gun rights champion and he says firearms are relied upon in Montana for hunting and staying safe.

Trump, speaking to a crowd of his supporters in a horse show arena in Kalispell, near Glacier National Park, called Forstag "extreme" and said Democrats "will take your guns away if we don't keep it going."

He noted that Republican candidates Kurt Alme, running for the Senate, and Aaron Flint, running for the House, have earned top ratings from the National Rifle Association.

Meanwhile, Democratic Senate candidate Alani Bankhead has earned an F, and Forstag was given a question mark by the NRA because he "refused to fill out a form," Trump said.

He did not mention Seth Bodnar, the independent in the Montana Senate race who is backed by top Democrats in the state.

Luxury Air Force One serves as backdrop and speech fodder

In Arizona, soaring music played as the former Qatari jet flew low over the local airport where supporters awaited Trump in the heat. The president, wearing his signature red baseball cap, emerged with a wave and a fist bump and slowly descended the stairs as speakers blasted Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA," the song that marks Trump's entrance at campaign events.

Air Force One, now wearing Trump's new red, white, blue and gold paint scheme, and mountains filled the background as he started speaking about how he learned that the Qataris had "the best of all the 747s." He described to the crowd, which was standing in the sun at a rural desert airport to hear him speak, how he called Qatar's emir and asked to borrow the aircraft before the leader instead offered it as a gift.

Mohave County, where Bullhead City is located, has higher poverty and unemployment rates than the state and nation, with a lower per-capita income, according to Census and state unemployment data.

Trump also spoke extensively about his aesthetic flourishes around Washington: the White House ballroom that is under construction and a just-completed helipad on the South Lawn, along with a triumphal arch he has planned for the capital city.

"The fake news media doesn't talk about how well we're doing" as a country, Trump said. Journalists ask him instead about "affordability," he said, pronouncing the word in a dismissive tone.

Trump traveled to Arizona to rally support for Rep. Andy Biggs, who is seeking to defeat Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs. Republicans running in the state's two competitive U.S. House districts, Jay Feely and Rep. Juan Ciscomani, did not attend the event.

GOP strategy is shifting as Election Day nears

With under three weeks left in the campaign, the Western swing comes as Trump's party has begun retreating from a handful of battleground U.S. House races and Democrats aim to raise money for candidates who seemed like long shots earlier this year.

The shifting money in the final weeks of midterm campaigns reflects an increasingly defensive posture

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 49 of 73

by Republicans, who have already trimmed their expectations in U.S. Senate races, and new aggression from Democrats, who are trying to capitalize on Trump's low public approval.

Trump has kept up a brisk pace of hour-plus-long rallies — new White House press secretary Katie Zacharia called it a “midterm blitz” — in his effort to stem expected Republican losses and fight a historical trend in which the president's party typically loses seats in elections halfway through their term in the White House.

Trump twice won Arizona, in 2016 and 2024, but lost the state in 2020. Montana's 1st District is slightly less Republican overall than the state, which voted for Trump by double digits in each of his three presidential campaigns.

Arizona is the lone swing state in recent stops

His other visits so far in October have taken him into traditionally solid Republican territory — Alabama, Nebraska, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas — as he weathers low approval ratings, rising costs and the Iran war.

Arizona stands out as the lone swing state among the president's recent stops, though the airport rally was in a county Trump won with 78% of the vote in 2024.

Biggs has been a stalwart ally of the president and assisted Trump's attempt to block certification by the House of Trump's 2020 election defeat. A one-time head of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, he's represented a safe GOP seat since winning election in 2016.

He faces Hobbs, who narrowly defeated Republican Kari Lake in the governor's race four years ago. Arizona was long a GOP stronghold, and registered Republicans still outnumber Democrats and independents by a comfortable margin, but voters have repeatedly rejected Trump allies and handed the state's top offices to Democrats.

Trump said Biggs “will always stand with law enforcement” and took aim at Hobbs, who he said “does the bidding of the cartels” on the U.S.-Mexico border. Hobbs counters that she has strengthened the border by sending National Guard troops there and has boosted local law enforcement funding.

Iran-backed Houthis strike Saudi oil company Aramco's headquarters, officials say

By SAMY MAGDY and CARA ANNA Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Iran-backed Houthi rebels hit the headquarters of the Saudi state-owned oil company Aramco in an overnight strike, two regional officials said Wednesday, damaging the offices of the firm's chief executive and other top officials.

The strike, in the eastern Saudi Arabian city of Dhahran, was the latest demonstration of the Houthis' ability to attack high-profile targets.

There were no casualties in the attack, which the officials said damaged the building's top three floors. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the matter with the media.

The Houthis had warned earlier they were targeting Dhahran with a ballistic missile. Late Wednesday evening, Houthi-run broadcaster al-Masirah reported strikes on the capital Sanaa, blaming Saudi Arabia. The Saudi coalition has not commented on the strikes.

The sight of smoke rising from some of Saudi Arabia's most sensitive facilities in recent days has rattled the region and global markets while increasing questions for U.S. President Donald Trump, who has said he's evaluating whether the U.S. should join Saudi strikes against the Houthis in the latest front in the Iran war.

The Saudi energy ministry reported a “limited fire” at the Aramco building Tuesday night. Aramco didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

On Wednesday, Saudi civil defense authorities in the capital, Riyadh, said debris from an intercepted strike had left one person injured. The state-run SPA news agency published images showing a damaged building and a vehicle with a large cylindrical object, seemingly part of a missile, lodged in its hood.

The Saudi-led coalition said that it had intercepted two Houthi drones, four cruise missiles and one ballistic missile targeting Riyadh, a ballistic missile targeting Dhahran and a cruise missile targeting Al-Kharj, a key military and industrial city. Alerts for incoming missiles were also sounded around Riyadh, though details weren't immediately clear.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 50 of 73

Rebels call the strikes retaliation for ones at home

The Houthis called the attacks retaliation for "treacherous Saudi aggression" against Sanaa, the rebel-held Yemeni capital, and other areas, as the kingdom backs the forces of neighboring Yemen's internationally recognized government in a major military offensive launched a week and a half ago. The rebel-run Health Ministry reported two dead in attacks in Yemen on Tuesday and blamed the Saudis.

The Houthis have repeatedly targeted Saudi airports, military facilities and oil infrastructure. King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh has been targeted multiple times in the past week with strikes that have killed at least 18 people and wounded more than 300 others, greatly affecting aviation across the kingdom.

The Houthis, hardened by years of civil war, have emerged as Iran's most effective armed proxy of the moment, but experts say they also have their own agenda. Either way, they are applying increasing pressure on a key U.S. ally.

Casualties surge along Yemen's front lines

There has been an "unprecedented surge" in combat casualties along Yemen's front lines, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, particularly in the city of Marib, along the Red Sea coast and the besieged city of Taiz, where the World Food Program says it can no longer reach more than 600,000 people who depend on aid.

Main roads leading into Yemen's third-largest city have been closed amid rebel attacks, with regular clashes on the outskirts and overnight bombardment.

Residents are increasingly worried about dwindling supplies of fuel and food.

A Taiz resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity fearing the Houthis could seize the city, said that long lines now form outside shops, and public transportation has become increasingly scarce because of fuel shortages. The sound of loud explosions keeps her awake at night, she said in a telephone interview, adding that downtown Taiz hasn't been shelled.

On Wednesday, schools in Taiz were ordered closed for a month.

Houthi official describes diplomatic outreach for a ceasefire

A senior Houthi official told The Associated Press that regional and international powers have reached out in an effort to stop the attacks on Saudi Arabia as part of a ceasefire deal.

Mohamed al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthis' political bureau, said that Oman has tried to get both sides back to the negotiating table, and Russia and China also tried via Iran.

"We're welcoming any mediation that leads to an end of the war and the blockade between Sanaa and Riyadh," he said. "We're ready for a comprehensive end of the war and the blockade from both sides, not just a temporary ceasefire."

The rebels continued to warn of attacks on both airports and oil facilities. More than 3,000 flights scheduled to depart from airports across Saudi Arabia have been canceled or listed as not operating in the past week, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

Saudi Arabia is running low on interceptors

The escalation has highlighted Saudi Arabia's struggle to intercept Houthi missiles and drones. The kingdom has pressed allies like the United States for more military support. Regional officials say Saudi Arabia, the world's top purchaser of U.S. weapons, is running low on interceptors.

The Saudis are trying to stop daily attacks across a territory about three times the size of Texas. Experts say intercepting all of the missiles and drones is impossible. The Houthis have a large arsenal capable of reaching targets well over 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) away, with some warheads capable of changing direction midflight.

The Saudi-led coalition is also striking oil targets. Earlier Wednesday, the Houthi-run Health Ministry said that two people were killed in an airstrike on Tuesday on an oil facility near the Ras Isa port in Hodeida province. The coalition attacked another oil facility in Sanaa.

The targeting of fuel storage facilities in Houthi-controlled areas marks a new phase, said Ahmed Nagi, senior Yemen analyst at the International Crisis Group, a think tank. He said that in a war of attrition, the rebels could risk losing much of their military capacity.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 51 of 73

"The Houthis are betting on pressure, while the Saudis are betting on time," Nagi said.

The fighting has revived Yemen's civil war after four years of relative calm.

"There's a huge fear," said one Sanaa resident, Umm Shadi, after the Saudi-led strikes there on Tuesday, adding that people are largely staying home.

UN detainee released by rebels

A United Nations staff member detained by the rebels has been released, the U.N. special envoy for Yemen said Wednesday. Sami al-Kalabi, who was detained in June 2024, has been freed, Hans Grundberg said. Last week, the World Food Program announced the release of one of its employees.

The Houthis continue to hold 71 U.N. workers arbitrarily detained over the past few years. Aid workers are often held for months without charges, accused of being spies for the West or Israel, claims their families deny.

Justice Department threatens California with legal action over claim of noncitizens on voter rolls

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The U.S. Department of Justice has threatened California with possible legal action over what it says are noncitizens believed to have received mail ballots for next month's midterm elections.

