WNBA team tiers: Ranking contenders to rebuilders

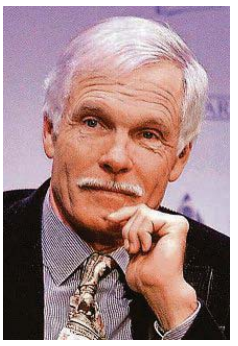
USA TODAY Sports evaluates which franchises have a chance to win title in 2026. **In Sports**

'Michael' star says story is 'not finished being told'

Jaafar Jackson opens up about playing his uncle in biopic and whether a sequel is coming. **In Life**

USA TODAY

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ROBERT DEUTSCH/USA TODAY

CNN founder Ted Turner dies at 87

IN NEWS Media mogul turned TV station into CNN, the first 24-hour cable news station.

IN SPORTS Column: As owner of the Braves, Turner helped change sports media landscape.



Tennessee protesters rally May 5 near the state Capitol as lawmakers review congressional district maps.
NICOLE HESTER/USA TODAY NETWORK

Memphis in a new civil rights struggle

Black voters say they're fighting 'four-alarm fire'

N'dea Yancey-Bragg, Jacob Wilt and Jeremy Redmon
USA TODAY NETWORK

MEMPHIS – Gino Barzizza signaled a mixture of disappointment and defiance as he took shelter from a driving rain inside his polling place at Central Christian Church here in this city's Midtown neighborhood.

As Barzizza cast his ballot in Tennessee's local primary election May 5, his state's Republican-controlled Legislature prepared to redraw the congressional district he calls home.

His 9th Congressional District includes most of Memphis, one of the largest predominantly Black cities in the nation, and is the state's sole remaining Democratic seat in the U.S. House. Home to the National Civil Rights Museum, the city played a major role in the Civil Rights Movement. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis in 1968.

The Tennessee Legislature's moves follow a U.S. Supreme Court ruling April 29 that threw out a congressional map Louisiana drew to protect the voting power of Black residents. The court's 6-3 decision sided with the Trump administration and non-Black voters who challenged the map as relying too heavily on race to sort voters.

"I feel like they're playing dirty, and we expect it, so that's just par for the course," Barzizza said of GOP efforts to redraw his district's boundaries.

Other GOP-led Southern states are making similar moves after the court's decision on the landmark 1965 federal Voting Rights Act, hoping to help Republicans keep control of Congress in the November midterm elections.

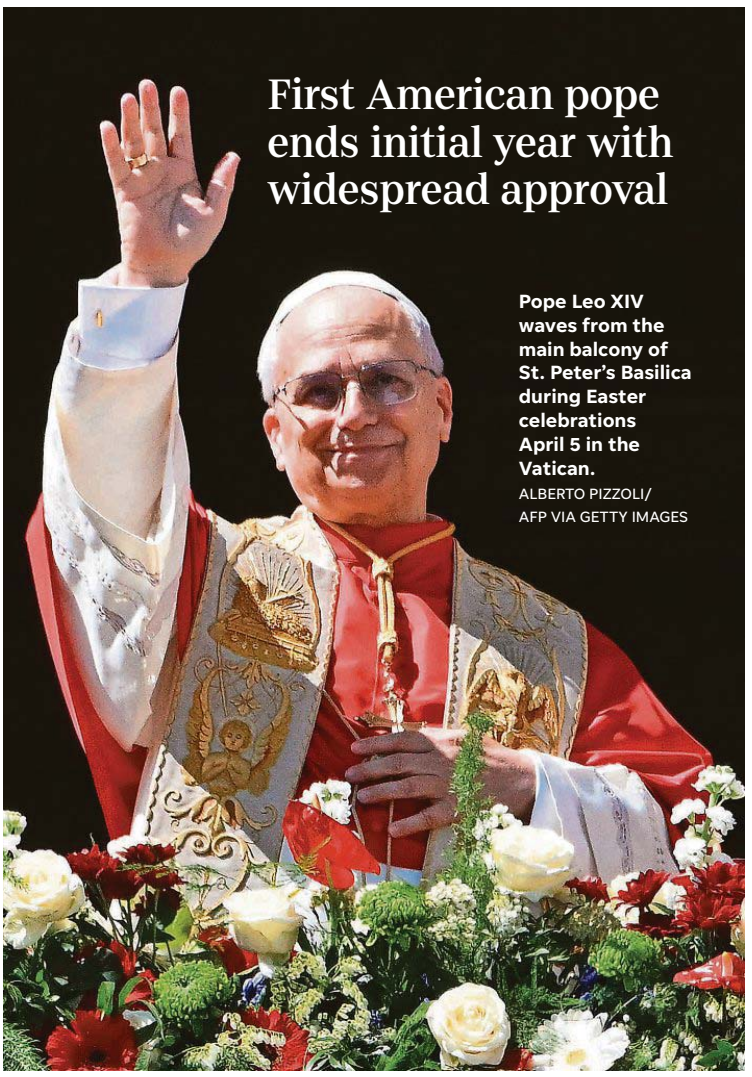
Just hours after the court's ruling, Florida's Legislature approved a new map that could give Republicans control of four more House seats in that state. A day later, Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry issued an executive order delaying his state's House primary election and calling on the state Legislature to redraw congressional maps. On May 1, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey called for a special legislative session for reviewing congressional district maps.

"We owe it to Tennesseans to ensure our congressional districts accurately reflect the will of Tennessee voters," Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said the same day, adding the Legislature "has a responsibility to review the map and ensure it remains fair, legal, and

See MEMPHIS, Page 4A

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First American pope ends initial year with widespread approval

Pope Leo XIV waves from the main balcony of St. Peter's Basilica during Easter celebrations April 5 in the Vatican.
ALBERTO PIZZOLI/ AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

U.S. Catholics relate to Leo as one of them

Marc Ramirez, Phaedra Trethan, Mike Stunson, Bailey Allen, Liam Adams and Rachel Gow
USA TODAY NETWORK

VILLANOVA, PA

It's been nearly 1,000 years since King Henry IV stood barefoot in the Italian snow to beg forgiveness after clashes with Pope Gregory VII and over two centuries since Napoleon imprisoned Pope Pius VII in France. Now, a new battle is underway between a pope and a world leader, this time in America. • It's the war of words between President Donald Trump and Pope Leo XIV. And for dozens of U.S. Roman Catholics interviewed by the USA TODAY Network across the nation, it's Leo who has the upper hand in the crusade. A year into his historic papacy he has given them hope for the future of the Roman Catholic Church. • At Villanova, where Leo graduated in 1977, Catholic convert Jacob Adams, 25, said outside the campus' St. Thomas Church that young people don't have much appetite for war. Hence, they appreciate Leo's strong words in defiance of Trump's recent comments about destroying "a whole civilization" in the Iran war. • "Right or left, there are people calling for peace," said Adams, a former evangelical who supported Trump in 2020 and 2024. "I like what [Leo] is doing to hold [Trump] accountable." **See POPE LEO, Page 6A**



Pope Leo XIV meets Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the Vatican on May 19, 2025. SIMONE RISOLUTI VIA REUTERS

Trump flexes his muscles in Indiana

Primary vote punctuates his power over the GOP



Susan Page
Washington Bureau Chief
USA TODAY

He's still the boss.

President Donald Trump is beset by rising gas prices, falling approval ratings and an unpopular war in Iran. But in the Indiana primary May 5 he demonstrated his continued grip on the Republican Party by delivering a thumping to a half-dozen state senators who defied his demands to redraw congressional lines.

Republican rebels are on notice

A closer look at Indiana, Ohio and contests to come. **2A**

Of seven GOP senators who earned his ire, five lost their party's nominations to challengers the president had endorsed, with one race still too close to call.

It was an unlikely test, and an expensive one, in contests that typically attract little attention.

"Trump is perhaps not as popular in my district as he once was," Spencer Deery, one of the incumbent senators, told CNN while the votes were being counted, "but he is still overwhelmingly

See PAGE, Page 4A



Brian Schmutzler, a Trump-backed GOP candidate for the Indiana state Senate, ousted his incumbent rival.
MICHAEL CLUBB/USA TODAY NETWORK

Alarms sound as grand plans for fireworks form for July 4

Karissa Waddick
USA TODAY

America will mark its milestone birthday this summer with a bang – quite a few, actually.

Ahead of the country's 250th anniversary, firework retailers and pyrotechnicians said that they're seeing surging demand. From coast to coast, communities are preparing giant shows, and families are looking to spice up their backyard barbecues.

Independence Day is going to be "the grandest 4th of July that we've seen in 50 years," said Julie Heckman, executive director of the American Pyrotechnic Association, a trade group.

Phantom Fireworks, the largest firework chain in the country, has already seen an uptick in traffic and is expecting its "greatest sales ever," Vice President Jessica Dragoiu told USA TODAY. "Everybody's gearing up."

But not everyone is excited.

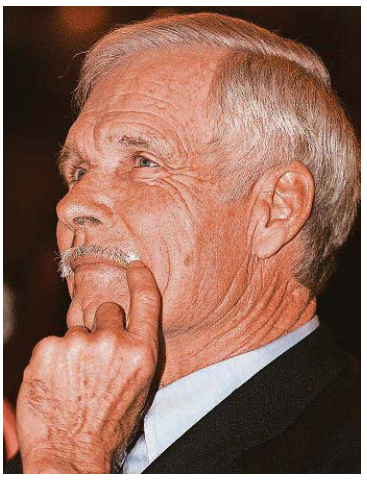
See FIREWORKS, Page 4A

TED TURNER 1938-2026

Founder of CNN changed mass media

Larger than life figure remembered as visionary

Bryan Alexander
USA TODAY



Ted Turner, shown in 2005, turned a struggling Atlanta TV station into a global media empire.
MANPREET ROMANA/ AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Ted Turner, the maverick businessman and philanthropist who turned a financially struggling Atlanta TV station into a media empire around CNN, the first 24-hour cable news station, has died. He was 87.

Turner Enterprises announced his death in a news release obtained by USA TODAY on May 6, sharing that Turner died "surrounded by his family."

The garrulous broadcast entrepreneur, known as "The Mouth of the South," sold his father's successful billboard business to purchase Atlanta independent station WJRJ channel 17 in 1970. Turner expanded that purchase into Turner Broadcasting System, or TBS, which included Turner Network Television, or TNT, and the groundbreaking 24-hour news channel Cable News Network, or CNN, which launched its nonstop news coverage in 1980.

"Ted was an intensely involved and committed leader, intrepid, fearless and always willing to back a hunch and trust his own judgment," Mark Thompson, chairman and CEO of CNN Worldwide, said in a statement. "He was and always will be the presiding spirit of CNN. Ted is the giant on whose shoulders we stand, and we will all take a moment today to recognize him and his impact on our lives and the world."

Turner was the longtime, colorful owner of both the Atlanta Braves professional baseball team and Atlanta Hawks professional basketball team – teams that provided key content for his TV super-station WTCG, and which earned both teams a nationwide following. The one-time cellar-dweller Braves became known as America's Team and eventually dominated the National League in the 1990s under Turner's ownership, including a 1995 World Series victory.

Turner was the epitome of the swaggering business titan and sportsman, known for hunting, drinking rum and arguing politics with his friend, the late Cuban president Fidel Castro. Turner's obsessive dive into yachting and the America's Cup yacht race earned him the media-dubbed title of "Captain Outrageous."

Yet, the amateur skipper led his yacht to improbable victory in the 1977 America's Cup and was inducted into the National Sailing Hall of Fame in 2011.

Outspoken in politics, Turner founded and sponsored the Goodwill Games, which lasted from 1986 to 2001: international games started in the hopes of easing Cold War tensions through friendly athletic competition.

Turner is survived by his five children, fourteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. "A private family service is planned, and a public memorial will be held at a later date, with details to follow," Turner Enterprises said in its statement.

Ted Turner and Jane Fonda: Mogul and actor-activist's unlikely love

A star in his own right, Turner wed activist-actor Jane Fonda in 1991, his third marriage. The unlikely union lasted 10 years and the mutual admiration between the two never diminished.

"I will never love anyone like I love him," Fonda said of her former husband Turner years after they divorced in 2001.

Turner legend started with 'high goals,' Brown University departure

Born Robert Edward Turner III on Nov. 19, 1938, in Cincinnati, Turner was inspired by his billboard magnate father, Robert Edward Turner II.

"He told me something I've never forgotten. He said, 'Son, be sure to set goals so high you couldn't possibly achieve them in one lifetime. That way you'll always have something ahead of you," Turner wrote in his 2008 memoir, "Call Me Ted: My Life, My Way."

He lived up to that ethos, despite a rebellious youth and an early departure from Brown University. Turner lore suggested the college student was expelled from the Ivy League school for having a female student in his dormitory room. Turner insisted the visit did not get him expelled. "It is true I got caught and suspended, but I was already preparing to leave," Turner wrote in his memoir.