A letter sent Tuesday to Secretary of State Shirley Weber from Trent McCotter, the acting deputy U.S. attorney general, says the department has provided officials in Los Angeles County with a password-protected thumb drive that contains a list of names the federal government believes are likely noncitizens who were sent ballots to participate in the Nov. 3 election.

California mails ballots to all registered voters.

The letter obtained by The Associated Press gives the state 48 hours to determine whether any citizens are included on the list. For individuals whose citizenship cannot be independently verified, the state is to instruct local election officials to segregate their mail-in ballots until their status can be determined, and to not provide a ballot to anyone who has not yet received it. The letter warns that legal action may follow if the state does not meet the 48-hour deadline to review the list.

"If you cannot implement this process by then, given the ongoing federal election, the United States will have no choice but to seek emergency relief," the letter states.

Weber's office issued a statement late Wednesday saying the Justice Department gave it 48 hours to obtain the list from Los Angeles, investigate it and take action, noting the demand was being made just three weeks before Election Day.

It also said that over the summer, the Department of Homeland Security claimed that California had 190,000 noncitizens on its voter rolls, but refused to provide the methodology or data sources when the office asked for them.

"Now the USDOJ, under threat of 'emergency' litigation, demands that California blindly trust this administration without any evidence or legal authority to justify its request," Weber said in the statement.

She said California requires that only U.S. citizens can register to vote and that those who are not eligible are removed from the voter rolls.

Unclear how many names DOJ flagged

A separate, similar letter was sent to the registrar's office in Los Angeles County, which the U.S. attorney's office had investigated during the state's June primary.

Los Angeles County Registrar Dean Logan said in a statement that his office also received a thumb drive, along with a "hand written note providing a password" to access the list of alleged noncitizens on the voter rolls. The secretary of state's office said the password was written "on a sticky note."

Logan said he did not consider the thumb drive a secure device and hasn't yet accessed any files. The letter, which Logan made public, does not specify the number of individuals flagged by the federal government.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 52 of 73

Logan said his office is working with the secretary of state and attorney general's offices to decide how to proceed.

"Federal and state laws are clear on how voter eligibility is established," Logan wrote. "And any action to remove a voter from eligibility must be based on verifiable information, not assertions of unconfirmed data matching."

California Attorney General Rob Bonta slammed the letter in an unrelated press conference on Wednesday, calling it another example of President Donald Trump spreading "absolutely false conspiracy theories that there is widespread voter fraud when there is not."

Bonta did not say how the secretary of state's office would respond to the Justice Department, but said: "Will we be engaging in conspiracy theories? We will not."

Nationwide search for alleged noncitizen voters

The Trump administration has made the hunt for noncitizen voters a priority this year, even though the problem is exceptionally rare. The Justice Department has charged about 90 people for various types of election misconduct so far this year, including 50 who are alleged to have voted as noncitizens. There were more than 227 million registered voters in the United States during the 2024 presidential election.

In July, Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin sent letters to California, Nevada, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, alleging that as many as 250,000 noncitizens were registered in those states. Election officials there were skeptical of the claim, including Weber, the California secretary of state.

"I have serious doubts about the reliability of your data and accuracy of your claims, since my office has not shared our statewide voter registration list with DHS or any other federal agency or official," Weber said in response.

That same month, the Republican administration claimed Nevada had 1,500 noncitizen voters on its voter rolls. But after the federal government identified them to the state, the number of actual registered noncitizens turned out to be zero.

As part of its project to find noncitizens on the voter rolls, the Justice Department has been seeking detailed voter information — including dates of birth, addresses, driver's license numbers and partial Social Security numbers — from the states. Some Republican-led states have turned over the information, which has been run through a U.S. Department of Homeland Security database that has been criticized as inaccurately flagging U.S. citizens.

The Justice Department has sued 30 states and the District of Columbia for that information, but so far has lost those cases in court. California is among the states that successfully sued, in part by arguing that turning over the data would violate state privacy laws.

Election official calls 48 hour deadline "unreasonable"

Santa Cruz County Clerk Tricia Webber, who is president of the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials, said she had not seen the letters but said the 48-hour deadline to vet voters flagged by the federal government was "completely unreasonable."

She said when there is a report of an ineligible voter incorrectly on the rolls, her office does due diligence to investigate. That involves looking at the voter's registration history, identifying whether that person had voted before and, most importantly, reaching out to the voter, she said.

"It would take more than 48 hours to even begin to get the full picture," Webber said. She also questioned how the federal government came up with a list of alleged noncitizen voters since it doesn't have access to the state's detailed voter information.

Webber added that throughout the course of her decades-long career working for local election agencies, she has "never seen anything that would make me believe that our voter records are filled with fraudulent voters."

Lawyers for New York man shot by ICE say officer fired into car without warning

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Lawyers for a man wounded by an immigration officer while driving with his young son in New York said in a court filing Wednesday that the agent who shot him never identified himself before he ran up to the car, smashed one of its windows, then fired several shots into the vehicle.

The account by lawyers for Oscar Belgal contrasted sharply with the version of events outlined by Department of Homeland Security officials. They have said officers opened fire only after Belgal smashed his car into two government vehicles and “accelerated toward other officers.”

The Legal Aid Society, in a petition filed in Brooklyn federal court seeking Belgal’s release, said he had picked up his son from school on Oct. 8 and was stopped in front of a fire hydrant, looking for a parking spot, when “an anonymous, masked man” stormed up to the vehicle with his gun drawn, followed by other masked men with guns.

“The men did not identify themselves, show any documents or otherwise communicate with Oscar in any substantive way,” Belgal’s lawyers wrote. “Instead, without identifying himself, the first man struck and shattered Oscar’s window and began firing a pistol into Oscar’s car while his son cowered in the back seat. One of those bullets struck Oscar in the neck and he immediately began to bleed.”

New York City police security camera footage released by the department last week shows some of the encounter but doesn’t conclusively resolve the dispute about how the shooting happened.

The video shows a man wearing a sweatshirt and a red hat running up to the car with his gun pointed at Belgal, then immediately using the barrel of his gun to bash the driver’s side window. The window shatters on the second blow.

A second officer comes into view alongside the car and draws his gun. Belgal then pulls into the street, away from the two officers. The car pulls out of view of the camera, with the officer in the red hat in pursuit.

Whatever happened next didn’t appear on the NYPD’s security cameras, but the chase ended just a moment later, with Belgal’s damaged car resting against a concrete barrier with bullet holes in its windshield and a rear window.

Video from bystanders and NYPD body camera footage show that ICE officers handcuffed Belgal and tended to a gunshot wound to his neck as he sat on the pavement outside the car. NYPD officers took Belgal to a nearby hospital.

DHS didn’t comment Wednesday on the claims by Belgal’s lawyers, saying the incident remains under investigation. But DHS officials have maintained that ICE officers fired their weapons because they believed their lives were in danger.

Belgal’s lawyers said he didn’t learn the men were ICE officers until he awoke later in the hospital. They say he remains detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, where he has yet to receive surgery to remove the bullet lodged in his neck. They also say he has lost sensation on the left side of his face and is suffering from impaired hearing.

“Mr. Belgal’s detention was unlawful from its inception. ICE officers shot him in the neck in front of his five year-old son, failed to provide him with immediate medical assistance, and now continue to hold him in a facility notorious for medical neglect,” said Perry McAninch and Elyssa Williams, the lawyers representing Belgal.

DHS referred questions about Belgal’s medical treatment to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, which manages the jail. That agency also declined comment, citing “privacy, safety, and security reasons,” but said, in general, that it “does not deny any inmate necessary medical treatment or basic necessities.”

At a news conference last week, Marcos Charles, the head of ICE’s enforcement and removal operations, said Belgal refused orders to exit his vehicle and then accelerated and smashed into two government vehicles as ICE officers tried to block him from driving away.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin has maintained officers didn’t know a child was in the car and blamed Belgal for putting his son’s life in danger.

Police investigate report of sexual assault at a fraternity party near the University of Chicago

By CYBELE MAYES-OSTERMAN and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Police are investigating a woman's report that she was sexually assaulted during a fraternity party near the University of Chicago campus, an allegation that comes at a time of heightened awareness of sexual violence on college campuses.

Chicago police said no one had been charged Wednesday, a day after university officials posted an alert saying that a person of interest had been identified.

The Chicago case comes amid an uproar over Cornell University's handling of a woman's allegations that she was drugged and gang raped by fraternity members in 2024. A campus investigation led to internal disciplinary action by the university, but no criminal charges were ever filed.

The University of Chicago, a top-ranked U.S. research school with an enrollment of 18,000 students, said in a statement that a woman reported being sexually assaulted early Sunday during a party at the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity house.

The university said the perpetrator fled the house after being confronted by another person.

The 21-year-old woman reported the assault to police and went to a hospital for treatment, according to Chicago police. The university said she is not a student.

Chicago police did not immediately provide a copy of the incident report on the alleged attack when The Associated Press requested it Wednesday.

The Chicago Sun-Times, citing the police report, said the woman told police she had been drinking and dancing at the party before she began feeling unwell. The Sun-Times said the report stated two of the woman's friends then found her "not fully conscious" in a bathroom with a man and that both were partially undressed.

The friends told police that to get into the bathroom, they had to force their way through several men who were "cheering and appearing to encourage the activity inside," the Sun-Times reported.

Alpha Epsilon Pi said no fraternity members took part in the alleged attack or encouraged it. The fraternity's University of Chicago chapter said in a statement that its members rushed to help the woman after being alerted by one of her friends and ended the party immediately.

"There is no evidence at all that any AEPI members participated in this assault or were aware of it while it was transpiring," Jonathan Pierce, a spokesperson for the fraternity's national organization, said in a statement Wednesday.

The fraternity said the perpetrator was chased out of the house and was recorded by cameras while fleeing.

University officials said the person of interest who has been identified is not a student or otherwise affiliated with the school.

The Cornell case came to light last month after a woman filed a lawsuit against the university and seven fraternity members, saying she was repeatedly assaulted at a fraternity house in October 2024. She went to campus police three weeks later and gave a detailed interview, but local prosecutors never pursued charges. The men she accused have denied wrongdoing.

Cornell announced Tuesday it's banning parties at fraternity houses until next year. The university said it will include New York State Police in investigations of campus sexual assaults.

Fraternities have also been under scrutiny at the University of Arizona, which suspended fraternity activities earlier this month following multiple reports of assault, hazing and other misconduct.

Pope Leo is eating, celebrating Mass and walking after cancer surgery, but trip is in question

By NICOLE WINFIELD and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Leo XIV resumed his regular diet, began walking and celebrated Mass in the hospital Wednesday as he recovered from surgery to remove a cancerous mass from his lung, the Vatican said. Questions remained about whether the cancer had spread, while Peru's president suggested Leo might have to alter his planned visit to Latin America next month.

Blood tests and a chest X-ray showed the 71-year-old pope was recovering normally, his two doctors said. "The Holy Father underwent respiratory physiotherapy and has begun walking in his room. He resumed his regular diet and had breakfast and lunch," said Dr. Luigi Carbone, the pope's personal doctor, and Dr. Stefano Margaritora, the head thoracic surgeon at Gemelli hospital. "Recovery is proceeding as planned."

Tuesday's surgery confirmed that Leo has lung adenocarcinoma, the most common type of lung cancer. Surgeons removed the lower lobe of his right lung.

The right lung has three lobes and the left has two. After one lobe is removed, the remaining lung tissue can gradually compensate, especially in otherwise healthy, physically active people. Leo is known for his interest in sports, including weekly tennis games and swimming.

The Vatican said late Wednesday that the pope had celebrated Mass with his secretaries in the afternoon in a special chapel set up for him on the 10th floor of the hospital.

No word yet on whether the pope's cancer had spread

Experts said some of Leo's lymph nodes would also have been removed and tested to determine whether the cancer had spread. Those results have not so far been made public.

If the cancer has spread, test results will guide treatment, said Dr. Stephen Liu, a lung cancer expert at Georgetown's Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. Options include chemotherapy, a combination of chemotherapy and immunotherapy, or targeted therapy, which uses pills to treat cancers with specific characteristics.

Liu, who is not involved in the pope's care, said that, of the different types of lung cancers, adenocarcinoma has the most favorable prognosis.

"While we know the diagnosis, we now need to know the stage," Liu said. "We now need to know how big it is, how many spots in the lung are involved. Is it just one nodule, or more than one, and the lymph nodes, are they cancerous?"

Dr. PierCarlo Gentile, head of radiation oncology at Rome's San Pietro Fatebenefratelli Hospital, said the minimally invasive, video-assisted chest surgery the pope underwent typically requires 15 to 20 days of recovery. Postoperative complications, including infections, are rare, he said.

Doubts over Latin America trip

The Vatican hasn't announced any changes to Leo's planned trip to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru on Nov. 6-17.

But Peruvian President Keiko Fujimori said Wednesday that the pope's diagnosis and recovery could affect the visit, even as she expressed hope it would go ahead. Leo spent two decades as a missionary in Peru, holds Peruvian citizenship and is beloved by his flock there.

"We understand that this recovery will take several weeks, longer than expected," Fujimori told reporters. "We also understand that there could be some changes to the schedule of his visit."

The ambitious itinerary for the longest trip of his papacy covers just over 31,000 kilometers (19,000 miles), with a dozen flights and two helicopter rides across the three countries, as well as a significant change in altitude in Peru.

Fujimori said millions of Peruvians were praying for the pontiff's recovery and awaiting further announcements from the Vatican.

"We hope his recovery will be swift and that his visit can go ahead, but we will also understand if that is not possible," she said. "What matters most is that His Holiness regains his health."

Oncology surgeons often advise patients not to fly for three weeks after surgery.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 56 of 73

"If it is Stage 1, he can complete these trips. If more treatment is needed, I would likely advise against the trips," said Liu.

Doctors took tissue samples before surgery

The pontiff has offered a rare degree of transparency about the first publicly disclosed major health problem of his 17-month papacy.

He revealed the discovery of a nodule, or growth, on his lung during his Sunday noon prayer, announcing it on live television. But Leo did not disclose everything he knew Sunday.

Tuesday's medical bulletin said preoperative tests had led doctors to suspect cancer, which surgery confirmed. Leo did not use the word cancer in his announcement, though he described the nodule as being at an "early stage" and "circumscribed."

The Vatican has now said that those tests included a robotic bronchoscopic biopsy, known as an ION bronchoscopy, meaning doctors had already taken tissue samples to assess whether the mass was cancerous.

The procedure requires general anesthesia and must be performed in a hospital equipped with one of the advanced machines, said Dr. Lorenzo Spaggiari, chief thoracic surgeon at the European Institute of Oncology in Milan. He said Gemelli hospital had had one for about a year.

The Vatican did not say when Leo underwent the diagnostic tests, which also included a chest CT scan with contrast and a PET scan.

A PET scan can be used to make sure that the disease has not traveled to other places in the body, said Dr. Brendon Stiles, chief of surgical oncology at Montefiore Einstein in New York. Between the scan and the biopsy, Stiles said, "we can be hopefully reassured that this should be a stage-one cancer."

Pope breaks with a tradition of secrecy surrounding health issues

The Vatican has long been secretive about the health of popes and tightly controlled any such information — a practice encapsulated in the popular Italian saying, "The pope is fine until he's dead."

St. John XXIII died in 1963, nearly a year after doctors diagnosed stomach cancer that was kept hidden at the time. St. John Paul II died in 2005 after suffering for years from the obvious effects of Parkinson's disease that the Vatican only confirmed after he died.

Pope Francis seemed more up front about his health problems, giving an Argentine doctor a tell-all interview for a book about his physical and mental health. But in the end Francis, too, tightly controlled the information that was released in his dying months.

As a result, Leo's decision to announce himself that he had a nodule and was undergoing surgery was significant.

"That was truly a revolution. It was like he was reading a medical bulletin himself," said Giovanni Maria Vian, a church historian and the former editor-in-chief of the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano.

Vian, who was part of the Vatican communications team from 2007 to 2018, said the Vatican's obsession with secrecy was due to both practical and cultural considerations. He noted the Vatican is a 2,000-year-old institution that is culturally European — and Europeans tend to be more guarded about health problems than people in the United States.

Trump press secretary Katie Zacharia faces scrutiny over claims she's a lawyer

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The new White House press secretary is facing mounting questions about her background and resume as she transitions into her role as the public face of the Trump administration.

Katie Zacharia has long described herself as a lawyer as she has worked to establish herself as a commentator for conservative outlets like Fox News and Newsmax. But so far, she and the White House have offered no evidence that she passed the bar exam in any state or in China, where she worked for a large law firm years ago.

The questions add to the confusion surrounding President Donald Trump's decision to hire Zacharia, who had worked for his social media company for only a few months when he announced her appointment.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 57 of 73

and whose debut at the podium on Tuesday has been widely panned.

Afterward, the president was asked by reporters where Zacharia had passed the bar exam, following a report by the independent outlet Popular Information that she did not appear to be licensed in any state.

Trump stepped aside to allow Zacharia to answer.

"When I moved to China," she responded over the sound of Marine One whirring in the background. It is not clear what she had intended to say or whether she had finished the sentence.

China's notoriously difficult National Unified Legal Professional Qualification Examination can only be taken by Chinese citizens.

Asked what credentials she held, the White House passed along a statement from Zacharia, who received a bachelor of arts degree from Pepperdine University in 2007 and received her law degree from Pepperdine Caruso School of Law in 2011, according to the school and her LinkedIn bio.

"I practiced international transaction law, with all the appropriate credentials," it read.

Steven Cheung, the White House communications director, added that Zacharia was "uniquely qualified and whip smart to help inform the American people about all the great things President Trump and his Administration have been doing, and she will do an incredible job as press secretary."

A resume under scrutiny

According to her LinkedIn profile, Zacharia has been the senior communications adviser at the Trump Media & Technology Group since June and spent two months as deputy assistant secretary for public affairs at the Department of Homeland Security earlier this year.

From 2011 to 2013, it says, she served as an associate on the International Practice Team at the Zhong Lun Law Firm in Beijing. She also worked as the manager of fundraising and communications for Compassion for Migrant Children, which assists the children of migrant workers, from 2012 to 2013.

More recently, it says she served as general counsel for Fix California, a group started by Trump administration official Richard Grenell.

Neither the firm nor the two groups responded to questions about her tenure and background.

Zacharia has long called herself a lawyer. On Instagram, she describes herself as the White House press secretary, "Wife, Mom, & Lawyer" (with four heart emojis after "Mom").

And her official author page at the California Globe, where she wrote occasional commentary, says that, in addition to being a "regular commentator on Fox News, Newsmax," she has "extensive experience in political advocacy, international corporate law, and non-profit work, including time as outside counsel for the World Bank and IFC in Beijing."

A June 2026 press release from NovaRed Mining Inc. announcing her appointment to the company's advisory board, which was first reported by Popular Information, said her "professional experience includes work related to international legal and financial transactions, including matters involving organizations associated with the World Bank Group and the International Finance Corporation during her tenure with Zhong Lun Law Firm in Beijing."

In announcing her hire on his social media site, Trump described Zacharia as "a distinguished Graduate of Pepperdine University, and the Pepperdine Caruso School of Law, an attorney, and a frequent Commentator on outlets, including Fox News and Newsmax."

"She has an unblemished record of support, and has been a loyal and brilliant supporter, right from the beginning. She is, likewise, a devoted fan and member of MAGA!" he added.

'No Record' found

Zacharia is not listed as a member of the state bar in California, where she currently resides, according to a public database.

Rick Coca, a spokesperson for the State Bar of California, a regulatory agency that oversees state licensing, said in a statement that they have "no record of Kate Sharon Zacharia or Kate Sharon Black" or any version of her married or maiden names "having been licensed to practice law in California."