He returned home and took over the Atlanta-based family business, Turner Advertising Co., at age 24 following his father's death by suicide in March 1963. He ambitiously expanded to radio station ownership and then TV stations. The rise of CNN, which exploded to ubiquity with its wall-to-wall coverage of the 1991 Gulf War, made Turner a media megastar, earning him Time magazine's 1991 Man of the Year.

"CNN, once derided as the 'Chicken Noodle Network' for its low wages and amateurish presentation, is now the video medium of record," the Time magazine cover story stated.

The TBS network included the creation of the 24-hour Cartoon Network (1992) and Turner Classic Movies (1994). TCM consisted mainly of classic theatrically released feature films from the Turner Entertainment film library.

Turner also oversaw the purchase of two motion-picture production companies, New Line Cinema and Castle Rock Entertainment, in 1993.

Turner lost $8 billion after AOL-Time Warner merger

In 1996, the media giant Time Warner Inc. merged with Turner Broadcasting System, making Turner vice-chairman, a position he kept when Time Warner merged with internet giant AOL in 2001. The dot-com crash was disastrous for the company and Turner, the largest individual shareholder in the combined company.

"I lost 80% of my worth and subsequently lost my job," Turner told The New York Times in 2010. "We looked it up to see if I was the biggest loser of all time because I lost about $8 billion. But I don't think I was the biggest loser."

Turner focused on his already impressive philanthropic efforts. In 1997, the businessman shocked diplomats at a black-tie gala by announcing the donation of a staggering $1 billion to the United Nations to benefit programs aiding refugees and children. He was an outspoken environmentalist, funding conservation programs through his Turner Foundation.

As for his legacy, the outspoken Turner wrote in his memoir that he often considered what he would write on his own tombstone.

"In the middle of my career, I considered, 'Here Lies Ted Turner. He Never Owned a Broadcast Network,'" Turner wrote in his memoir. "These days, I'm leaning toward, 'I Have Nothing Left to Say.'"

In his lifetime, Turner said plenty.

"If I had to live my life over there are things I would do differently," Turner wrote. "But it's been a remarkable ride. I have very few regrets."

Trump tests his influence in Ohio, Indiana contests

President and allies put primaries on the map

Phillip M. Bailey
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump annihilated most of the Indiana Republican legislators who stood against his plan to redraw congressional maps to keep hold of the U.S. House of Representatives ahead of the 2026 midterms in the state's May 5 primaries.

Out of the seven GOP incumbents on the ballot who opposed the Hoosier State creating new boundaries for its federal delegation in Washington, only state Sen. Greg Goode prevailed, and most other incumbents lost in landslides.

The president's allies spent millions in those usually sleepy state legislative races, underscoring how far the White House is willing to go as GOP-controlled states across the country move rapidly to create new boundaries.

Trump taunted the incumbents ahead of the results in a post on Truth Social, referring to them as "RINOs," or Republicans In Name Only. That likely will serve as a warning to other GOP legislators thinking about crossing the administration amid a gerrymandering arms race that was supercharged last week by the U.S. Supreme Court striking down a key provision of the Voting Rights Act.

Over in Ohio voters also added their stitch to the midterm primary quilt with crucial Senate and gubernatorial races looming in November.

The Buckeye State, much like Indiana, also is playing a role in the gerrymandering arms race where voters will test a redrawn congressional district that was made more favorable for Republicans.

Here are the critical takeaways from this week's election.

Most Indiana legislators fall after opposing president

Trump and his forces cleaned the opposition's clock in five of the seven Indiana state Senate races, where some of the incumbents lost by more than 20 percentage points with at least one of those races remain undecided late Tuesday evening.

These victories reaffirmed the president's dominance despite public clashes within the Make America Great Again movement over Iran and the economy.

Groups supporting the president's redistricting gambit, such as Hoosier Leadership for America and American Leadership PAC, doled out about $6 million against the targeted incumbents, according to AdImpact. Other national groups, like Win It Back PAC, a Club for Growth-affiliated organization, have joined the fray as well with direct mailers and field operations.

That was too much for most of the legislators, such as state Sen. Travis Holdman, who represented a district just south of Fort Wayne, to overcome. He was throttled by Trump-backed candidate Blake Fiechter by roughly 22 percentage points.

"This was a tough, gut-punching race," Fiechter told the Indianapolis Star, part of the USA TODAY Network.

Among those who fell to the president's wrath was longtime state Sen. Jim Buck, who had the support of former Vice President Mike Pence, who also hails from Indiana. Buck lost to challenger Tracey Powell by about 30 percentage points.

Massie, other GOP rebels beware

Standing by the president has paid off well for GOP candidates and leaders, such as Indiana Gov. Mike Braun, who put resources behind by some of those challengers against Hoosier State lawmakers even after some faced death threats after defying the administration's plan.

"Ultimately, decisions like this carry political consequences," Braun said in a Dec. 11 post on X. "I will be working with the President to challenge these people who do not represent the best interests of Hoosiers."

In the Georgia special election earlier in the year to replace former Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who had a major falling out with Trump last year, every GOP contender ran towards the president and away from Greene.

That puts even more attention on the May 19 primary, in which Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., faces Trump-backed challenger Ed Gallerin, a farmer and retired Navy SEAL, in a closely watched primary.

"He's the worst person," Trump said of Massie at a Kentucky rally in March. "Massie is a complete and total disaster as a congressman and frankly as a human being."

Massie is one of a few House Republicans who voted to oppose the Iran war. He also has been one of the conservative figures behind legislation that forced the Justice Department to release documents surrounding the Epstein files and voted against the administration's tax cut legislation last year.

Can the red wall hold? GOP testing redistricting tactic

One test of Trump and his allies building a red wall to guard against Democrat's projected blue wave will be in Ohio's 9th Congressional District where Republicans will see if redrawing congressional lines will pay off.

Whichever of the GOP contenders jockeying for the nomination prevails, they will be facing Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur, the longest-serving woman in Congress, who won her last reelection by less than one percentage point in 2024.

The Ohio Legislature redrew Kaptur's district, which stretches along the state's northern border with Michigan, to be more GOP-leaning. It is now rated a toss-up by Cook Political Report, making it one of the few Democratic-held House seats that could be a Republican pickup when every seat could matter.

Brown v. Husted: Critical Senate race starts ugly

Ohio will be crucial for Republicans and Democrats in terms of controlling the U.S. Senate, which is more competitive than originally thought.

Democrats need to flip at least four seats to gain the upper hand in Washington, including the Buckeye State, where Trump won by 12 percentage points in 2024.

Former Sen. Sherrod Brown is waging a comeback after losing two years ago, and he easily won the Democratic nomination. That sets up what will be an expensive and nasty general election against Republican incumbent Sen. Jon Husted, who is still relatively unknown after being appointed to fill a seat vacated by Vice President JD Vance.

Brown's first ad is a scorcher. It seeks to link Husted to Jeffrey Epstein, the disgraced financier, claiming he received more money from the convicted sex offender's associates than other lawmakers.

In return, the GOP has called attention to the former senator's record on immigration, saying Brown voted almost a dozen times to "protect federal funding for sanctuary cities" and against deporting undocumented immigrants with criminal records.

The ugliness will be fueled by a deluge of campaign cash from both sides. Republican groups have already earmarked at least $79 million, and Democratic organizations, such as Senate Majority PAC, have committed at least $40 million, according to reports.

Forecasts rate Ohio's Senate race as a toss-up and most surveys have it a dead heat.

Contributing: Terry Collins, James Powell and Cate Charron

USA TODAY

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Trump ramps up pressure for Iran peace

President: Without talks, bombing would resume

Michael Loria, Bart Jansen and Andrea Riquier
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump said Iran could either agree to a framework for peace talks or bombing would resume, after he had paused the military operation to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump said on social media the war that began on Feb. 28, with a ceasefire since April 7, could end if Iran agrees to U.S. terms and allows commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. But he said if Tehran doesn't agree, bombing would resume "at a much higher level and intensity."

His appeal for peace came after he paused "Project Freedom," an effort launched on May 4 to move U.S. commercial vessels through the critical shipping channel. Military leaders said a few U.S. vessels safely passed through the strait in the operation, but Iran restarted its attacks on commercial vessels and neighboring Gulf states.

Trump said in a statement that "we have mutually agreed that ... Project Freedom will be paused for a short period of time to see whether or not the Agreement can be finalized."

An Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson, cited by Iran's ISNA news agency, said Iran would convey its response soon via Pakistan, which hosted the war's only peace talks and has since served as the main conduit for messages between the sides.

By the afternoon of May 5, there had been no public comment from Washington's wartime ally Israel, which has pressed Washington to stand tough on demands before any agreement. An Israeli source told Reuters Israel was not aware that Trump was potentially close to a deal to end the war, and that Israel was instead preparing for an escalation in fighting.

One-page memorandum

A Pakistani source and another source briefed on the mediation confirmed information initially reported by Axios about a proposed 14-point, one-page memorandum that would formally end the war, Reuters reported.

The source briefed on the mediation said the U.S. negotiations were being led by Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner. If both sides agreed on the preliminary deal, that would start the clock on 30 days of detailed negotiations to reach a full agreement.

The full agreement would include the United States lifting sanctions and releasing frozen Iranian funds, Iran and the United States lifting competing blockades on the Strait of Hormuz, and some curbs on Iran's nuclear program, with the aim of a pause or moratorium on Iranian enrichment of uranium.

While the sources said the memorandum would not initially require concessions from either side, they did not mention several key demands Washington has made in the past, which Iran has rejected, such as curbs on Iran's missile program and an end to its support for proxy militias in the Middle East.

The sources spoke of potential curbs on future Iranian enrichment of uranium, but made no mention of Iran's existing stockpile of more than 900 pounds of it, already enriched to near weapons-grade, which Washington has previously demanded it give up before any end to the war.

'An American wish list'

Even if the reported 14-point memorandum appeared to sidestep some demands rejected by Iran in the past, there were indications Tehran could still hold out for more U.S. concessions.

In a post on X, Iranian lawmaker Ebrahim Rezaei, a spokesperson for parliament's powerful foreign policy and national security committee, described the text reported by Axios as "more of an American wish list than a reality."

"The Americans will not gain anything in a war they are losing that they have not gained in face-to-face negotiations," he wrote.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, visiting China, made no mention of Trump's latest remarks, but said Tehran was holding out for "a fair and comprehensive agreement."

Oil slides, Wall Street celebrates

Reports of the possible agreement caused the price of oil to tumble on May 6, with Brent crude trading just below $103 a barrel in the morning, down 6.5%. Gas prices, which lag behind the moves in oil, were higher, however, hitting $4.54, according to GasBuddy.

In his post, Trump said: "Assuming Iran agrees to give what has been agreed to, which is, perhaps, a big assumption, the already legendary Epic Fury will be at an end, and the highly effective Blockade will allow the Hormuz Strait to be OPEN TO ALL, including Iran."

"If they don't agree, the bombing starts, and it will be, sadly, at a much higher level and intensity than it was before," Trump added.

Earlier, Trump cited "great progress" in negotiations to announce the pause on "Project Freedom." The mission failed to bring about any significant resumption of traffic through the waterway, while provoking a new wave of Iranian strikes on ships in the strait and targets in neighboring countries, particularly the United Arab Emirates.

French container ship attacked

In the latest incident, a French container ship was attacked while traveling through the strait May 5, injuring eight crew members and damaging the vessel, shipping company CMA CGM said.

At least 32 such attacks on civilian ships have happened since the war began Feb. 28, according to the United Nations' International Maritime Organization said.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth told reporters May 5 that two U.S. commercial vessels and two Navy destroyers passed through the strait, demonstrating that Iran hadn't blocked it completely. But Trump paused the assistance to commercial vessels while aiming for a broader peace deal.

Contributing: Reuters

Flag makers want tariffs on imports

As hearings resume, firms look for action

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY



A carpenter in 2025 in Waunakee, Wisconsin. The Trump administration is weighing its next move on tariffs. MARK HOFFMAN/USA TODAY NETWORK

WASHINGTON – U.S. flag makers say that half the star-spangled banners sold in this country are made in China, so the manufacturers are urging the Trump administration to impose huge new tariffs on imports rather than wave a white flag after the Supreme Court overturned his emergency tariffs.

"The American flag, one of the most recognized and sacred symbols of the United States, is being produced abroad and imposed into the U.S. market at prices that no domestic manufacturer can match," said Jen Christiansen of FlagSource, a manufacturer in Batavia, Illinois.

Flags are just one thread woven into a $1.2 trillion trade deficit with other countries in 2025 that President Donald Trump is trying to eliminate through tariffs that raise money for the government and encourage manufacturers to locate their factories in the United States.