Popular Information said the same was the case in all 50 states they had queried, plus Washington, D.C.

In response, the watchdog group Campaign for Accountability filed a complaint Wednesday with the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 58 of 73

State Bar of California asking them to investigate whether Zacharia misrepresented herself as a lawyer in violation of California law.

"In California, calling yourself a lawyer without a license isn't puffery; it's a crime. The State Bar should investigate whether Ms. Zacharia has misled the public about her credentials and hold her accountable if she has," said CfA Executive Director Michelle Kupper-Smith in a statement.

The State Bar said they could not confirm whether they had received the complaint or were conducting an investigation, citing confidentiality laws.

Rep. Ilhan Omar's phone seized and relatives subpoenaed in criminal probe, AP source says

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal authorities investigating Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar seized the Democratic lawmaker's phone and have issued more than a dozen grand jury subpoenas, including to some of her relatives, according to a person briefed on the probe.

The subpoenas were issued for a grand jury collecting evidence in Minnesota as federal authorities probe potential fraud in Omar's immigration paperwork, said the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation. The investigation led to federal agents searching Omar's Washington, D.C. home on Monday just weeks before the November midterms, in which Omar is seeking reelection.

The scope of the investigation into Omar is unclear, though Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin has suggested that authorities were examining potential crimes related to her family's immigration paperwork.

On Tuesday, Washington D.C. U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro said in a Fox News interview that "there are several investigations going on" related to Omar and that her office is also probing issues concerning the lawmaker's financial disclosures.

"If there was a crime that was committed, it will be prosecuted," Pirro said.

The search of Omar's home so close to next month's midterm contests that will determine control of the House and the Senate was swiftly condemned by Democrats, who accused the administration of targeting the Democrat for political purposes. Omar, in a statement on X, called the search an "attempt to target political enemies and weaponize federal law enforcement."

"For 10 years, Trump has targeted me with baseless lies and smear campaigns. This is just the latest escalation in his campaign of political intimidation," she said. "I will not be silenced."

A phone message seeking comment was left Wednesday with a representative for Omar.

Though the Republican focus on Omar's background dates back years, the search notably took place three weeks before the November midterms, in which Omar is seeking reelection. The Justice Department has historically sought to avoid public investigative actions involving a candidate within 60 days of a primary or general election.

Omar, who was first elected to the House in 2018, represents Minnesota's 5th District, including Minneapolis. She is part of The Squad of progressive lawmakers who are a vibrant political force on the left wing of Congress but have also endured repeated attacks from Trump, dating back to his first term. She was one of the first two Muslim-American women in the House and the first African refugee to be elected to Congress.

US stocks drop to their worst day since July as inflation worsens

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks dropped to their worst day since July on Wednesday following the latest signal that inflation is getting worse.

The S&P 500 sank 1.1% for a fifth loss in the six days since setting its all-time high. The Dow Jones

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 59 of 73

Industrial Average fell 48 points, or 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite slid 1.9% as stocks in the artificial-intelligence industry led the way lower.

Stocks felt pressure from rising yields in the bond market, where worries grew after a report said U.S. consumers had to pay prices for fuel, food and other costs of living last month that were 3.7% higher overall than a year earlier. That means inflation accelerated from its 3.4% rate in August and was worse than the 3.6% that economists expected.

Inflation has remained more painful than anyone would like since the economy catapulted out of the crevasse created by the COVID-19 pandemic. It's accelerated recently in part because of jumps in fuel prices caused by the war with Iran, and the price for a barrel of Brent crude added 0.4% Wednesday to \$106.06.

That has added to the longstanding worries about fast-rising debt loads for governments, signals that the U.S. economy is still growing and other factors that have sent bond yields to their highest levels in years.

The centerpiece of the U.S. bond market, the 10-year Treasury, saw its yield briefly jump above 5.32% from less than 5.17% just before the inflation report's release. It eventually gave back much of the gain.

Yields on shorter-term Treasuries had even bigger leaps as traders raised their expectations for coming hikes to interest rates by the Federal Reserve, though they also moderated as the day progressed.

The Fed recently raised the interest rate that it controls, which affects very short-term loans, for the first time in three years in hopes of reining in inflation. Higher rates do that by making it more expensive for everyone to borrow money and slowing the overall economy.

Traders now see a nearly 35% chance the Fed will raise the federal funds rate at its next meeting in two weeks, up from the 22% probability seen a day earlier, according to data from CME Group.

Part of what's keeping inflation high is that Americans overall are continuing to spend, which encourages businesses to keep raising prices for their products and services. As Americans become more "price-sensitive" and the economy also benefits from greater productivity by workers, Vanguard Senior Economist Adam Schickling said inflation should slow, but "patience will be required."

Much of Wall Street's pain on Wednesday was due to drops for companies riding the AI frenzy to huge profit growth and stellar stock gains.

Higher bond yields making borrowing money more expensive could make it more difficult for companies to raise cash to build data centers and fill them with AI chips. Drops of 3.2% for Nvidia, 3.1% for Broadcom and 5.7% for Advanced Micro Devices were among the day's heaviest weights on the S&P 500.

CoreWeave, which offers AI computing power to customers over the cloud, tumbled 15.5% for its worst day since February. GE Vernova, which is hoping to electrify power-hungry data centers, dropped 6.2%, and Oracle sank 8.8%.

Smaller companies also feel the bite of higher interest rates because many need to borrow to grow. The Russell 2000 index of the smallest U.S. stocks fell 1.9%.

Higher yields in the bond market push downward on prices for all kinds of stocks, and the main way companies can offset that is by delivering bigger profits. That's exactly what analysts are expecting, and it's how the S&P 500 has been able to set records despite the many challenges weighing on Wall Street.

But the high expectations also mean companies will likely get punished if they fall short of targets for growth.

Bank of America dropped 4.8% after reporting weaker profit and revenue for the summer than analysts expected. The profit would have failed to meet expectations even if the U.S. Treasury Department had not announced \$1.2 billion in fines late Tuesday for alleged violations of anti-money laundering and sanctions laws by the bank.

State Street sank 4.1% after reporting weaker revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected, even though its profit was slightly above their forecasts.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 86.51 points to 7,718.94. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 48.62 to 51,621.48, and the Nasdaq composite sank 511.51 to 26,692.87.

In stock markets abroad, indexes ticked higher in Europe following a weaker finish in Asia. They rose

0.7% in London and fell 0.9% in Shanghai for two of the world's bigger moves.

Prosecutors urge life sentences for Alexander luxury real estate brokers in sex trafficking case

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Federal prosecutors on Wednesday urged a New York judge to send two of the nation's most successful luxury real estate brokers and their brother to prison for life for drugging and raping dozens of women over a two-decade stretch, while defense lawyers recommended 15-year terms.

The lengthy written submissions by both sides precede the sentencing later this month of twins Oren and Alon Alexander, 39, and Tal Alexander, 40.

The brothers were convicted in March of multiple charges including sex trafficking, which carries a mandatory minimum penalty of 15 years in prison.

"As the evidence makes clear, the defendants are serial rapists who violated woman after woman and girl after girl for years upon years," prosecutors wrote. They said they had identified at least 70 victims who were raped or sexually assaulted by at least one of the defendants.

Defense lawyers said the brothers apologize to the women they insulted or offended for conduct they admit was "insensitive toward the feelings of certain women at certain times," but they added that all three "steadfastly maintain their complete innocence of these awful charges."

Oren and Tal Alexander, once known as real estate's "A Team" for their high-ticket sales and celebrity clientele, face sentencing Oct. 27 along with Alon Alexander, who ran their family's private security company.

Prosecutors said the brothers began sexually assaulting women as early as 2001 or 2002, when they were in high school. As the years passed, the government said, they developed a pattern of drugging and raping women who they enticed to join them on luxury getaways.

"The defendants felt empowered to take whatever they wanted from any woman or girl who agreed to get on a plane, go to a party, or sit at their table at a nightclub," prosecutors said.

Once sexual assaults began, the brothers "seemed to prefer — when the women protested, struggled to get free, or lay lifeless in front of them," prosecutors said.

Eleven women testified at their trial, with many of them describing being raped or sexually assaulted after they became disoriented and lost control of their bodies after being given a drink by one of the brothers.

Prosecutors noted that the Probation Office has recommended that each defendant serve 15 years for each victim they raped, which would result in 180-year sentences for Alon and Tal Alexander and 195 years in prison for Oren Alexander.

Defense lawyers described the brothers as "dedicated husbands and fathers" and said they had all lived "lives very different than what was portrayed at trial" for years prior to their 2024 arrests. They have been jailed ever since.

The defense submission projected confidence that the brothers will do well on appeal, saying the evidence was "remarkably weak" on critical points and that the men faced "overwhelming prejudice" as a result of Judge Valerie E. Caproni's decisions about what evidence the jury saw.

"We fight against injustice," they wrote.

The lawyers also urged Caproni to see the brothers as "human beings, not the monsters falsely portrayed in Court and in the media."

ICE rejects suggestion that its officers wear body cameras that automatically activate

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal immigration officials need to ensure that body cameras worn by officers are uniformly activated when needed, a government report released Wednesday said, following a series of contentious shootings and aggressive arrests by ICE officers.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 61 of 73

The agency rejected the recommendation, saying that using cameras that automatically activate when an officer pulls their weapon or activates a car siren could risk privacy concerns.

ICE has come under intense scrutiny after numerous incidents where officers have opened fire during enforcement operations and the agency has claimed they were under threat but officers weren't wearing body cameras. Critics say the cameras could help hold officers accountable and promote transparency at a time when the agency is operating at a high tempo across the country and increasingly accused of excessive use of force. The report by the Government Accountability Office covers the period from February 2025 until September of this year. The report, conducted at the request of Democratic members of Congress, delves into policies governing the use of body-worn cameras by ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection and details improvements both agencies can make to improve their programs. But it did not go into any of the high-profile ICE-involved shootings that have focused attention on the agency's body-worn camera usage, such as the shooting deaths of Renee Good in Minneapolis or Lorenzo Salgado Araujo in Houston.

A fatal shooting exposed gaps in ICE's camera rollout

Former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced in February that every Homeland Security officer on the ground in Minneapolis would be issued body-worn cameras. Noem, who was later fired by Trump, said officers across the country would receive them as funds became available.

The department later received \$20 million from Congress to finish the ICE body-camera rollout plan. But then came a shooting in July of Salgado Araujo, when Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers shot and killed the Mexican man who lived in the U.S. for more than 35 years. Those officers were not wearing body cameras, raising questions about why the agency still hadn't gotten the cameras out to officers in the field. Homeland Security said after Salgado Araujo's death that body cameras had been deployed to more than half of ICE field offices and that the remainder would get them in the next 60 days. In the GAO report, DHS said all ICE offices had received the body-worn cameras as of Aug. 5 and that officers were being trained on their use.

In a statement Wednesday, DHS said that while they'd purchased devices for all ICE officers across the country, the required training was still ongoing and that they expected to be finished "soon."

DHS rejects automatic recording, citing privacy concerns

The report recommended ICE take additional steps such as "automated camera activation" that it said would be particularly helpful in situations where "unexpected and unplanned incidents, unrelated to sensitive operations, result in use of force by or against personnel." The report said this would improve transparency and public trust. But DHS disagreed, saying that cameras that automatically activate could result in "the unauthorized recording of sensitive interactions with informants or victims." The agency said the body-worn cameras are required to be turned on at the beginning of pre-planned enforcement activities.

Confusion over camera rules kept one ICE office from using them

The report also said some of the officers they talked to at both ICE and CBP were confused as to when they should activate the cameras. For example, some officers told the GAO they didn't know whether to activate the cameras during vehicle searches or when transporting detainees. The report noted that at one ICE office, staff was so uncertain about when they were supposed to use the cameras that they hadn't begun using them even after they'd been trained.

The report also found that neither agency had updated the plans that oversee their body-worn camera programs even as their staff had grown significantly.

Social Security recipients to get 3.6% cost of living boost, an average of \$75 per month

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Social Security Administration projected Wednesday that the annual cost-of-living adjustment for older adults and people with disabilities will go up by 3.6% beginning in 2027, with some recipients complaining that is not enough to offset soaring prices.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 62 of 73

The adjustment translates to \$75 extra per month for the nearly 72 million people who receive monthly Social Security benefits and about 7.3 million beneficiaries who get Supplemental Security Income.

The announcement comes as inflation adds pressure on household budgets and businesses and as midterm elections are weeks away.

The cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, for retirees and disabled beneficiaries is financed by payroll taxes collected from workers and their employers, up to a certain annual salary. That is set to increase to \$192,300 in 2027, from \$184,500 in 2026.

The agency's commissioner, Frank Bisignano, said in a statement that the adjustment will give recipients "greater financial stability."

Older adults feel the bite of rising costs

Some older adults feel the increase is a drop in the bucket as inflation has eaten away at monthly savings. The government reported Wednesday that inflation accelerated in September, with the consumer price index rising 3.7% in September compared with a year ago and gas prices have spiked in the wake of renewed fighting between the United States and Iran.

Nancy Altman, president of the Social Security Works advocacy group, said the latest inflation data shows that "as important as the Social Security COLA is, it is not keeping up with prices."

Lorrie Ufkin, a 71-year-old retiree who lives outside Rochester, Minnesota, said the COLA will not put a dent in her healthcare costs, which are set to increase after the Trump administration concludes at year's end a temporary Medicare Part D subsidy program that has helped offset premiums. Ufkin said that her premiums and drug cost are expected to rise, although the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has projected a modest increase for most people.

The COLA "doesn't even meet what they're going to do for changes to Medicare," she told The Associated Press.

She said one of the medications both she and her husband take will go from \$11 per month for each prescription, to \$200 per month, after Republican administration changes made to older Americans' health-care programs. She said that was "catastrophic."

Senior advocacy groups say the COLA is a strong reminder of the financial straits of many older people. "There's a lot on the line financially right now for older Americans — one in five have no retirement savings, and more people feel financially insecure this year than last. That makes Social Security's cost-of-living adjustment critically important," said AARP CEO Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan.

Jaime Jakubczak, a 68-year-old resident of Buffalo, New York who retired early at 55, has recently gone back to work to make ends meet, specifically to afford rising property taxes. He said the COLA is insufficient because it is offset by high inflation and a proposed 3.9% property tax increase in his town.

Jakubczak called the 3.6% cost-of-living adjustment "a pittance," given how high food, healthcare and gasoline prices have become across the country.

"We were getting ahead a little bit with the COLA based on inflation, but the inflation is so high that it doesn't offset what our COLA allowance is," he said.

Most older adults believe the COLA isn't adequately keeping up with inflation, according to an AARP poll from September. That poll found that about three-quarters of those 50 or older disagreed with the idea that a 3.5% COLA in 2027 would be enough to keep up with rising prices.

Social Security faces a looming funding shortfall

The Social Security Administration faces a looming bankruptcy date if a funding shortfall is not addressed by Congress.

The June 2026 Social Security and Medicare trustees' report states that Social Security's combined trust funds — which cover old age and disability recipients — will be unable to pay full benefits beginning in 2034. After that, incoming revenue would cover about 83% of scheduled benefits.

While a permanent solution for shoring up the benefits program has not been passed into law, lawmakers on the Hill have called for new measures to replenish the trust funds.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Bernie Moreno, R-Ohio, in June proposed lifting the Social Security

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 63 of 73

payroll tax cap, which is a maximum amount of earnings taxable. Treating all income the same “would generate substantial revenue that would extend the solvency of Social Security for another generation,” they wrote in The New York Times.

The move is controversial because Republicans have traditionally criticized calls to raise taxes on the wealthy.

The Peterson Foundation estimates that lifting the payroll tax cap would add roughly \$3 trillion into the program over the next 10 years.

Both the Trump and Biden administrations signed into law new benefits for retirees, which boosted their finances, but simultaneously accelerated the insolvency of the old-age benefits program.

The Trump administration, as part of Republicans’ tax and spending bill, gave a temporary tax deduction for people 65 and over, which applies to all income — not just Social Security. But those who aren’t able to claim the deduction include the lowest-income older adults who already don’t pay taxes on Social Security, those who choose to claim their benefits before they reach 65 and those above a defined income threshold.

Additionally, Democratic President Joe Biden in 2024 repealed two federal policies — the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset — that previously limited Social Security payouts for roughly 2.8 million people, including largely former public workers.

Pope Leo XIV has lung cancer called adenocarcinoma. Here’s what that means

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Pope Leo XIV had the lower section of his right lung removed after doctors diagnosed him with the most common form of lung cancer. While lung cancer is a leading killer, survival rates can be high if it’s caught early, as the pope’s tumor appears to have been. Here are some things to know.

What is lung adenocarcinoma?

The Vatican announced the pope’s diagnosis as lung adenocarcinoma, which is one of many forms of lung cancer.

There are two main groups, small cell and non-small cell lung cancers. The non-small cell kind make up the vast majority of the world’s cases and adenocarcinoma is its most common subtype. Even it comes in varieties that can grow faster or slower.

“While it’s still very dangerous, it has slightly higher cure rates than other types of lung cancer,” said Dr. John Heymach of the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer. But as many as 1 in 5 lung cancers occur in people who have never smoked and it’s not clear why, maybe in some cases just random chance, Heymach said.

Other risks include exposure to radon gas, asbestos, radiation, secondhand smoke and air pollution, according to the American Cancer Society.

How is lung cancer detected?

Lung cancer symptoms don’t usually appear until the cancer is advanced, according to the cancer society. They can include a persistent cough, chest pain, a hoarse voice, shortness of breath, and recurrent pneumonia or bronchitis — symptoms important to get checked.

Sometimes, lung cancer can be found early when someone has an X-ray or other scan that shows a spot in a lung that needs further investigation. That’s called an incidental finding, leading doctors to investigate well before symptoms and possibly early enough that the cancer remains small and hasn’t spread. In the pope’s case, a nodule in his lung was spotted during another exam.

In the U.S., yearly screening with a low-dose CT scan, a type of X-ray, is recommended for certain people at high risk because of heavy smoking.

How is it treated?

Surgery is a mainstay when lung cancer is detected early, and increasingly is used even in more advanced stages. The pope had the lower section, or lobe, of his right lung removed to try to ensure that all of the cancer was removed.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 64 of 73

The right lung has three sections or lobes while the left has two. Each lobe has its own airway branch and dedicated blood vessels and when one is removed, "the other lobes actually pick up some of the work," said Dr. Ben Zhang, a thoracic surgeon at Allina Health in Minneapolis.

The lungs gradually compensate over several months until most people, especially those who already were physically active, notice little to no difference with exertion, he said.

The pope is known to engage in weekly tennis games and swimming.

In the U.S., the average hospital stay after lung cancer surgery is two nights, Zhang said. It depends in part on how quickly the patient can get up and walk around, as well as pain and how long a tube that can drain air and fluid from the chest is needed.

The pope was walking the next day, which Heymach called "typically a harbinger of a quicker recovery."

Whether additional treatment is needed depends on the tumor's stage, based on factors such as its size and whether it shows signs of spreading via the lymph nodes, and if markers on its cells suggest it may be aggressive. Additional treatment can be chemotherapy, used before surgery to shrink a tumor or afterward to attack any lingering cells. Other options include radiation, immunotherapy or what are called targeted drugs aimed at specific molecular drivers of a tumor.

Kelly Clarkson and a Brooklyn store clashed on social media. Behind it, power dynamics loomed

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It was something most people have likely done at one time or another: complain to others about feeling judged or dismissed during an interaction, maybe even take to social media to post about it.

But just because we might all have the same impulse, we all don't have the same reach and impact. Exhibit A: a dispute between singer Kelly Clarkson and a small store in Brooklyn that's brought out angry fans and heated commentary.