Hearings resume this week on whether to impose more tariffs

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer is sorting through hundreds of proposals in hearings about whether to impose new tariffs based on accusations of unfair trade practices abroad.

Greer heard from 60 witnesses in April about allegations that manufacturers overseas relied on forced labor to produce cheaper products. The probe focused on adversaries such as China and Russia, but also on allies including Australia, Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Israel, India, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Hearings started May 5 on accusations that other countries produce more products than they need to sell in the United States for less than domestic manufacturers can match.

The American Sugar Alliance, for example, said the industry is "threatened by a glut of low-priced imports from foreign countries whose policies have flooded the world market." Countries such as Brazil, El Salvador, Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica dramatically increased their sugar production since 2021, according to census data.

But Chicken of the Sea International told the government to leave canned tuna alone. The company, a subsidiary of Thai Union Group, said tariffs would jeopardize its $20 million processing facility in Lyons, Georgia, that cooks, cleans and packs 10% of all canned tuna in the United States.

Airlines also opposed tariffs for the aviation industry. About 70% of the industry – aircraft construction, engines and other components – is dominated by U.S. companies such as Boeing, with $93 billion more sold in exports than bought in imports in 2025. But airlines don't want to discourage competitors such as plane-maker Airbus in France.

"The U.S. does not need to fix the 30%," the trade group Airlines for America said.

Trump dropped tariff on Scottish whisky during royal visit

The hearings come at the same time Trump is threatening to raise tariffs on cars and trucks from the European Union from 15% rate negotiated as part of a trade agreement to a 25% rate. Trump argued that Europeans were breaking the agreement reached in July because it's still not finalized. Europeans are scrambling to complete the deal to avoid higher fees.

The Supreme Court invalidated Trump's emergency tariffs on countries worldwide under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act. But other statutes allow the president to impose tariffs temporarily under one section of the 1974 Trade Act, to combat unfair trade practices under another section of the Trade Act or to respond to national security threats under the 1962 Trade Expansion Act.

Trump told business leaders at the White House on May 4 the Supreme Court made a "terrible" decision, "but the good news" is that he's able to impose tariffs "another way."

"We have other ways of tariffing," Trump said of raising duties on Chinese imports. "A little bit more complex. I like to keep it as simple as possible. In many ways, it'll be better."

While considering those options, Trump eliminated the tariff on Scottish whisky during the recent visit by the United Kingdom's King Charles III. Trump had imposed a 10% temporary tariff after the Supreme Court decision, but removed duties on liquor to spur trade between Scotland and Kentucky.

Trump's decision came after U.S. liquor exporters reported sales fell more than $90 million in 2025, as Canadians removed American spirits from their shelves and Europeans imported less, according to a March report from the trade group Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

The American Distilled Spirits Alliance urged Greer to leave liquor out of any new tariffs.

"Distilled spirits are geographically distinct, artisanal products governed by strict legal standards of identity," said Amanda Nguyen, CEO of the alliance. "They are not manufactured commodities subject to overcapacity concerns: Bourbon cannot be made in France and Cognac cannot be made in Kentucky."

Manufacturers urge Trump not to wave the white flag

Nearly all the 6 million U.S. flags imported each year are made in China, according to industry groups, including the Flag Manufacturers Association of America and the National Independent Flag Dealers Association.

The imported Old Glories typically sell for $8 to $20, compared with $30 to $48 for flags made in America, the trade groups said. Manufacturers are encouraging the administration to impose tariffs of 300% to 500% to combat the imports they contend are swamping the U.S. market.

The current duties on Chinese flags is 24.5%. Christiansen said without "decisive and aggressive action," Chinese imports "will continue to devastate U.S. manufacturers," which employ 5,000 workers whose shifts could be cut or factories shuttered.

China's Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Textiles urged against raising tariffs by arguing they could raise costs on U.S. consumers.

Former FedEx driver sentenced in death of girl

N'dea Yancey-Bragg
USA TODAY

A Texas jury sentenced a former FedEx driver to death for kidnapping and killing a 7-year-old girl after delivering what would have been her Christmas gift.

In a surprising move, Tanner Lynn Horner pleaded guilty April 7 to the 2022 murder of Athena Strand at the start of his trial, sending the proceedings into the penalty phase. Prosecutors asked the jury to give the death penalty, citing evidence including chilling, hour-long audio of the attack that moved some jurors to tears.

Prosecuting attorney James Stainton said Horner was delivering Barbies to Athena's home in Paradise, a town of fewer than 500 people about 60 miles outside Dallas, when he abducted her in late November 2022. Stainton said Horner covered the camera in his FedEx truck before attacking Athena and then repeatedly lied to police about what happened.

In his closing arguments on May 5, Stainton said the case was among the "worst of the worst," and the kind of situation the state reserves the death penalty for.

Defense attorneys, meanwhile, called expert witnesses along with Horner's family and former teachers in hopes of persuading the jury to sentence him to life in prison. The witnesses testified about Horner's turbulent childhood, his autism and his exposure to toxic amounts of lead.

Horner's defense attorneys argued May 5 that prosecutors failed to prove Horner would be a continuing threat to society and that all of Horner's problems should be considered mitigating factors warranting a life sentence. Jurors rejected both arguments after about four hours of deliberations.

People in the courtroom could be heard crying as Athena's uncle shared his last memories of her and the toll Horner's actions have taken on Athena's family after the sentence was announced.

"He's robbed us of safety, peace and our trust in the world and forever change who we are as a family," he said.

Athena's uncle also directly addressed Horner, who turned to face him.

"You did not just take a life, you destroyed a family," he said. "You took a little girl who trusted the world and repaid that innocence with violence."

Horner was then handcuffed and removed from the courtroom.

In Texas, a death sentence must automatically be reviewed by the Court of Criminal Appeals.

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popular."

"Good luck to those great Indiana Senate candidates who are running against people who couldn't care less about our country, or about keeping the majority in Congress," Trump posted on Truth Social earlier in the day. "Let's see how those RINOs do tonight," a reference to so-called Republicans in Name Only.

The primary's stakes for the Indiana state Legislature – solidly red no matter what – were relatively low. The campaigns turned less on policy differences than on fealty to Trump.

That means Tuesday's returns are likely to reinforce the reluctance of most Republican officials to publicly split with Trump, whatever his travails. His command of his own party, especially over Republican members of a compliant Congress, has been the main source of his ability to levy tariffs, wage war and redesign Washington's landscape with little challenge or oversight.

That said, things could change in the midterm elections in November, when Democrats are considered likely to gain control of the House of Representatives and score gains in the U.S. Senate.

Next up: More key primaries

Over the next two weeks, Trump will face more challenges in other Republican primaries.

In Louisiana's primary May 16, the U.S. Senate candidate Trump endorsed, Julia Letlow, was boosted by his backing but remains locked in a three-way race. Trump's target, Republican incumbent Bill Cassidy, still could make a runoff.

In polls for Kentucky's May 19 primary, the House challenger Trump endorsed, Navy SEAL veteran Ed Gallrein, trails incumbent Republican Rep. Thomas Massie, one of the few congressional Republicans willing to openly challenge Trump.

In Georgia's primary, also May 19, the gubernatorial candidate Trump endorsed, Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, trails health care CEO Rick Jackson in statewide polls with support from just 24% of Republican primary voters.

By any measure, though, the president remains the loudest voice in the GOP.

Republican officeholders and hopefuls are still more likely to fret about Trump in private than criticize him in public. An ABC News/Washington Post/Ipsos poll April 24-28 found that 85% of Republican voters approved of the job he was doing – down by a bit but still healthy.

What's more, Republicans by 2-1, 65%-34%, said the GOP should follow Trump's lead, not head in a different direction.

But just 25% of the independent voters who usually swing competitive elections approve of Trump. Overall, his approval rating was a dismal 37%, with a 62% disapproval rating that is the highest of either of his presidential terms.

In Indiana, a welcome landscape

With Indiana, Trump couldn't have chosen a friendlier field for a fight.

In the 2024 presidential election, Trump carried six of the seven contested state Senate districts over Democrat Kamala Harris in double-digit landslides, including three of them by more than 30 percentage points. Trump won the seventh district by 7 percentage points.

In Tuesday's primary, only incumbent Greg Goode managed to defeat a Trump-backed challenger, Brenda Wilson. Five of his colleagues lost: Dan Dernulc to Trevor De Vries; Linda Rogers to Brian Schmutzler; Travis Holdman to Blake Fiechter; Jim Buck to Tracey Powell; and Greg Walker to Michelle Davis.

In the seventh race, the votes for incumbent Deery and challenger Paula Copenhaver were still being counted.

It was an expensive exercise. Adimpact, which tracks spending on campaign ads, estimated that $13.5 million was spent on the Indiana state Senate races this year. That's unfathomably more than in the past election, when spending on the races totaled less than $1 million.

"Money's the mother's milk of campaigns, and so, when you're up against, like in my race right now, $1.3 million, issues weren't the topic, and that's what it should been about," Buck told the Indianapolis Star, part of the USA TODAY Network. "Instead, it's retribution for December 11."

That's the date the Indiana state Senate rejected Trump's redistricting push.

Fireworks

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Fire officials in drought-stricken Western states say the expected uptick in explosions is ratcheting up their anxiety.

"We are definitely bracing for what could be an unusually busy summer as people celebrate," said California State Fire Marshal Daniel Berlant.

A dangerously dry summer ahead

Fireworks spark tens of thousands of wildfires across the United States each year, causing deaths, injuries, and millions of dollars in property damage. In mid-April, a blaze tore through more than 10 acres in Lake City, Florida, in the northern part of the state, after embers from a firework ignited dry vegetation.

Out West, officials are on especially high alert. Low winter snowfall and hotter-than-normal temperatures have set the stage for what's expected to be a dangerously dry summer. Some areas have already begun restricting water usage.

A single errant firework ember could smolder acres of land.

Chris Brunette, fire and life safety section chief for the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control, said the state is "very concerned with the dry landscape." While he acknowledged this summer will be drier than most, Brunette said, Colorado is used to arid conditions.

His team is warning people about which fireworks are off limits and how to dispose of them properly. Anything that shoots off the ground or explodes, like bottle rockets, cherry bombs, and mortars, isn't allowed in the state.

But Brunette said he isn't blind to people's desire to celebrate.

That's why, harkening back to the nation's founding era, the state is promoting "bucket brigades" to limit the damage of illegal fireworks.

At the time of the American Revolution, the term referred to the line of colonists who would pass down buckets of water to help quench a neighborhood fire. Colorado is using the term to encourage people to soak spent fireworks in a bucket outside overnight.

While people in Colorado are all too aware of the wildfire threats, Brunette said, it can be enticing for them to drive to another state and buy illegal fireworks.

Rising risk of injury and death

Most fireworks enter the United States from ports in Southern California. Berlant said he's seen an "explosive growth" of illegal fireworks pouring into the country in recent years.

"Most of the explosions and even injuries are from illegal fireworks or the unsafe usage of fireworks," he said.

Deaths and injuries related to fireworks skyrocketed last year, with firework-related injuries rising by 52% year over year, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

While states determine what types of fireworks they allow, the federal government sets baseline safety standards. In 2025, Berlant's agency confiscated millions of pounds of pyrotechnics that didn't meet those requirements, though that wasn't enough.

Seven people were killed in a July 1 explosion at an illegal fireworks warehouse in Northern California. In early April, eight people were charged in connection with the incident.

This year, Berlant said fire and law enforcement agencies are working together in California to stop illegal distributors.

"While education is No. 1, enforcement of keeping the illegal fireworks off our streets really has been an increased strategy," Brunette noted.

America's heroes

Military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder can experience distress from the sudden, loud bangs and vibrations of fireworks. And with more fireworks than ever expected to dot the night sky across the country this year, some worry there will be fewer ways to avoid such anguish.

Passageways, a nonprofit that helps veterans in Kansas, is hosting a 12-hour party for a small group of veterans at an underground salt mine museum. The event will feature barbecue ribs and brisket, games, giveaways, sleeping bags, and, notably, no fireworks.

In the 600-feet-deep cavern, attendees will not be able to hear, feel, or see any of the fireworks above.

"This is truly the first time they're going to have an escape," Passageways cofounder Jennifer Garrison said.

Garrison said she received a phone call from one veteran who had tried everything from earplugs to noise-canceling headphones. After registering for the event, she said, he told her, "I don't think I have to suffer this year."

"It brings to front of mind all the veterans that got us to where we are and everything they've been through so that we can have the freedoms we have," Garrison said.

Contributing: Trevor Hughes

Memphis

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defensible."

President Donald Trump has called for more states to follow suit, predicting Republicans could pick up more than 20 House seats in the Nov. 3 midterms. "We should demand that State Legislatures do what the Supreme Court says must be done," the president posted May 3 on Truth Social. "That is more important than administrative convenience."

The next day, Martin Luther King III wrote Tennessee's Republican leaders to urge them not to undo his father's work. "A session launched for the sole purpose of dismantling Congressional District 9 is not normal and is not fair," King wrote. "The resulting disenfranchisement of Black voters would run contrary to everything that my father, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., fought for."

Memphis and the movement

Memphis has been an epicenter of the struggle over voting rights for African Americans, and the Civil Rights Movement more broadly, since the 1860s, said Charles McKinney, who teaches history at Rhodes College in Memphis.

King, for example, visited Memphis to support a sanitation workers strike in 1968. That same year here, he delivered his famous "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech. It happened the night before he was assassinated on a balcony of the Lorraine Motel.

Memphis is also home to the historic Beale Street Baptist Church, built by freed slaves after the Civil War. The church also housed the newspaper that published some of Ida B. Wells' anti-lynching investigations in the late 19th century. That history, McKinney said, has helped Memphis serve as a bellwether for African Americans nationwide.

Memphis has long been the nation's second-largest predominantly Black city, trailing Detroit for decades by, at times, a razor-thin margin.

"That's an extended legacy of gains and losses," McKinney said. "And so we find ourselves once again in this moment of profound setback, this moment of profound loss, this moment of – literally – the forces of segregation, the forces of racism, the forces of White supremacy and the forces of anti-Blackness [consolidating] in such a way that rolls us back 50-plus years."

What's different in this moment is that rather than voting rights advocates going on the offensive to secure stronger protections for the Black community, they are on defense, McKinney said. And the stakes, he said, couldn't be higher.

"It's a four-alarm fire here in Memphis," McKinney said, "and in other states as well."

Those in favor of redistricting the Memphis-area congressional district are considering a strategy called "cracking," when a community dominated by one political party is split to dilute its voting power, said Brooke Shannon, who teaches political science at the University of Memphis. The same strategy was used in 2022, she said, when Republican lawmakers split Nashville into three districts.



State Rep. Karen Camper, D-Nashville, addresses a news conference May 5 on the first day of a special session at the Tennessee state Capitol.
NICOLE HESTER/USA TODAY NETWORK

"The point behind this is to ensure Democratic voters will not get representation in Congress because they will be minorities," Shannon said.

It's possible the GOP's strategy could backfire, said Jonathan Cervas, an assistant teaching professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

"The term is 'dummymandering,'" said Cervas, who specializes in redistricting. "Instead of Democrats winning one district, they might win more than one."

U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee has urged the state to "redistrict another Republican seat in Memphis."

"It's essential to cement @realDonaldTrump's agenda and the Golden Age of America," the Republican senator wrote last week in a post on X.

Tennessee's Republican leaders sidestepped questions about whether Black voting power could be diluted.

"The governor's asked us to come into special session to take a look at it, and that's what we're going to do," Senate Majority Leader Jack Johnson, R-Franklin, told The Tennessean on May 4. "We'll have lots of conversations, I suppose."

House Speaker Cameron Sexton, R-Crossville, said Tennessee's redistricting process "will undergo a comprehensive review with all necessary reforms implemented."

Not all Republicans are on board with the plan, which would put in place new district lines ahead of the state's congressional primaries in August.

"I don't think that the people in my district would feel that's a good use of their tax dollars," state Sen. Paul Bailey, R-Sparta, said last week about holding a special legislative session just for redistricting, particularly after it has just adjourned.

By 9 a.m. on May 5, protesters lined the sidewalk near the state Capitol in Nashville, holding signs that read "No Jim Crow 2.0" and "Lee Sold Out Tennessee." Some reacted angrily as state lawmakers adopted a slate of rules for the special session, including one allowing them to ban protesters they consider disruptive.

"They should be ashamed for this clearly racist act that they're about to do," Odessa Kelly, executive director of Stand Up Nashville and a former Democratic congressional candidate, shouted as she exited the committee room. "But we're going to show up anyway and let our voices be heard."

The crowd surged outside to join a Democratic caucus rally on the steps of the Capitol, chanting: "Whose state? Our state!"

U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, a Democrat who has held the 9th Congressional District seat in Memphis since 2007, said the redistricting effort "puts us back in the Jim Crow era" and "counters everything that was done in the '60s to try to bring African American opportunities to elect representatives of their own choice."

'We're not going to stand down'

In Memphis' Midtown, which lies within Tennessee's 9th Congressional District, voters weren't surprised by the redistricting push, though they also expressed optimism.

"I think we can win it," Sam Flanagan said. "I think Democrats have an opportunity to go talk to everyone who's going to be in whatever ridiculous district we're going to be in and actually start talking to people who would normally be MAGA but are maybe feeling like, 'Hey, Nashville doesn't understand who we are anymore.'"

Flanagan added: "It's time that Democrats take the offensive on this. That would surprise the state, if Democrats came out strong in this new district."

Vanessa Rodley called the GOP effort "predictable," referring to the Republican supermajority in Tennessee's Legislature. She also highlighted that numerous GOP state legislators ran unopposed in previous elections.

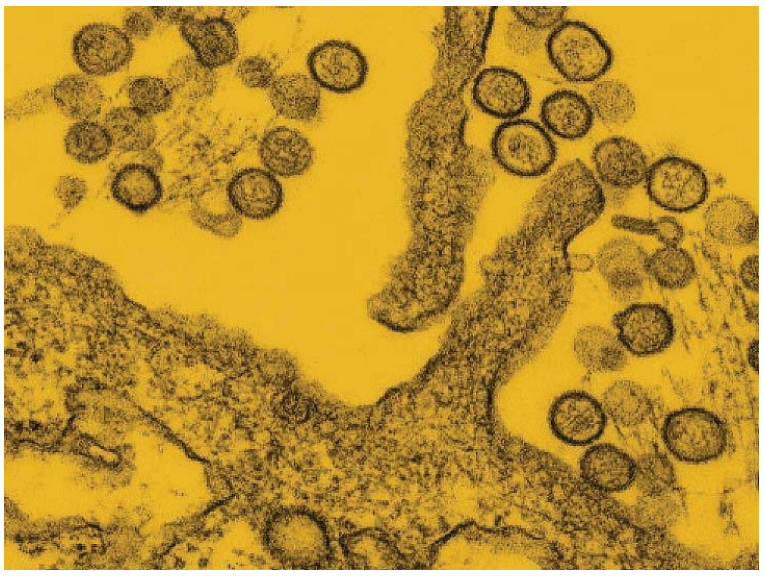
"But, at the same time, we as a people do have some power," she said, "and if we got really upset about this and actually showed up, we could actually effect some change."

LaGina Mitchell-Scott, who is running for Shelby County Commission District 13, expects a court battle if the congressional district is redrawn. As she greeted a steady stream of voters heading to their polling place at Central Christian Church, she noted increased engagement among local voters.

"To make it very clear, we're not going to stand down," she said. "We're going to fight."

Yancey-Bragg and Redmon write for USA TODAY; Wilt reports for The Commercial Appeal, part of the USA TODAY Network, in Memphis.

Contributing: John Beifuss, Chris Day and Brooke Muckerman, The Commercial Appeal; Joey Garrison, USA TODAY; and Vivian Jones, The Tennessean in Nashville



People can become infected with hantavirus when they breathe in air that is contaminated with the virus. PROVIDED BY CDC

Cases grow to 8 in hantavirus outbreak aboard cruise ship

Three have died on MV Hondius vessel

Melina Khan, Eve Chen and Nathan Diller
USA TODAY

An eighth hantavirus-linked case has been identified among passengers who traveled on a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean, officials announced on Wednesday, May 6.

The World Health Organization said the particular strain has been confirmed as the Andes virus.

Three people have died since the outbreak began on the MV Hondius, a cruise ship run by Netherlands-based operator Oceanwide Expeditions.

Three others were evacuated from the ship.

Here's the latest.

Where is the cruise ship now?

The MV Hondius has been moored off the coast of Cape Verde, an island nation near Africa's west coast.

It was expected to head to the Canary Islands off the coast of Spain after the evacuation, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus confirmed Wednesday morning.

"Three suspected #hantavirus case patients have just been evacuated from the ship and are on their way to receive medical care in the Netherlands in coordination with @WHO, the ship's operator and national authorities from Cabo Verde, the United Kingdom, Spain and the Netherlands," Ghebreyesu posted on X.

Oceanwide said two of those people were in "serious condition," and the third was currently asymptomatic but closely associated with an individual who passed away on board.

Upon arriving in the Canary Islands, passengers and crew will be screened and treated in line with protocol from health officials, Oceanwide Expeditions and Spain's Ministry of Health said in a news release.

The ship departed from Argentina on April 1 and traveled across the Atlantic, making "multiple stops in remote and ecologically diverse regions," including mainland Antarctica, South Georgia, Nightingale Island, Tristan da Cunha, Saint Helena and Ascension Island, according to WHO.

What's happening onboard?

"The situation is being closely monitored, and as a precaution, passengers have been asked to remain in their cabins while disinfection and other public health measures are carried out," WHO official Maria Van Kerkhove said during a May 5 news conference. "Medical teams from Cabo Verde are providing support on board the ship."

The ship also has "plenty" of food and water on board, she added. Jake Rosmarin, a guest aboard MV Hondius, said in a statement that passengers are generally in good spirits and that safety protocols such as social distancing and masking are in place.

Passengers can have meals delivered to their cabin and are allowed access to outer decks for fresh air, he added.

"Oceanwide Expeditions and the crew have been doing everything within their ability to keep passengers safe, informed, and as comfortable as possible during this time," he said. The company confirmed to USA TODAY that the measures Rosmarin referenced were in place.

Oceanwide noted in a May 6 update that two infectious disease physicians will fly in from the Netherlands to join the ship, to expand medical care onboard.

Are there rats or mice on cruise ships?

Generally, no, according to Walt Nadolny, professor emeritus of marine transportation and global business at the State University of New York Maritime College, and a former environmental officer for Carnival Cruise Line and Norwegian Cruise Line. "In my time on cruise ships, inspecting everything from the bilge to the galleys to passenger cabins, I've never seen a rodent or evidence of rodent droppings," he told USA TODAY.

There are traps "all over the place" as a precaution, he said, but no rodents are typically caught. Cruise lines usually appoint a designated crew member onboard to be in charge of those procedures.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Vessel Sanitation Program also routinely inspects ships that stop at U.S. ports across various areas, including pest and insect management. Inspectors interview "the person in charge of the plan to manage pests on the ship," according to the health agency's website, and confirm that employees are knowledgeable about pest control.

There are equivalent authorities in other jurisdictions, as well.

Van Kerkhove said during the briefing that the cruise operator told the WHO there were no rats on board MV Hondius.

How is hantavirus transmitted?

Human hantavirus infection is primarily transmitted through contact with the urine, feces or saliva of infected rodents. Although uncommon, limited human-to-human transmission has been reported in previous outbreaks, per the WHO.

Officials believe a husband and wife, Dutch nationals, were infected while they were off the cruise ship, engaging in wildlife expeditions. Others with suspected infections may have come in contact with the virus on islands as well, Van Kerkhove said during the briefing.

"We do believe that there may be some human-to-human transmission that's happening among the really close contacts – the husband and wife, people who've shared cabins, etcetera," Van Kerkhove said.

On May 6, WHO said the strain of hantavirus has been confirmed through laboratory testing as Andes virus, a strain found in South America that is believed to spread person-to-person.

WHO has also said the current risk to the rest of the world is low, but it is continuing to monitor the situation and provide updates.

Hantavirus symptoms

Symptoms typically begin two to three weeks after infection, and can include fever, chills, muscle aches, vomiting and diarrhea. In serious cases, it can cause issues with lung and heart function, per the Mayo Clinic.

Bald eagle euthanized after damage from lead poisoning

Laws banning lead in ammo differ by state

Drew Pittock
USA TODAY



Spirit, a bald eagle, at Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky. An eagle in Michigan had to be euthanized. JEFF FAUGHENDER/USA TODAY NETWORK

A bald eagle in Michigan had to be euthanized after he was found to have suffered irreversible damage from lead poisoning.

The Skegemog Raptor Center, a nonprofit wildlife rehabilitation group, announced May 2 that it had responded to a call about a bald eagle that was "too weak to fly." The bald eagle was found in Manistee County, roughly 60 miles southwest of Skegemog's headquarters in Traverse City.

In a post on Facebook, the center noted that as the rescue workers approached the bald eagle, "it was clear something was very wrong," adding that "his breathing was labored, he was regurgitating, and his clinical signs were severe."

The symptoms were indicative of fatal lead poisoning. "After returning to the clinic and confirming severely elevated blood levels," the Facebook post read, "the most humane decision was made to end his suffering."

Through May 2026, Skegemog said it has admitted five bald eagles, four of which suffered lead poisoning.