The conflict from over the weekend, involving a high-priced mechanical bird, is raising more issues than just the quality of customer service. It's also a case study in power dynamics, and the differential that exists between someone with a high profile and those without.

It started Saturday when Clarkson went to Art of Play, a store in Brooklyn that offers items like books, games and playing cards and also hosts magic shows. But the interaction turned negative, she said in a social media post, when she "was looked at as if I couldn't afford it" and went on to say the store had "just lost a huge sale." She named the store and gave it a thumbs down.

A back-and-forth ensued, with the store making its own posts saying initially that the item wasn't for sale and then adding that they had tried to find her an alternative. Clarkson said that wasn't true.

Since Clarkson's initial post, there's been a barrage of commentary online — and, the store owners say, in the real world. There have been hateful messages and reviews, and even someone showing up at the store, said Adam Rubin, one of the partners.

"I don't understand why these people are willing to debase themselves on behalf of a celebrity they never met," he said. Representatives for Clarkson did not respond to repeated attempts to get comment.

The power of celebrity is potent

Celebrities have power in different ways. They can influence what people feel as well as impact what they think or believe, said Alfred Archer, assistant professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands, who has done research around the ethics and politics of fame.

In a situation like Clarkson's, the influence is heavily weighted in the celebrity's favor as a result, he said. That doesn't mean celebrities should be censored or barred from speaking, but they should be cognizant of that reality in determining what they say and how they say it.

"You can't hold the celebrity responsible for everything that their followers do, of course," Archer said, but those who have influence should remember that their words can resonate widely and "be careful about what they put on social media and what they communicate in public for that reason."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 65 of 73

That power can also have positive ripples — like when Ms. Rachel, the children's educator and YouTube star, asked people on social media for Black-owned businesses to support. She gave recognition to small businesses like a coffee shop in New Jersey, leading to a huge jump in sales and popularity.

"I think really the responsibility here is to use this power in a responsible way," Archer said. "And of course, what that looks like in any individual case is going to be a decision for a particular celebrity to make. But they do have to think about it a bit more carefully than an ordinary member of the public does."

Social media changed the equation

While everyday people have always been fascinated by the famous, the explosion of social media and the glut of information — and the way we follow our family and friends right along with our favorite stars — means there's more of a likelihood that people can develop parasocial, or one-sided, unreciprocated relationships with celebrities. That can lead to the kind of harsh messages and bad reviews that the Brooklyn store says it has experienced.

That aspect of modern life is baffling to Franchesca Ramsey, a writer, podcaster, and content creator.

"I think social media itself has heightened people's ability to feel a connection to a celebrity or a public person that they don't know," she said.

"Back in my day, you liked a musician, you put up a poster on the wall. You read the magazine articles about them. You maybe went to their concert. You watched their music videos. But beyond that, it didn't feel like a two-way relationship. It felt like I'm the fan and this is the person that I really enjoy," she said.

"Social media has ... kind of created this false sense of reality where, I really think even the act of watching someone's content on your phone and it looks like they're talking directly to you," she said.

Asked what advice he would give another small-business owner facing this kind of situation, Rubin didn't have any. "This is not something that a small business owner has the capability to deal with," he said. "This is something that happens on a level of fame and celebrity that I don't have access to, (that) most normal people don't have access to."

Watching the crowd of reporters from his plumbing supply store next door to Art of Play, Daniel Graffeo couldn't believe the uproar was still going on several days after the initial encounter, but wasn't totally surprised. "Nowadays everybody's looking for something, you know, publicity," he said.

He hoped it would never find him. "I would not want to be in that situation."

Lawyers for Federal Reserve's Lisa Cook say White House hearing set up by Trump is 'biased'

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook's lawyers say that a committee set up by the White House last week to investigate an accusation against her is "demonstrably biased," though they did not close the door on the possibility that she would appear before the panel.

Lawyer Abbe Lowell also said in a letter Tuesday that Cook would not be able to participate in a hearing Nov. 5 because she "will be executing her official duties as Governor at financial and monetary policy meetings in Europe."

The earliest that Cook could appear before a "committee of inquiry" that the White House set up last Friday would be after the Fed's policy meeting Dec. 8-9, the letter said. The letter was sent to William Scharf, a counsel to President Donald Trump.

Lowell's comments are the latest turn in the Trump administration's extended efforts to fire Cook from her position as one of seven members of the Fed's board of governors. Trump has accused Cook of committing mortgage fraud in 2021, before she joined the board, a claim she has denied. No criminal charges have been filed.

No president has fired a Fed governor before, a reflection of the Fed's traditional independence from politics. Yet Trump, who has repeatedly demanded that the central bank lower its key interest rate, has taken numerous steps that economists say have threatened that independence. The Justice Department earlier this year sought to investigate then-Chair Jerome Powell over brief testimony he had given about an

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 66 of 73

extensive building renovation, though a judge threw out subpoenas in the case and it was later dropped.

Cook was appointed by former President Joe Biden and is the first Black woman on the Fed's board.

Trump first tried to fire Cook in August 2025, but the Supreme Court ruled earlier this year she could remain in her position while litigation continued. The court also suggested, in a footnote to the ruling, that Trump could try again to fire her if the administration provided her adequate notice and an opportunity to respond. The committee of inquiry announced by the White House last Friday is an effort to meet those conditions.

Under the law governing the Fed, the president can only fire a Fed governor "for cause," but the Supreme Court didn't address whether Cook's actions met that standard. The committee of inquiry will ultimately recommend whether there is cause to fire Cook, a White House memo last week said.

Lowell also said in the Tuesday letter that "we have significant concerns regarding the objectivity and fitness of the committee for its assigned purpose."

One of its three members, Kevin Hassett, a top economic adviser to Trump, has already said the president has "cause" to fire Cook, the letter noted. The other two members — Labor Secretary Keith Sonderling and chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Andrea Rich — are also Trump appointees.

"A hearing with demonstrably biased members, unspecified additional allegations, and an unclear schedule for the disclosure of any additional evidence — with no explanation for why it was not previously produced — is not a process that respects the appearance or history of independence," Lowell's letter said.

The first new sunscreen type in 25 years has arrived on US store shelves

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the first time in more than a quarter-century, Americans have a new option when shopping for sunscreen: a skin-protecting chemical that's long been a go-to option in Europe and other parts of the world.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved bemotrizinol — sometimes called BEMT — in June. The first sunscreens containing it are now hitting U.S. store shelves, including formulas from Neutrogena and other manufacturers.

Dermatologists say the chemical fills an important market gap by offering broad protection, like the most well-established sunscreen ingredients, but without their cosmetic downsides, including white streaking.

BEMT has decades of safety data behind it, including studies showing it has minimal absorption into the skin. That's been a concern with some older sun-blocking chemicals.

"It's not a brand-new ingredient that you're going to be the first person to try," said Dr. Jennifer Stein, a dermatologist at NYU Langone Health.

Here's what to know:

New ingredient offers broad protection without streaks

To be effective, sunscreens must protect against both forms of ultraviolet light that can damage the skin — UVB rays, which cause most sunburn, and UVA rays that pose the greatest risk of skin cancer and wrinkles.

Sunscreens that block both forms are labeled "broad spectrum protection." Those that don't must carry an FDA warning label.

BEMT is the first chemical-based sunscreen in the U.S. that offers this dual protection. Previously, manufacturers had to mix multiple ingredients to protect against both UVA and UVB light.

"This ingredient provides a solution for what is currently a big gap with respect to providing strong UVA protection," said David Andrews, chief science officer of the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit that advocates for higher sunscreen standards.

A different class of sunscreens, using minerals such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, has long been shown to offer strong protection against both forms of ultraviolet light. These mineral-based formulas work by physically blocking harmful rays from the skin.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 67 of 73

But some people — particularly those with darker complexions — tend to avoid them because they cause white streaking and discoloration. In other cases, people don't like their texture or consistency.

"Those are good sunscreens," Stein said. "But for people who aren't so inclined to use them — maybe they don't like how it feels on their skin — this is a nice option."

There's less skin penetration with the new formula

The fact that chemical-based sunscreens are absorbed into the skin means they have to be carefully studied to make sure they aren't building up in the body at unsafe levels.

Last month, the FDA revoked approval of an older chemical ingredient, oxybenzone, after determining it was "absorbed through the skin to a greater extent than previously understood."

That's not a problem with BEMT.

"It's a molecule that's too big to really penetrate through the skin and get absorbed into the bloodstream," Stein said. "The older chemical sunscreens had small molecules."

As part of its safety review, the FDA reviewed studies of BEMT in more than 500 patients conducted by Dutch manufacturer DSM Nutritional Products. Levels of the chemical absorbed into the skin were nearly undetectable, the studies found.

Agency reviewers said research in people who used the sunscreen daily for up to three weeks showed that BEMT "did not cause irritation" or allergic reactions. As a result, the FDA designated the ingredient as "generally recognized as safe and effective," alongside the older mineral ingredients zinc oxide and titanium dioxide.

More than a dozen other ingredients are currently used in U.S. sunscreens, but the FDA has said they will require additional evidence to support their safety and effectiveness. The FDA review is part of an ongoing effort to overhaul U.S. sunscreen ingredients that kicked off in 2019.

More evidence is needed about the impact on coral reefs

Scientists have shown that some sunscreen ingredients can trigger bleaching and damage coral reefs. That's led to bans on two chemical ingredients — oxybenzone, the ingredient recently targeted by the FDA, and octinoxate — in Hawaii and parts of Florida. It's estimated about 25% of the sunscreen people apply to their skin washes off while swimming or wading in the ocean.

The U.S. government doesn't classify the environmental impact of sunscreens, and marketing claims like "reef safe" or "reef friendly" have no standard definition or requirements. The European Union's environmental agency has found "limited evidence of environmental toxicity" with BEMT, but longer-term research is needed.