20 million lead poisoning deaths annually

On a national scale, upward of 20 million birds and other animals die because of lead poisoning each year, according to Tufts University. The problem can be traced to lead that still is found in hunting ammunition and fishing tackle.

Mark Pokras, an associate professor emeritus of infectious disease and global health at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, told Tufts Now that wildlife can ingest lead through various means, depending on the species.

"Scavengers such as bald eagles, California condors and foxes ingest lead when dining on carcasses of deer, ducks, squirrels or other animals shot with lead projectiles," Pokras said. "Other species mistakenly eat lead shotgun pellets, because the little round pieces are about the same size as some seeds and grit that birds eat."

Shortcomings at the federal level

Under former President Barack Obama, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service attempted to phase out the use of lead-based ammo and tackle on federal lands. However, that effort was reversed on the first day of President Donald Trump's first term, when Ryan Zinke took the reins of the department.

There currently is only one ban related to lead ammo at the federal level. In 1991, the government banned the use of the toxic material when hunting waterfowl, citing concerns with the population's health.

What's left is a patchwork of laws that differ from state to state.

For example, New Hampshire became the first state to ban lead in fishing tackle in 2000. Thirteen years later, California became the first to fully ban lead in hunting ammo. Minnesota, New York, Vermont, Massachusetts and Maine are among the other states to have at least some restrictions on hunting and fishing lead.

Advocating for nontoxic alternatives

In the absence of guidance at the federal level, independent organizations are taking it upon themselves to spread the word about the dangers of lead products in nature.

The Skegemog Raptor Center partners with Wyoming-based Sporting Lead-Free, an organization that aims to educate hunters and anglers about nontoxic forms of ammo and tackle. Some alternatives include bullets made from copper, as well as tungsten, bismuth and steel shot or anglers.

Sporting Lead-Free's founder and director, Bryan Bedrosian, told USA TODAY that as the "original conservationists," hunters and anglers have a "great opportunity to showcase our continued commitment to conservation by using lead-free ammunition and tackle when we're in the field."

Bedrosian pointed to the "multiple proven pathways" that lead winds up in the digestive systems of birds and other wildlife.

"Making the switch to lead-free is easy, effective, and proven to make a difference," Bedrosian said. "Plus, when we hunt lead-free, we know we are bringing home the best, cleanest game meat for the kitchen table. It's a win for wildlife, and a win for you."

LEGAL NOTICE

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

In re:	)	Chapter 11
BROADWAY REALTY I CO., LLC, et al.,	)	Case No. 25-11050
Debtors.[1]	)	(Jointly Administered)

NOTICE OF BAR DATES FOR FILING PROOFS OF CLAIM AND CLAIMS UNDER SECTION 503(B)(9) OF THE BANKRUPTCY CODE AGAINST THE DEBTORS

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York (the "Bankruptcy Court") has entered an order (the "Bar Date Order") establishing **June 8, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. prevailing Eastern Time** (the "General Claims Bar Date"), as the last date for each person or entity (including individuals, partnerships, corporations, joint ventures and trusts) to file a Proof of Claim against any of the Debtors listed below (collectively, the "Debtors"). A copy of the Bar Date Order, and any exhibits thereto are available (i) at the Debtors' expense upon request to Stretto, Inc. (the noticing and claims agent retained in these chapter 11 cases), by calling 866-549-7058 for callers in the United States or by calling 949-608-7166 for callers outside the United States, (ii) for no charge by visiting the Debtors' restructuring website at http://cases.stretto.com/broadwayrealty, or (iii) for a fee via PACER by visiting http://ecf.nysb.uscourts.gov.

The Bar Date Order requires that all entities (collectively, the "Claimants") holding or wishing to assert a claim that arose or is deemed to have arisen prior to May 21, 2025 (the "Petition Date"), against the Debtors ("Claims") file a Proof of Claim so as to be actually received by Stretto, Inc. (the "Notice and Claims Agent") on or before the applicable bar dates (collectively, the "Bar Dates") as set forth below.

Debtor Name, Last Four Digits of Tax Identification Number, Case Number: BROADWAY REALTY I CO., LLC, 5426, 25-11050; 193 STREET REALTY CO., LLC, 5448, 25-11051; 2 WEST 120TH REALTY CO. LLC, 8940, 25-11052; 25/35 HILLSIDE ASSOCIATES LLC, 1398, 25-11053; 402-412 WEST 148 LLC, 1339, 25-11054; HILLSIDE REALTY I CO., LLC, 5445, 25-11055; 509 REALTY CO. LLC, 1707, 25-11057; 281/295 WADSWORTH ASSOCIATES, LLC, 1213, 25-11059; 241 SHERMAN LLC, 1365, 25-11060; WEST 50TH STREET REALTY CO., LLC, 2393, 25-11062; 58 ELIZABETH NY LLC, 2303, 25-11064; 207 REALTY LLC, 3215, 25-11067; 34 SEAMAN ASSOCIATES, LLC, 1388, 25-11075; 233 REALTY NY LLC, 0325, 25-11082; AUDOBON REALTY LLC, 3212, 25-11090; 536 REALTY CO. LLC, 6395, 25-11098; 237 REALTY NY LLC, 0317, 25-11105; MANHATTAN REALTY CO. LLC, 4024, 25-11112; 349 REALTY NY LLC, 0320, 25-11115; 1023 REALTY LLC, 5232, 25-11120; 1038 REALTY LLC, 5278, 25-11123; 1042 REALTY LLC, 5303, 25-11125; 1048 REALTY LLC, 5339, 25-11128; 1060 REALTY LLC, 5364, 25-11130; 115 EAST 21 REALTY CO., LLC, 0876, 25-11131; 1171 PRESIDENT LLC, 2262, 25-11056; 1280 REALTY NY LLC, 5387, 25-11058; 1296 REALTY LLC, 5409, 25-11063; 1362 OCEAN LLC, 4750, 25-11068; 147 REALTY CO., LLC, 7868, 25-11074; 1535 OCEAN LLC, 4778, 25-11080; 1554 OCEAN LLC, 4812, 25-11085; 1597 REALTY LLC, 5440, 25-11091; 1601 REALTY LLC, 5460, 25-11097; 1617 REALTY LLC, 8842, 25-11103; 17 REALTY LLC, 1475, 25-11107; 176 CLARKSON AVE LLC, 5241, 25-11110; 18 STREET REALTY CO., LLC, 5450, 25-11065; 1820 REALTY LLC, 5554, 25-11072; 2102 REALTY LLC, 5618, 25-11076; 222 LENOX RD LLC, 2414, 25-11081; 225 PARKSIDE LLC, 2397, 25-11087; 2340 VALENTINE AVENUE REALTY CO., LLC, 2388, 25-11093; 2400 REALTY NY LLC, 5517, 25-11100; 2513 NEWKIRK LLC, 1457, 25-11106; 28-30 ARGYLE LLC, 4225, 25-11111; 292 ST. JOHNS LLC, 6469, 25-11117; 30 ROAD REALTY CO., LLC, 5389, 25-11118; 307 12 ST LLC, 4263, 25-11122; 330 REALTY NY LLC, 5722, 25-11066; 3301 FARRAGUT LLC, 6315, 25-11071; 34 AVENUE REALTY CO., LLC, 5422, 25-11077; 3410 KINGSBRIDGE LLC, 2162, 25-11083; 40-15 HAMPTON LLC, 6201, 25-11089; 405 REALTY LLC, 5801, 25-11095; 426 EAST 22 ST LLC, 2378, 25-11099; 43-60 BAYCHESTER, LLC, 2369, 25-11104; 45-35 REALTY LLC, 6224, 25-11108; 457 SCHENECTADY LLC, 2195, 25-11113; 470 REALTY NY LLC, 6944, 25-11116; 481 EASTERN LLC, 6891, 25-11121; 529 EAST 22 LLC, 4918, 25-11126; 607 RUGBY LLC, 4335, 25-11061; 63-94 AUSTIN REALTY, LLC, 2395, 25-11069; 681 OCEAN LLC, 4714, 25-11079; 706 REALTY NY LLC, 3843, 25-11086; 85 CLARKSON LLC, 4656, 25-11094; 85-05 35 AVENUE REALTY CO., LLC, 5423, 25-11102; 915 REALTY LLC, 9374, 25-11109; 916 CARROLL ST LLC, 2462, 25-11114; 932 CARROLL LLC, 1378, 25-11119; 94-06 34TH AVENUE REALTY CO., LLC, 2390, 25-11124; 94-06 34TH ROAD REALTY CO., LLC, 2389, 25-11127; 990 REALTY NY LLC, 9607, 25-11129; 991 CARROLL ST LLC, 2298, 25-11070; CLINTON PROPERTY CO., LLC, 8353, 25-11073; FIELDSTONE NY LLC, 1797, 25-11078; FOREST PARKWAY REALTY CO., LLC, 5390, 25-11084; HEATH REALTY LLC, 1613, 25-11088; KINGSTON PLACE REALTY CO., LLC, 2386, 25-11092; PARK LANE SOUTH REALTY CO., LLC, 5391, 25-11096; TREGER MANAGEMENT LLC, 5386, 25-11101

General Claims Bar Date. (Applicable to 503(b)(9) Claims) All Claimants holding or wishing to assert a Claim must file a Proof of Claim with respect to such Claim so as to be actually received by the Notice and Claims Agent by **June 8, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. prevailing Eastern Time** (the "General Claims Bar Date"), including parties asserting Claims pursuant to section 503(b)(9) of the Bankruptcy Code.

Governmental Bar Date. All governmental units (as defined in section 101(27) of the Bankruptcy Code) holding or wishing to assert a Claim against the Debtors must file a Proof of Claim so as to be actually received by the Notice and Claims Agent by **June 8, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. prevailing Eastern Time** (the "Governmental Bar Date," and together with the General Claims Bar Date, the "Bar Dates"). For the avoidance of doubt, no governmental unit has been barred from filing a Claim by virtue of the expiration of the 180-day period under section 502(b)(9) of the Bankruptcy Code, as no bar date was established in these Chapter 11 Cases prior to entry of the Bar Date Order.

Administrative Expense Bar Date. All entities asserting Administrative Expense Claims (as defined in the Plan) must file a Proof of Administrative Expense Claim so as to actually be received by the Notice and Claims Agent by **June 8, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. prevailing Eastern Time** (the "Administrative Expense Bar Date"). A separate notice regarding the deadline for filing requests for payment of Administrative Expense Claims will be provided to known postpetition creditors. Holders of Administrative Expense Claims should not rely on this Notice for information regarding the Administrative Expense Bar Date.

Amended Schedules. In the event the Plan Administrator amends or supplements the Schedules subsequent to the date on which the Bar Date Notice is served, the Plan Administrator will give notice of any such filing, amendment, or supplement to the holders of affected claims, whereby such holders will have no less than thirty-five (35) days from the notice date to file Proofs of Claim with respect to their claims.

When and Where To File

Each Proof of Claim, including supporting documentation, must be filed so that the Notice and Claims Agent ***actually receives*** the Proof of Claim on or before the applicable Bar Date by: (i) electronically using the interface available on the Notice and Claims Agent's website at https://cases.stretto.com/broadwayrealty/file-a-claim/, or (ii) first-class U.S. mail, overnight mail, or hand delivery, at the following address: Broadway Realty Claims Processing, c/o Stretto, Inc., 410 Exchange, Suite 100, Irvine, CA 92602.

PROOFS OF CLAIM MUST BE FILED BY MAIL, BY HAND, OR THROUGH THE STRETTO WEBSITE. PROOFS OF CLAIM FILED BY FACSIMILE OR ELECTRONIC MAIL WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL NOT BE DEEMED TIMELY FILED.

Contents of Proofs of Claim. Each Proof of Claim must: (i) be written in English; (ii) include a claim amount denominated in United States dollars; (iii) conform substantially with the Proof of Claim form provided by the Plan Administrator or Official Form 410; (iv) be signed by the claimant or by an authorized agent or legal representative of the claimant under penalty of perjury; and (v) include supporting documentation unless voluminous, in which case a summary must be attached or an explanation provided as to why documentation is not available. Please note that each Proof of Claim must state a Claim against only one Debtor. To the extent the Proof of Claim lists more than one Debtor, the applicable Claim may be treated as if filed only against the first-listed Debtor. If a Proof of Claim does not identify a specific Debtor, the Proof of Claim will be deemed filed only against Broadway Realty I Co., LLC (Case No. 25-11050).

Section 503(b)(9) Claims. Vendors and suppliers of goods may be entitled to request an administrative priority Claim under section 503(b)(9) of the Bankruptcy Code to the extent they delivered, and the Debtors received, goods within the twenty-day period prior to the Petition Date. In addition to the other requirements listed above, any Proof of Claim asserting a 503(b)(9) Claim must: (i) include the value of the goods delivered to and received by the Debtors in the 20 days prior to the Petition Date; (ii) attach documentation identifying the particular invoices for which the 503(b)(9) Claim is being asserted; and (iii) attach documentation of any reclamation demand made against the Debtors under section 546(c) of the Bankruptcy Code (if applicable).

Consequences of Failing to Timely File Your Proof of Claim. Any Claimant who is required, but fails, to file a Proof of Claim in accordance with the Bar Date Order on or before the applicable Bar Date shall be forever barred, estopped, and enjoined from asserting such Claim against the Debtors (or filing a Proof of Claim with respect thereto). In such event, the Debtors' property shall be forever discharged from any and all indebtedness or liability with respect to such Claim, and such holder shall not be permitted to participate in any distribution on account of such Claim or receive further notices regarding such Claim.

Reservation of Rights. Nothing contained in this Notice is intended to or should be construed as a waiver of the Plan Administrator's right to: (a) dispute, or assert offsets or defenses against, any filed Claim or any Claim listed or reflected in the Debtors' Schedules as to the nature, amount, liability, or classification thereof; (b) subsequently designate any scheduled Claim as disputed, contingent, or unliquidated; and (c) otherwise amend the Schedules.

Additional Information. If you have any questions regarding the claims process and/or if you wish to obtain a copy of the Bar Date Order, a Proof of Claim form, or related documents, you may do so by visiting the Debtors' case website at https://cases.stretto.com/broadwayrealty or by contacting the Notice and Claims Agent by calling 866-549-7058 for callers in the United States or 949-608-7166 for callers outside the United States and/or writing to the following address: Broadway Realty Claims Processing, c/o Stretto, Inc., 410 Exchange, Suite 100, Irvine, CA 92602. Please note that the Notice and Claims Agent cannot advise you how to file, or whether you should file, a Proof of Claim.

BY ORDER OF THE COURT

New York, New York, Dated: April 28, 2026, */s/ Nicholas A. Bassett* , **PAUL HASTINGS LLP,** Justin Rawlins, Brett Lawrence, Nicholas A. Bassett, Shlomo Maza, 200 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10166, Telephone: (212) 318-6000, Email: justinrawlins@paulhastings.com, brettlawrence@paulhastings.com, nicholasbassett@paulhastings.com, shlomomaza@paulhastings.com, *Counsel to David Barse, as Plan Administrator*

[1] The last four digits of Broadway Realty I Co., LLC's tax identification number are 5426. A complete list of the Debtors in these Chapter 11 cases may be obtained on the website of the Debtors' proposed claims and noticing agent at https://cases.stretto.com/broadwayrealty. The Debtors' mailing addresses are located at 2 Grand Central Tower, 140 East 45th St., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10017.

Pope Leo

Continued from Page 1A

With the pontiff about to finish year one in his papacy, the USA TODAY Network spoke with Catholics nationwide about their views of Leo and found their responses overwhelmingly upbeat. Many say Leo is palpably different from Pope Francis, with an everyman affability they believe is helping fuel a global resurgence in Catholicism – especially among the young.

The pope's firm push for peace amid the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran has rankled the president, igniting sparks at times that have tested the loyalties of conservative Catholics. The rhetoric has also pulled others into the fray, including Vice President JD Vance and the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops.

At one point, Trump called Leo weak on crime and "terrible on foreign policy," though he later said he wasn't fighting with the pontiff. For his part, Vance, a Catholic convert, urged the pope to "be careful" when addressing theological questions tied to war and peace.

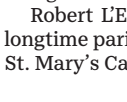
While Leo's statements have triggered some backlash, his forcefulness hasn't diminished his standing.

"It hasn't undermined his credibility because most feel it comes from a place of pastoral sincerity," said John Cavadini, director of the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. Leo's statements, he said, reflect gravitas and precision, leaving little room for misinterpretation or divisiveness.

"He's got a kind of presence that I find edifying and elevating," said Cavadini, a professor of theology. "His articulations tend to be unifying. They're not stated in ways that are alienating or dismissive."

As parishioners poured from churches across the country on April 26, those who spoke with USA TODAY agreed that Leo has deftly handled the discord, leaning into the gospel to strike a moral rather than political tone.

"He's done a beautiful job of showing us how to respond in nonviolent ways to very harmful and degrading language," said Margaret Sebern, 74, a retired nursing professor who attended Mass at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Manhattan's Upper West Side.


Sebern

Many view the pope as a unifying and revitalizing force who, like Francis, has advocated for the world's marginalized while treading cautiously around more prickly Catholic issues such as ordination of women and the blessing of same-sex unions. They praised Leo's support of immigrants and refugees in the United States and noted his appointments of bishops reflecting such backgrounds in California, Florida and Louisiana.

Gallup International's 2025 end-of-year survey found Pope Leo XIV its most positively viewed leader by far. In the United States, a survey conducted in November found more than two-thirds of American Catholic voters hold a favorable opinion of the pope, while a poll conducted this month by Reuters/Ipsos showed 60% of Americans overall approve of Leo.

For U.S. Catholics, the pope's relatability is heightened by a sense that Leo, a Chicago native who loves Peeps and the White Sox, is one of them. The pope is no longer an obscure Vatican figure but a homegrown reality.

Catholic schoolteacher Elizabeth Baldacci, 55, has a framed newspaper article about Leo's announcement as pope on her classroom wall. "It's really fun and nice for the kids," Baldacci said after Mass at Chicago's Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church. "He's more real to them because he's from here, so he's more human – like, 'Wow, this man grew up in Chicago like I did.' "

At the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, freshman Teresa Iannitello was among the students who packed into a cramped basement for free brunch after Sunday Mass at the school's Newman Center – a visual reminder that Gen Z is flocking to the faith. For many college-age Catholics, Leo's election in the May 7-8, 2025, conclave was the first they were old enough to understand and follow.


Iannitello

"It was so funny to hear him speak the first couple weeks, hearing his voice," said Iannitello, 19. "I remember thinking, 'oh my gosh – he sounds like me.' "

At Manhattan's St. Paul, Christopher Browner, 31, said "it's been an exciting time to be an American Catholic, with an American pope. [It's] something I never thought I would see in my lifetime."

Robert L'Europa, a chiropractor and longtime parishioner attending Mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Cranston, Rhode Island, agreed, saying Leo's papacy has given him reason for optimism. "It's become more personal to me now," he said.


Fourteen-year-old Iris Le, with her mother, Kim Tran, at Saints Simon and Jude Cathedral Church in Phoenix on April 25, says Pope Leo "seems like he has a very good moral compass."
DIANNIE CHAVEZ/USA TODAY NETWORK

'Bringing us back to true north'

In Washington, DC, Henry Huot was among the many who'd filled the pews for Mass beneath the massive, shimmering domes of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, North America's largest Roman Catholic Church.

The Arlington, Virginia, retiree said he's been glad to see Leo adhere to Francis' teachings and priorities. "We need a voice like Pope Leo's that will remind everyone, especially those on the world stage, that there are values that need to be upheld," Huot said.

Catholic observers say Leo has indeed largely embraced Francis' vision while charting his own path. Nicholas Hayes-Mota, a social ethicist and public theologian at California's Santa Clara University, said Leo, like Francis, has embraced the collaborative practice of synodality, favoring "a church that moves by listening to its members rather than unilaterally."

"It was clear that he was going to continue much of the substance of Francis' papacy but with a different style and priorities," Hayes-Mota said. As Francis did, Leo has stressed the church's mission to care for the poor and marginalized, but he's done so "more uncompromisingly than any of his predecessors. ... He not only picked it up but carried it further."

While maintaining continuity, Leo's more deliberate leadership style and manner have served as a sort of rebalancing, Hayes-Mota said. Francis' off-the-cuff nature often endeared him to people – such as his viral selfies with young Catholics or his well-known "who am I to judge?" remark regarding gay priests – but also alienated some put off by such spontaneity.

"One of the ongoing tensions in Francis' papacy with traditional members of the church was a fear that he was changing too many things too fast," Hayes-Mota said. "Leo has tried to extend olive branches to those alarmed by that, saying this is your church as well."

At the basilica in Washington, that view was echoed by Brian Dimatteo, who was visiting from New Jersey. While Francis "took us a little bit away from biblical standing," he said, Leo is "bringing us back to true north."

At St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Jensen Beach, Florida, retired computer scientist Mark Gooley praised both the pope's recent visit to several nations in Africa, where the church is rapidly expanding, and his rebuke of German bishops who've pushed for the church to formally bless same-sex unions.


Gooley


Knight

"He does seem to be holding to church tradition," said Gooley, 64. "He's been firm with the German bishops. Africa is a big area of growth, and he's been very sympathetic to Africans and their views. The Africans tend to be traditional."

Others said they weren't clear about the new pope's stance beyond continuing Francis' work. In Boca Raton, Florida, Eric Knight, a 27-year-old graduate student at Florida Atlantic University, sees Leo as "a continuity of Pope Francis, rather than a rupture. ... I'm still kind of waiting to see what's distinctively Pope Leo and not just the greater church tradition."

Appealing to young Catholics

Jonathan Tan, a professor of Catholic studies at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, said while Leo lacks the flair and flamboyance of predecessors like Francis and Pope John Paul II, he's revived hope for many U.S. Catholics who've lost faith in the political process and previously saw the church as detached from everyday realities.

In Worcester, Massachusetts, Celeste Mahaney, of nearby Charlton, echoed that point, saying she feels the pope is plugged in.

"It's nice to see our pope having a real interest in the day-to-day issues that affect people, not only in America but across the globe," she said at Christ the King Church. "He really has a finger on the pulse."


Mahaney

In the greater Cincinnati area, interior decorator Abby Jahnigen said she believes Leo can fill "a God-sized hole" in the United States, bringing people back to the Catholic faith.

"He feels more casual and more approachable," said Jahnigen, 46, as she left Mass at St. James of the Valley Church in Wyoming, Ohio. "He has, like, a 'regular guy' vibe."

Some said that vibe has helped Leo appeal to young Catholics. One of them is Iris Le, a 14-year-old freshman at Xavier College Preparatory in Phoenix, who was attending a Saturday evening Mass at Saints Simon and Jude Cathedral Church in north Phoenix with her mother, Kim Tran.

"I believe he was the right choice," Iris said about the 70-year-old pope's selection. "He seems like he has a very good moral compass."

In Westerville, Ohio, a bleak, chilly Sunday morning had brought gray skies to what had been a welcome early spring for the greater Columbus region, but that didn't keep Kristi Lethenstrom, 48, from attending early Mass at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church.

The church's young population has grown, she said, and as a kindergarten teacher personally invested in her community's littlest parishioners, Lethenstrom enjoys Leo's more youthful style of leadership. "I just think his message resonates more," she said.

At St. Paul Roman Catholic Church in Philadelphia, Kayleen Bodnar, 34, said she's found the pope's leadership inspiring.


Bodnar

"I think for a lot of people my age, Catholicism had become very polarizing," Bodnar said. "He's doing a great job of bringing young people back to church with the way that he leads."


Alexandre

Meanwhile, as he spoke outside St. Anastasia Roman Catholic Church in Teaneck, New Jersey, retired engineer Jacque Alexandre said Francis' successor is reaching a cross-section of generations, genders and cultures.

The new pope "makes me feel the future of the Catholic Church is very bright," said Alexandre, 71. "The younger generation are seeing a resurgence because they're seeing what's going on all over the world, and they see a relatability and relevance in Pope Leo."

Advocating for those on margins

At St. Vincent de Paul Church, the only historically Black parish in the Diocese of Nashville, the seven-member women's choir led parishioners through hymns infused with gospel sound. Deacon Bill Hill spoke about local Catholics' role in school desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement, reflecting the church's founding principle of social justice.

A floor below, a pantry brimmed with food donated by parishioners and nearby churches, a sign of the community engagement central to St. Vincent's identity throughout a 94-year history that has seen nine popes come and go. Last year, St. Vincent hosted a "Know Your Rights" training with an immigrant rights group and more recently helped organize a rally protesting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement actions.

With Leo exhibiting many of the same values they hold dear, church members say this moment is especially exciting. "It's a reassurance," said Deacon Harry Guess. "I take from all of that that there is this hope for us to do the right thing and to help others do the right thing. But we won't get there if we don't say anything. And he is saying something."

Tan, of Case Western Reserve, said Leo's background as bishop in an impoverished rural area of northern Peru and his visits to Augustinian communities around the world "have made him more attuned to the life experiences of those living in the margins."

That's an important factor for people like Catherine and Bill Odell, of South Bend, Indiana, who were leaving late morning Mass at St. Therese Little Flower Catholic Church. The couple said it's important that the new pope is carrying on Francis' legacy of environmental advocacy and addressing poverty.

"We're in a country in which the poor are seen as kind of in the way," said Bill Odell, 83. "I think he's going to be a voice for the poor. He's going to be a voice for the very people that Jesus talked to and about in the Sermon on the Mount. ... I hope he lives a long life."