Mineral ingredients like zinc oxide are generally considered safer for the environment, although some experts recommend staying away from so-called nano formulations. Those products are made with tiny particles that are more likely to be inhaled or absorbed by marine organisms.

Older chemicals were often unstable

Experts say BEMT has one other key advantage, in that it doesn't quickly break down in the sun. That's been a particular issue for avobenzone, the only other chemical-based ingredient that filters UVA light.

"Avobenzone has been known to be particularly unstable on its own, and a lot of work and reformulation efforts have gone into trying to find ways to stabilize it," said Andrews. "BEMT is significantly more stable."

As with all sunscreens, dermatologists say it's important to reapply every few hours — more frequently if you're swimming or sweating a lot.

Also, people shouldn't rely on sunscreen alone when spending time outside, Stein said. Taking breaks in the shade, wearing a hat and sun-protective clothing are all important protections.

"Sunscreen is just one part of an overall sun-protection plan," Stein said. "Clothing is even better."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 68 of 73

Inflation worsened last month to 3.7% in sign that prices remain elevated as midterm elections near

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. inflation accelerated last month as gasoline and many other goods and services became more expensive, evidence that rising prices remain an economic challenge just a few weeks before midterm elections that have focused heavily on affordability.

The consumer price index rose 3.7% in September compared with a year ago, the Labor Department said Wednesday, up from 3.4% in August. On a monthly basis, costs jumped 0.6% from August to September, the biggest gain in five months, up from a 0.4% increase the previous month.

The figures underscore the lingering impact of the Iran war on gas prices and the stubborn persistence of inflation, which has ticked higher since the war began in late February. The rise isn't all linked to oil and gas, as surging investment in data centers and AI has also pushed up prices for computer chips and the consumer electronics that use them. Elevated inflation has posed political problems for Republicans in Congress and is a challenge for the Federal Reserve, which is required by Congress to seek stable prices.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices rose 2.6% in September from a year ago, up from 2.4% the previous month and higher than economists had expected. And they climbed 0.3% from August to September, an elevated pace that, if it continued for a year, would run well above the Fed's 2% target.

Higher inflation will likely put more pressure on the Fed to lift its key interest rate at its next meeting Oct. 27-28. Economists noted that the report showed price increases were spread more broadly across the economy than in recent months.

"The report was worse than expected," Bill Adams, chief U.S. economist at Fifth Third Bank, said in a note to clients. "Price increases were widespread. ... Consumer demand seems to be holding up better than the downbeat consumer surveys would suggest, helping businesses maintain pricing power."

Wednesday's figures are the last major inflation data to be released before the upcoming elections. Ongoing inflation has taken a toll on Trump's standing with U.S. voters. A poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that just 17% of U.S. adults approve of his handling of the cost of living issue. And only 26% approve of his handling of the economy overall, a new low.

Higher prices are eroding Americans' earnings. The Labor Department also said Wednesday that average weekly paychecks, when adjusted for inflation, shrank last month compared with a year ago for the first time since May.

Gas prices jumped 9.1% just from August to September, the government's consumer price index report said. Rising gas costs are a highly visible sign of inflation and often drive down measures of consumer sentiment about the economy.

With fuel much more expensive, air fares rose 1.2% last month and have soared 22% compared with a year ago. Hotel prices rose 2% from August to September and are up 4.4% compared with a year earlier.

Consumers saw some relief in grocery prices, which actually declined 0.1% last month and are up just 1.8% from a year ago. Ground beef prices fell 0.8% in September, though they are still up 5.4% from last year.

The cost of toys, new and used cars, sporting goods, and shoes all rose at a rapid clip last month, the government said.

The government also said Wednesday that Social Security recipients will receive a 3.6% cost of living increase, based on the inflation figures.

The Middle East and Russia-Ukraine conflicts have also sharply inflated the cost of diesel fuel, which is used by long-haul trucks. Higher diesel prices will increase shipping expenses, which in turn could push up prices for a range of goods.

Ralph Newhouse, CEO of Chefman, which makes countertop appliances, said that rising diesel prices could force him to raise prices in the coming months.

The Mahwah, N.J.-based company, which makes milk frothers, air fryers, blenders and other appliances

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 69 of 73

in China, last increased its prices in 2024. This year, it has used its \$20 million in tariff refunds to offset the rise in fuel costs, but may not be able to do so much longer.

"We're at the point right now that if we continue to see any additional rises in (diesel) prices, then these conversations are going to be forced upon us. We just day by day, hope and pray that we don't have to have this conversation."

Federal Reserve officials are watching inflation data closely to determine whether they need to raise their short-term interest rate further, and by how much.

Fed Chairman Kevin Warsh said last month that inflation isn't moving quickly enough back to the central bank's target, causing the Fed to hike rates for the first time in three years, to about 3.9%.

Yet some key Fed officials have suggested the central bank can wait before increasing rates again. The Fed has a policy meeting Oct. 27-28, but most Wall Street investors expect it to hold rates then, and potentially implement another hike in December. Fed officials have penciled in just one more rate hike this year.

Still, Wednesday's report has led many Wall Street investors to project that the Fed will now act in two weeks. The odds of a rate increase at the central bank's October meeting have doubled, though remain at just 50-50, according to futures pricing tracked by CME Fedwatch.

Stock prices fell slightly after the report, while greater expectations for rate hikes pushed up bond yields, which will raise borrowing costs throughout the economy.

By raising borrowing costs, the Fed hopes to slow spending and growth and cool price increases. Yet much of the current inflation comes from supply shocks, such as the Iran war's disruption to oil and gas supplies, and higher interest rates can't address those bottlenecks.

Warsh has said his goal is to keep the gas price spike from seeping into more areas of the economy. It's already pushed up the price of air fares about 22% from a year ago.

Those costs raise shipping and other expenses for many large and small businesses, some of which are forced to pass the cost to consumers. Last week, PepsiCo said that it will raise prices for its snack foods, including Doritos, Ruffles, Sun Chips, and some sodas to offset higher costs for fuel, aluminum, and food ingredients.

The artificial intelligence buildout has also sharply elevated the cost of semiconductors, computer equipment, and electrical components, which have been passed on to consumers in the form of more expensive electronics such as gaming devices, laptops, and smartphones.

Goldman Sachs estimated in a report Tuesday that the AI buildout has added about a half-percentage point to the annual inflation rate, according to the Fed's preferred inflation gauge.

On September 1, Nintendo increased the price for its Switch 2 gaming system by 11% to \$499.99. And Apple's newest iPhone, the iPhone 17, cost about 10% more than its previous upgrade, though some of that likely reflects greater capabilities.

Her son has serious disabilities. She believes she's the best person to teach him

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, Mont. (AP) — "You can't hit me, Will. You know that," Katherine Walter says to her 11-year-old son, deflecting a swat.

"Why?" William asks, half-heartedly pushing his chest into his mother's open hands.

"You are in the red zone," she says. "I need you to take it back to the green. What can I do to help you? Are you hungry? Do you need a snack?"

A few hours later, Will is curled up in his favorite chair, listening to his mother read a novel and asking questions about the book.

It takes skill and patience to teach Will, who has autism and a neurological disorder that makes it difficult to speak. The Walters say they no longer trust their rural school system to educate him without restraining him or hurting him. Katherine Walter teaches him herself.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 70 of 73

America's public education system offers some of the world's best services and protections for students with disabilities, guaranteed by federal law. But more parents like the Walters are abandoning their rights to those services. They say public schools are failing their kids and they're better off trying to educate them at home.

In many states, they're receiving thousands of dollars from taxpayers to do it.

More kids now qualify for special education

In the 1970s, when the United States first established the right to a "free and adequate" education for "handicapped" children, only 8% of U.S. school children were considered disabled.

Now the special education rate is 15%, boosted in part by the inclusion of autism-spectrum disorders. But disability screenings are also on the rise — both in schools and in medicine — with less stigma associated with diagnoses. It's also possible that simply more Americans have disabilities: Advances in medicine mean more premature babies are surviving, and they often have developmental delays or medical conditions.

Before the Walters even married, they debated where their future children would go to school. They were set on living on the Montana ranchland that had been in Mike's family since his ancestors came from Kansas by covered wagon.

Katherine was open to homeschooling. But Mike insisted their children would attend the same tiny school district he did. Mike graduated salutatorian of his five-person class, and he adored his teachers for catering to his interests.

"He had such a good experience. He wanted the same for his kids," Katherine says. "But I'm not sure the school is the same now. It's now a mass, one-size-fits-all approach."

The Walters' children also have more complex needs than Mike had, reflecting the trend nationwide. Their oldest child, Lester, 15, has dysgraphia, a neurological condition that made it difficult to learn to write. Along with autism, Will has apraxia — a rare speech disorder in which children typically know what they want to say but struggle to control their jaws, lips and tongue.

Will thrived in a privately run preschool program, learning and playing alongside twin sister Ella and other children. The preschool owner had trained as an elementary special education teacher and understood how to tailor instruction and routines for Will. He followed preschool routines well, according to school documents, but the academic expectations of elementary school would pose a challenge.

"Will's speech and language delays will make it difficult for him to learn to read in kindergarten," his preschool teacher wrote in his special education plan. "Until those skills improve he will have to learn in non-verbal ways which he will be quite capable of doing."

The preschool teacher signaled another hurdle. "If he is interested in an activity, he can stay focused for as long as the activity lasts," she wrote. "However, if he is not that interested, he has difficulty staying on task. Sometimes it's hard to tell if Will can't do something or just isn't interested."

Will's mom was most concerned about Will's inability to communicate, fearing he would get frustrated if he wasn't understood.

Federal law guarantees the right for students with disabilities to study in what's called the "least restrictive environment." They should receive support to learn alongside children without disabilities as often as possible, with the same access to activities and curriculum.

When families don't feel satisfied with the support their children receive, some leave public school and abandon their child's right to state-funded educational support for their disability. That may mean the family takes on tens of thousands of dollars in therapies usually provided in public school.