'He's exactly what we need'

Many Catholics are awaiting the imminent release of Leo's first major encyclical, expected to address moral questions surrounding artificial intelligence, while Hayes-Mota of Santa Clara University is curious to see how Leo will address the complicated relationship between the United States and the Americas.

"He's seen by many in the Latin American Catholic church as someone who understands them very well," he said. "Especially given the tensions surrounding migration, and the geopolitical challenges raised by the Trump administration's intervention in Venezuela, the question of how the U.S. relates to the Americas as a whole is an important one."

Hayes-Mota said Leo has successfully straddled a line between conservatives unhappy with his views on immigration and war and progressives hoping to see quicker reforms.

"There will be frustrations and tensions, but so far he has remained a popular and less polarizing figure," Hayes-Mota said. "There will be more opportunities for consensus-building and deescalating tensions, but so far he has managed to keep most of the church behind him, and that's no easy task."

But the quality most of those interviewed by the USA TODAY Network said they appreciated about Leo is his commitment to pursuing peace, especially in light of the Iran war. The pope's firm push to end hostilities, some said, has provided a counterbalance to Trump, even as their exchanges have fueled a divide believed to be the most contentious between the papacy and a secular leader since medieval times.

"He's exactly what we need," said engineer Anthony Zamarro, who attended Mass with his two sons at Christ the King in Worcester. Though Zamarro leans politically conservative, he said, "we need someone who stands up for people and says war is bad for humanity. ... If your pope isn't speaking out against war, you don't have a very good pope."

Caroline Zengel, 44, who'd attended Mass at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Knoxville, Tennessee, said the pope is "a strong, quiet presence for our church."


Zengel

"He's outspoken when he needs to be, but he's very wise when he speaks," said Zengel, a stay-at-home mom and former nurse. "We're neither Democrat nor Republican. We're Catholic, and that's what comes first. I think his statement that he's not afraid of the Trump administration was so powerful, and I loved that."

In Boston's South End, organs thrummed as incense filled the cavernous nave of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. As her 7-year-old daughter tugged at her dress after a 90-minute-long Mass, Boston lawyer Abigail Hemnes, 43, said she admired how Leo has responded to the situation.


Hemnes


Ryan

"I really appreciate the way that Pope Leo has handled it, just staying true to the core beliefs of Catholicism, which is that Jesus lives in peace," Hemnes said.

Boston musician Jon Ryan, 55, agreed.

"I feel like Pope Leo hasn't really 'taken the bait,' " Ryan said. "People want to politicize what the pope does. But the pope's job is to evangelize the gospel and be a leader of the church, not to be a political figure. The Church and the pope are not Democrat or Republican."

Besides, he said, those "little tiffs" have made people more aware of Leo – "and that's a good thing."

Ramirez, Trethan and Stunson report for USA TODAY. Allen is a reporter for USA TODAY Network-New England. Adams is a reporter for The Tennessean. Gow is a reporter for Worcester Telegram & Gazette.

Contributing: Keith Burbank, Treasure Coast News; Rayleigh Deaton, South Bend Tribune; Jose Gonzales, Arizona Republic; Hope Karnopp, Milwaukee-Journal-Sentinel; Amethyst Martinez, Kinsey Crowley, Kaitlyn McCormick, Sarah Perkel and Paris Barraza, USA TODAY; Keenan Thomas, Knoxville News Sentinel; Scott Wartman, Cincinnati Enquirer; Emma Wozniak, Columbus Dispatch; Deena Yellin, The Record; Jonny Williams, Providence Journal; Shane Brennan, News Journal; Marissa Meador, Indianapolis Star; and Eileen Zaffiro-Kean, Daytona Beach News-Journal

OPINION

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Military families must be able to trust leaders



Rebekah Gleaves Sanderlin
Opinion contributor

There's an unspoken contract the U.S. military makes with military families: Lend us your loved ones, and we'll meet their basic needs.

Considering how few guarantees accompany military life, sustenance is nonnegotiable. So when photos began to appear in USA TODAY and on social media of meager and unappetizing meals purportedly being served to sailors deployed to the Middle East, people took notice.

Taking care of our troops is more than just a necessity – it's a point of national pride. An army marches on its stomach, the famous saying goes. A navy sails on its stomach, too.

I've been a military community advocate for more than 20 years. I've dined elbow-to-elbow with sailors in the galley of the USS Gerald R. Ford, where the food was plentiful and delicious.

I wanted to know if something had changed, so I started asking around. I heard more stories of sailors rationing food, care packages going undelivered for a month or more, and deployed soldiers not having enough food.



Photo shared by a family member of a sailor aboard USS Abraham Lincoln. PROVIDED BY FAMILY MEMBER OF A SAILOR

Stories told in desperate tones

I had already seen posts in private military spouse Facebook groups about deployed service members not getting the pay they were due and going into debt. And I heard these stories told in desperate tones. People were eager to tell me what they were seeing.

One advocate put it plainly: "The military is built on trust. Leaders constantly speak about taking care of service members and their families, but when people feel they cannot safely raise concerns, the gap between those words and reality erodes something foundational. In an institution where trust is everything, that erosion isn't a peripheral problem. It's existential."

My husband, a retired U.S. Army command sergeant major, has a story he tells about buttpack straps – the straps used to tie down a soldier's load-bearing equipment. Early in his Army career, his infantry company's commander – a grizzled, longtime enlisted soldier who commissioned as an officer – noticed a number of soldiers had left their buttpack straps untied, which they weren't supposed to do.

The company had just completed a 25-mile march and everyone was exhausted. "You see that?" the officer said. "When a lot of soldiers deviate from the standard, it's an indicator the company is under stress. Pay attention to that."

It's a lesson my husband carried with him through his 26 years of service. When people and systems fail to do what they normally do, it's an indicator.

Right now, the indicators are everywhere. Military spouses who used to be outspoken are quieter. In online military community groups, people prefer to post anonymously.

During the Iraq and Afghanistan war years, there were reports of service members living in rough conditions, with less-than-ideal food, but those reports were delivered in tones of pride, not get-me-out-of-here desperation.

The mere fact that military family members suspect their loved ones' basic needs aren't being met is an indicator. It tells us they don't trust leadership to care for their people, and the data bears this out.

According to the 2026 Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle Survey, only 37% of active-duty family respondents say they would recommend military service to a young family member. Considering that about 80% of people who join the Army come from families with a history of military service, this is a real problem.

The military community feels the same sense of division that's overtaken the nation, but the stakes are higher. Troops who feel divided from their peers still have to rely on them.

Military spouses who aren't sure they can trust the people sitting next to them in a family briefing also have no one else to list as their children's emergency contacts at school.

When senior leaders are fired not for performance but for perceived lack of loyalty, military families literally do not know whom they can trust.

Honor contract with our families

I don't know if there really are problems with food on the USS Abraham Lincoln, the USS Tripoli or any of our military ships. We have only the word of individual sailors and the word of military officials – and we don't know whom to believe.

But I've toured several of our Navy ships. I've seen the tiny bunks sailors sleep in, stacked three high without enough headroom for them to sit up and with only small lockers for their possessions. I know food is the one consistent morale builder for everyone deployed.

For military families – parents, spouses, children, grandparents and all who love someone in uniform – there is very little inside our control. When someone you love agrees to serve, that loved one moves beyond your reach.

You rely on their leaders to take care of them.

Right now, military families aren't certain the contract is being honored – not just in the galleys, but in all the ways that matter.

The answer isn't better food.

It's leadership worthy of the trust this community has always been asked to extend. That's not a luxury. That's the contract.

Rebekah Gleaves Sanderlin is a writer and a military community advocate who has served on the boards of several national military nonprofit organizations, including the USO and Blue Star Families. She currently serves on the communication team of National Security Leaders for America.

ADHD diagnosis immediately helped my world make sense



Sara Pequeño
USA TODAY

I failed my sixth grade science fair project. Not because I didn't follow the scientific method, or because I didn't understand the science behind testing cleaning supplies to see which was the most effective at ridding countertops of bacteria. It was because I put off doing the project for a month when I couldn't decide on a question.

This incident was not the last time my procrastination got the best of me. There were plenty of times I put off projects and essays until the last minute, telling myself that I'd be able to do everything in a single night.

Yet my teachers and my parents didn't notice that anything was wrong. After all, I was still getting good grades.

However, there were still signs that something wasn't right.

Aside from procrastination, I would often find myself in class staring out at the distant mountains, thinking about everything but the lesson in front of me. I had a hard time completing tasks. In my personal life, I would often find that my energy levels were higher than those of the people around me, and I would interrupt people constantly.

What I wish I knew

If only we knew then what we know now and what researchers have uncovered in a new study on attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Then came college. I attended one of the best schools in North Carolina, and quickly learned that high school had not prepared me for academic rigor. Any other person would just study harder. I found myself unable to turn in assignments at all.

I began suspecting that I had ADHD. I even sought out testing, only to hit a wall when I couldn't get an assessment on campus.

This all came to a head when I was in my first job. I was so excited to be a journalist, yet I'd sit for hours without typing a single word. I had so many ideas, but trying to articulate them on the page was a Sisyphean task.

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, and days spent at home in isolation with my roommates and cat. I talked to my psychiatrist, and she performed an assessment. When she gave me the diagnosis, all of these shortfalls made sense.

I wasn't lazy or unmotivated – there was literally something happening in my brain that kept me from locking in to my work, that made me focus on everything else.

In a new study, scientists assessed 1,154 brain scans of children and concluded that there are three distinct forms of ADHD: primarily inattentive, primarily hyperactive-impulsive, and combined. The third form, which affects more areas of the brain, is characterized by emotional dysregulation.

Now I'm curious as to what my diagnosis actually is and the areas where it affects my life. Where do I fall in this expanded spectrum?

I wake up, and my inner monologue immediately starts. Statements in my head overlap, so that one sentence is never finished before the next one begins. When I don't take my medication – 27 mg of Concerta – this continues for the remainder of the day.

Even when I take my meds, I struggle to start tasks. I struggle to finish them. I am easily distracted, love to interrupt and am incredibly impulsive, as exemplified by my credit card bill. I have a deep-rooted fear of rejection, and have outsized reactions to breakups and friend drama.

Often, the act of writing – the thing I love to do, the thing I do for a living – makes me want to jump out of my skin.

I struggle to see any of these symptoms as anything other than negative, which I know is unfair to myself. I get frustrated by my own thought patterns, wondering why I can't just have "a normal brain." My therapist and loved ones have encouraged me to reframe my thinking; I can't help that I process the world differently from other people.



In a new study, scientists assessed 1,154 brain scans of children and concluded that there are three distinct forms of ADHD: primarily inattentive, primarily hyperactive-impulsive, and combined. TIM NEWMAN/GETTY IMAGES

I wish I could tell ADHD researchers that these things aren't just facts about nebulous people who don't exist in real life, nor does it only affect children.

In the United States, 6% of adults have an ADHD diagnosis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These symptoms affect me and millions of others every day and make it hard to function like everyone else.

Trilliant Health reported in April a 53.3% increase in stimulant prescriptions from 2018 to 2024. Among women ages 18-44 during this time period, there was a 93.6% increase.

With this surge in diagnoses comes a predictable refrain: that most people are faking it. Under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the Department of Health and Human Services has declared that children are overdiagnosed and overmedicated, adding to the stigma that people with ADHD face.

It's possible there are some misdiagnoses, but the increase in diagnoses is more likely attributed to the fact that, as we learn more about the way ADHD presents itself, girls and children of color are being diagnosed at higher rates.

It sounds trite to say, but being diagnosed with ADHD made a lot of things make sense for me, and the subsequent treatments for it have made a huge difference in what I'm able to accomplish in a given day. It made it easier for me to do my job, to have relationships, to move through the world. I still struggle, but life feels more manageable.

For those who think they might have ADHD, there is no harm in getting an assessment done and it's never too late. You will grieve the time you lost to it, but you will never regret getting clarity.

What I'd tell my younger self

I often think about how my life would be different had I been diagnosed younger. Would I have focused on school, gotten good grades, landed my dream internships? Would I have spent fewer nights crying because I felt I was "too dumb" to be at the college I got into?

I wish I could tell my younger self that it is OK that your brain works differently. Sometimes I wish that someone had told me that the things I hated about myself weren't my fault – it's just the way I was created. It doesn't mean I'm dumb or lazy, it just means that I have to work differently than the other people in my life – and yes, that does mean that some things are more difficult for me than they are for my peers.

Getting a diagnosis doesn't immediately fix you, but it does offer some clarity and peace of mind knowing that there are things beyond your control affecting your life. I've had to learn to work with my ADHD, instead of against it.