Increasingly, politicians — most of them conservative — say parents of kids with disabilities should receive financial support if they choose private or homeschool options. Thirty states, plus the District of Columbia, have taxpayer-funded scholarships for private school or homeschooling, and many give priority or more money to students with special needs.

But when Will entered kindergarten, his family wanted him to attend public school. The school district agreed to place Will in a mainstream classroom and provide a teacher's aide to work with him.

Will's education hit a roadblock after an incident with a teacher

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 71 of 73

Two weeks before Will would start kindergarten, Walter called the White Sulphur Springs superintendent to confirm they'd hired the assistant to help him. She wanted Will to meet the aide before school started. But, she says, the district hadn't hired the teacher's assistant.

She also says the school hadn't hired a special education teacher, who would meet with Will daily and help him reach the goals outlined in his special education plan. Later, the superintendent disputed some of this, saying he did hire "extra" aides.

Walter kept Will home for kindergarten. In fact, she decided to teach all three children herself, for convenience. She planned to send him back to school for first grade.

She kept taking Will to the school for his therapies, hoping to maintain a relationship with the district. She says one of those interactions with the school broke her trust in the public education system forever.

In March, on a visit to meet the newly hired special education teacher, Will's future first grade teacher stopped by to meet him too.

Written accounts collected by law enforcement and the school district and supplied to The Associated Press by the Walters portray different versions of what happened that day.

According to the first grade teacher, Will hit her early in their encounter. Then, he approached her with an object she thought was a toy, holding it in front of her face. In interviews, Will's mother explained it was actually his communication device — an iPad with software that speaks the pictures he chooses.

The teacher said she gripped Will's wrists and moved "the toy" down from her face. He tried to pull away, dropping to the ground. She followed him, still gripping his wrists, and he kicked her.

Will's mother described the incident in starker terms. She said in an email to the superintendent that the first grade teacher pulled Will from where he had fled under a table and "pinned" him to the floor.

Afterward, the first grade teacher told other school staff, "Nobody can pay me enough to put up with a child hitting or kicking me," according to a written statement she gave the superintendent.

Walter filed a complaint with the sheriff, alleging the teacher had assaulted Will that day. The county attorney concluded the teacher was defending herself. He continued: "While I do not believe that (the teacher's) actions were criminal, her actions escalated an already difficult situation."

The superintendent at the time determined the teacher had acted appropriately, calling Walter's allegations "not credible."

"I never set out to homeschool my kids," Walter says. "We wanted our kids to have all of the big milestones you have when you attend the public schools. Being a Hornet is a big deal in this community. ... But we needed the school to say they would never restrain a child to the floor again."

Walter tried various avenues, including filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, to no avail. She spent a year lobbying the state Legislature to ban restraint and physical isolation in public schools.

The family pursued filing a civil rights lawsuit, but said they couldn't find a qualified Montana attorney willing to take their case. One of the few disability rights attorneys working in Montana declined to represent Will unless he reenrolled at the public school, so his case would stand for more students, not just him. And returning to the school under the current circumstances was a deal-breaker, the Walters felt.

Katherine Walter came to see the federal law guaranteeing disabled students equal access to a public education as a "beautiful piece of paper."

"The deck is stacked against us as parents," she said. "School districts use our tax dollars to fund their lawyers to fight us. And we can't access what is entitled to our children without an attorney."

When all else failed, the family filed a personal injury lawsuit against the district, arguing it was negligent and didn't properly train its staff to work with students like Will. They settled last year for \$40,000, with no admission of wrongdoing by the district. And the current superintendent, Meredith Feddes, told AP the school district has trained its staff in de-escalation.

The whole Walter family kept homeschooling.

For therapy supports, Will and his mom drive hours

Every Wednesday for the last nine years, Will and his mom have driven 90 minutes to Helena for his specialized therapies. As they drive through hay fields one morning in July, away from their two-gas-station

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 72 of 73

town, Will plays a video game on an iPad strapped to the seat in front of him. Fireworks fill the screen.

"Aaah!" Will says as he taps the screen and blocks blow up.

Outside the office, his occupational therapist comes to the car and Will jumps out.

"Ready to have some fun?" therapist Charla Banks asks.

"Yuh-huh," he says.

Inside, Will grabs some pool noodles and gets on a giant platform swing. He sits in front with his legs crossed, his therapist seated behind him. She uses a free leg to propel them forward.

Will reaches a noodle into the pretend water and almost loses his balance, then rights his body. The exercise helps Will strengthen his core, but more importantly, he practices monitoring and managing his emotions and behavior.

Practice like this has helped Will and the Walters minimize conflict at home and out in the world. He's generally less frustrated here and more willing to take on difficult tasks, such as using his fingers to work out a small toy embedded in stiff Play-Doh.

But Will does still occasionally get frustrated, as he did recently when he lightly hit and pushed his mother during school time. The reasons can vary — a change in routine, guests in the home — and sometimes they're not apparent at all.

If upsets or resistance seem linked to a certain topic or activity, Walter sometimes adjusts her instruction. She stopped teaching Will science for a while and no longer gives him exams. To entice him to try something difficult, she offers to play a hand of Uno first.

"We're like most families," she says. "We're doing the best we can."

They follow a common homeschooling philosophy: Teach a lesson until it's mastered. This year, Will is working on first and second grade reading, third grade math and sixth grade science and history. He's progressed to doing more things independently, such as writing or filling out a worksheet.

"This is huge," Walter said. "Two years ago, this was not possible."

Therapies are vital to Will's development, and the district would have provided them at least partially if he were enrolled in public school. The Walters pay for his therapies through their health insurance, which covers one visit a week for occupational and speech therapy.

His apraxia diagnosis calls for speech therapy three to five times a week. At \$100 an hour, the Walters can't afford that. On average, they told AP, they already spend \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year on his therapies and evaluations.

Taxpayers could pay for homeschooling like Will's

While Walter was lobbying at the Montana Capitol for a ban on physical restraint in public schools, she told her story to dozens of lawmakers. A legislator with a child with Down syndrome took interest in the Walters' work to homeschool Will on their own dime.

Inspired by Will's experience, Montana legislators in 2023 created a taxpayer-funded scholarship to help students with disabilities pay for therapies after they leave public school. Families could also spend the money on homeschooling expenses or private school tuition.

Seventy-five students were approved for the scholarship, worth \$6,600 on average, before meeting a court challenge from education and disability rights groups. The lawsuit argued the scholarships were unconstitutional because the law doesn't designate a way to pay for them.

Will wasn't one of the students to receive the financial help; the scholarship is only for students who were recently enrolled in public school when they applied. His brother, Lester, did get the scholarship; the district counted him as recently enrolled because he played sports while homeschooling, according to Walter. But the state paused the scholarship distribution this year while the legal challenge makes its way through the courts.

Advocates for children with disabilities have lined up against taxpayer-funded scholarships like the ones in Montana. They argue the scholarships hurt students with special needs because their rights are no longer protected when they leave public school. And, they say, the money provided is insufficient to educate them adequately. They also say these programs incentivize parents to pull their children out of public schools,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 131 ~ 73 of 73

taking funding away from other kids who need it.

Walter doesn't think pulling her children out of the local school system has hurt remaining public school students. And she's convinced she's the best person in White Sulphur Springs to provide Will's education.

The conclusion is one that hundreds of thousands of families have made across the country.

In Arizona, for example, 20,000 students with disabilities are using the state's education savings account to pay for home education or private school. In Florida, 140,000 students use the state scholarship for children with "unique abilities." One in 5 recipients has autism.

Starting next year, the Walters may have another option for paying for homeschooling or private school, when the federal government gives taxpayers a credit for donating to new school choice scholarships in dozens of states.

That's welcome news for the Walters. Their other children may return to their public school at some point. But until there's a ban on restraint in schools, they don't think Will would be safe there. His mother plans to homeschool him from now on.

Today in History: October 15, #MeToo movement goes viral

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Oct. 15, the 288th day of 2026. There are 77 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 15, 2017, actor and activist Alyssa Milano tweeted that women who had been sexually harassed or assaulted should write "Me too" as a status. Within hours, tens of thousands had taken up the #MeToo hashtag (using a phrase that had been introduced a decade earlier by social activist Tarana Burke).

Also on this date:

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte, the deposed French emperor, arrived on the British-ruled South Atlantic island of St. Helena, where he spent the last 5 1/2 years of his life in exile.

In 1945, the former premier of Vichy France, Pierre Laval, was executed for treason.

In 1946, Nazi war criminal Hermann Goering (GEH'-reeng) fatally poisoned himself hours before he was to have been executed.

In 1954, Hurricane Hazel made landfall near the North Carolina-South Carolina coastal border as a Category 4 storm; Hazel was blamed for about 1,000 deaths in the Caribbean, 95 in the U.S. and 81 in Canada.

In 1976, the first debate of its kind took place between vice-presidential nominees. Democrat Walter F. Mondale and Republican Bob Dole faced off in Houston.

In 1991, despite sexual harassment allegations by Anita Hill, the Senate narrowly confirmed the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court, 52-48.

In 1997, British Royal Air Force pilot Andy Green twice drove a jet-powered car in the Nevada desert faster than the speed of sound, officially shattering the world's land-speed record.

In 2003, 11 people were killed and 70 were injured when a Staten Island ferry slammed into a maintenance pier. (The ferry's pilot, who had blacked out at the controls, later pleaded guilty to 11 counts of manslaughter.)

In 2018, Paul G. Allen, who co-founded Microsoft with his childhood friend Bill Gates before becoming a billionaire philanthropist who invested in conservation, space travel, arts and professional sports, died at age 65.

Today's Birthdays: Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Palmer is 81. Musician Richard Carpenter is 80. Film director Mira Nair is 69. Britain's Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, is 67. Chef Emeril Lagasse is 67. Actor Dominic West is 57. R&B singer Ginuwine (JIHN'-yoo-wyn) is 56. Singer-TV personality Keyshia Cole is 45. Former heavyweight boxing champion Anthony Joshua is 37. Actor Bailee Madison is 27. WNBA basketball player Lauren Betts is 23.