Things aren't perfect – I'm still working on my procrastination and staying focused – but knowing that I have ADHD has helped me better understand myself. I'm learning to give myself grace, and I'm a lot kinder to myself now than I was as a child who didn't know how to start my science fair project.

Follow USA TODAY columnist Sara Pequeño on the Bluesky platform: @sarapequeno.bsky.social

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'Diversified' portfolio is more than just stocks and bonds

An ideal asset mix now comprises 11 investment classes, one financial advocate says. **Page 4B**



GETTY IMAGES

Buy now/pay later enters housing

Andrea Riquier USA TODAY

As rental costs spiral higher, a growing number of companies are offering services that allow the monthly charge to be split up, which can make it easier for some tenants to pay. ● The companies say they're stepping into the breach where public policies for tenants don't exist, but consumer advocates say the products are expensive at best and predatory at worst. And with no relief in sight for a yearslong housing affordability crisis, the tension looks set to continue. ● Roughly one-third of all American households rent, and half of them spend more than one-third of their income on rent, according to the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies. For many tenants, paying the rent all at once at the beginning of the month leaves them with no way to get by until the next paycheck arrives.

"It fundamentally comes down to a cash flow problem," said Samir Goel, a cofounder of Esusu, one of the companies offering the service. "It's not that [tenants] don't make money, it's that the income they get and their expenses are basically in and out."

In interviews, Esusu's cofounder, Wemimo Abbey, often references his mother, an immigrant who works multiple jobs including occasional gig work, as an example of the company's target customer.

"This is not a discretionary spend product the way that a Gucci bag is," Goel said. "It's really oriented to the fact that one out of every two Americans has less than 400 bucks in their bank account and this solves that problem."

How does buy now/pay later work to pay rent?

Esusu offers what it calls "split pay" as part of a broader package of services such as financial coaching that is available with a subscription. In some select cases, tenants also can opt to use a loan from Affirm, the fintech better known for its "buy now, pay later" offerings.

Such services allow a tenant to apply for a loan for a portion of the coming month's rent then repay it later. Each request must be underwritten separately,

See RENT, Page 2B

Unwinding a trust presents problems

Tax changes make some parents regret fast gifting

Medora Lee
USA TODAY

Giving is expected during the great wealth transfer, but some families are discovering after they rushed to give away their assets to save on taxes that they may have gotten the timing wrong, some financial analysts said.

Many families in 2024 and 2025 rushed to their accountants, advisers and attorneys to set up estate plans to lock in the benefits of the soon-to-be expiring Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. The TCJA lowered tax rates, doubled the standard deduction and doubled the lifetime gift exemption but was scheduled to sunset at the end of 2025. All that changed when President Donald Trump signed into law on July 4, 2025, his signature tax and spending package that made permanent all those provisions.

People could slow down and take time to hash out a plan to give their assets away, well, except for those who already accelerated their gift-giving.

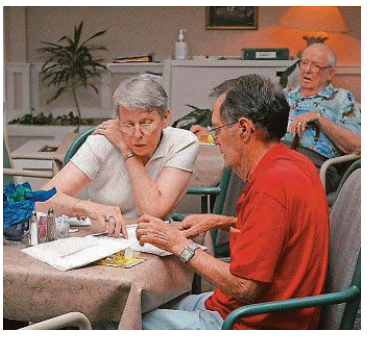
"Are people having buyer's remorse? Yes, maybe some of them," said Dina Friedman, private wealth strategies adviser at Merrill.

What happened?

With more than 11,000 baby boomers now turning 65 years old every day, approximately $124 trillion is expected to shift to younger generations and charities through 2048, according to Cerulli and Associates.

With so much at stake, wealthy families cheered the TCJA, which doubled the tax-free lifetime gift exemption to $11.18 million per person ($22.36 million for married couples) in 2018 from $5.49 million in 2017. By 2025, the inflation-adjusted exemptions had reached $13.99 million per person, or $27.98 million per couple. Those amounts, in addition to annual $19,000 gifts to as many people as you wanted, could be given tax free.

See GIFTS, Page 2B



People could slow down and take time to hash out a plan to give their assets away.
USA TODAY NETWORK

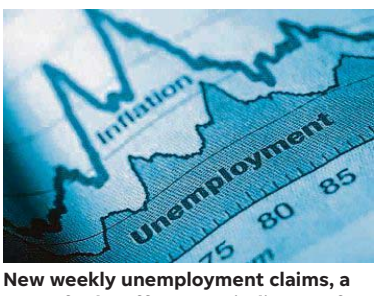
April's layoffs show a job market that is stagnant

Dian Zhang, John Heasly and Yoonserk Pyun
USA TODAY

Nike, Apple and Republic National Distributing Co., a major alcohol distributor in the United States, are among the latest companies listed on USA TODAY's layoff tracker, which is powered by Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act filings.

The tracker captured Nike's latest layoff filing in St. Charles, Missouri, on April 23, showing 172 job cuts, part of its broader plan to lay off 1,400 workers. On the same day, Apple's notice appeared in the tracker detailing that a store closure in Maryland will affect 78 workers.

Republic National Distributing Co. filed layoff notices from multiple locations, including Texas, South Carolina, and Virginia, totaling more than 3,000 job cuts.



New weekly unemployment claims, a proxy for layoffs, are an indicator of the health of a state's economy.
JLGUTIERREZ/GETTY IMAGES

Four months into 2026, corporate America has made nearly 1,600 layoff announcements affecting more than 128,000 workers, according to USA TODAY's tracker. That is 5% fewer notices this year compared with the same period last year. A large wave of mass layoff announcements from companies, including Amazon and UPS, made January a hard month for workers across the country.

Scan the QR code to track where layoffs hit the job market in 2026. Get the latest jobs report news May 8 at **usatoday.com**.

Since then, WARN filings show a cooling trend as affected workers declined month by month, indicating a labor market stuck in a holding pattern amid economic uncertainty driven by the Iran war and mounting concerns over artificial intelligence displacing workers.

"We just have this stagnant labor market from a macro perspective, where companies aren't hiring many people, but they're also not choosing to lay off a lot of folks," Laura Ullrich, director of economic research in North America at the Indeed Hiring Lab, told USA TODAY.

In an April 21 report on AI and geopolitics, J.P. Morgan Chief U.S. Economist Michael Feroli described a market showing "resilience in the face of headwinds," but one where month-over-month swings are growing more erratic than in prior economic expansions.

"The current labor market is neither overheating nor collapsing, but is increasingly sensitive to shocks," Feroli said.

WARN notices work as an indicator to estimate the job losses from major companies and the pace of those a few months ahead of actual departures,

See LAYOFFS, Page 2B

Errors could delay your tax refund

Damon C. Williams
Bucks County (PA) Courier Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

The IRS processed more than 130 million federal income tax returns as of mid-April, according to the revenue department's latest available tax-filing data. But what if you filed your tax return weeks ago and haven't yet received your tax refund?

Several issues can cause the IRS to delay your refund. Here are a few of the main culprits:



Several issues can cause the IRS to delay your refund. GETTY IMAGES

Why haven't I received my tax refund yet?

It can take the IRS longer to scrutinize your 2025 tax return if it included errors or if you applied for additional tax credits.

There are five broad reasons the IRS outlined that could delay your tax refund:

- Common mistakes, such as forgetting to sign your return or making a math error.
- Claiming the Earned Income Credit.
- Claiming the Additional Child Tax Credit.
- Filing an amended return.
- Requesting injured spouse relief.

How to track your 2025 income tax refund

You can track the status of your 2025 federal income tax refund by using the IRS refund status tool.

By using the IRS tool, you can also track the status of income tax refunds for 2023 and 2024.

You will need to enter your Social Security number, filing status and the exact amount of your expected refund, which is shown on your income tax return. Financial resource Kiplinger created a breakdown of the IRS tax refund schedule:

Refund Delivery Time	Filing and Refund Delivery Methods
3 weeks	E-file and direct deposit
4 weeks	E-file and check
4 to 8 weeks	Mail in return and direct deposit
4 to 9 weeks	Mail in return and check

Average 2026 tax refund tops $3,200

The average 2026 refund is nearly $300 higher than the average refund at this point last year, IRS data show, so filers have more reason to look for their checks. According to the IRS, as of April 18, the average tax refund stood at $3,275 – an 11.1% increase over the $2,942 average from this point last year.

Overall, the revenue service has refunded $296.067 billion to tax filers, 17% higher than the $253.116 billion refunded to this point last year.

Rent

Continued from Page 1B

even if the tenant has been approved in the past. Borrowers may not apply for a new loan until they've paid back the first one, which keeps the debt from growing in perpetuity.

Esusu declined to share details about how tenants are underwritten, or hard data about how the loans have performed. In a February interview, when the products were still relatively new, Abbey said that most tenants who've used the loans are prime borrowers, meaning they have high credit scores and are considered low-risk. "We've not seen one default," he said.

Is Buy Now/Pay Later a good idea?

"These products speak to very real problems for people, and people are looking for whatever way they can to stay afloat," said Ariel Nelson, a senior attorney at the National Consumer Law Center.

But Nelson and other advocates say companies such as these aren't offering a real solution, but are taking advantage of tenants' desperation.

In February, a group called Protect Borrowers published a report on the industry called "Rent Now, Pain Later." It used a company called Flex as an example of how rent splitting works.

"Users pay a membership fee of $14.99 per month and a 1% bill payment fee each time they make a payment," the report explained. If the user repays Flex with a credit card, an additional 3.5% fee is also assessed.

As an example: "A user with a $1,500 rent payment due on October 1st makes a $909 initial payment ($900 towards rent, plus $9 in bill payment fees) and then borrows $600 to cover the rest of their rent. In the background, Flex pays the landlord the full $1,500 directly. The $600 payment is due, with $6 in bill payment fees, on October 15th."

All in all, the tenant would wind up paying nearly $30 to borrow $600 for 14 days, a cost that Protect Borrowers calls nearly on par with payday loans.

But a Flex spokesman calls that reasonable.

"I understand [for] consumer advocates, in a perfect world, income would be sufficient," said Ryan Metcalf. "It would align perfectly with expenses. There would be no late fees. There would be no ability to evict people and housing would be affordable. That's a really great aspirational world."

In reality, Metcalf said, renters often wind up paying late fees or accessing other, even higher-cost, credit products that "compound their situation," as he puts it.

Flex, meanwhile, has what Metcalf calls "guardrails" to protect tenants, including no late fees, no compounding interest, one flat fee for use, and no loan "stacking" – meaning that a borrower must pay back a loan before getting another.

'Guardrails' aren't requirements

One of the problems with "guardrails," however, is that they are good-faith decisions, not firm requirements.

"A fintech might have consumer-friendly policies, but the best recourse for consumers encountering a problem would have been the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which has been gutted by the current administration," said Adam Rust, director of financial services at the national nonprofit Consumer Federation of America.

As USA TODAY has reported, the Trump White House has drastically cut the bureau, which was set up in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

While Esusu and Flex both say they are heavily regulated, the regulations they face prioritize the financial stability of them and their partners, Rust explained – not the customer experience.

The noted lack of consumer support is exacerbated by the fact that many of the rent-now-pay-later companies have struggled to deliver their services. The Protect Borrowers report – and many social media platforms – are rife with complaints from tenants who hit glitches and couldn't get them fixed.

"Several consumers have complained that Flex paid their rent late, did not pay at all even after taking money from their accounts, and did not respond to desperate requests for issues to be fixed," the report says.

"In certain instances, Flex's mistakes caused damage to consumers' credit scores. In others, Flex's errors have led to evictions," it added.

In response to a USA TODAY question about this issue, Metcalf said: "If something were to go wrong today, we have a make-whole policy. If Flex is ever at fault, we have covered any cost that a renter may incur, whether that's late fees, we've gone as far as paying their rents that month. And so... while those things happen, they happen very rarely at this point."

What else to do if you can't afford the rent?

For advocates who work on behalf of consumer housing issues, the rise of fintech solutions such as rent splitting is a symptom of how the system is failing many Americans. Tenants who struggle don't have many good options, Nelson said.

A tenant can always ask a landlord if it's possible to move the payment date or to pay in installments, she suggested. There's no specific reason landlords need to collect rent all at once or at the beginning of the month – though there's also not necessarily any reason for a landlord to agree to such a request, particularly in very competitive rental markets.

For anyone who simply can't afford the rent, rental assistance programs, both from the government and private sector, may be available locally, Nelson suggested.

Rust said he wonders whether pay-later services will mostly be used as one-time stopgap measures, or whether tenants will just use them "month after month," always behind, always financing the rent.

As Nelson put it, "This is just one more version of: 'It's expensive to be poor.' "

Contributing: Ignacio Calderon

Gifts

Continued from Page 1B

But TCJA was set to expire at the end of 2025, and lifetime exemptions would revert to lower levels. The exemption was set to drop in half to about $7 million for an individual and $14 million per couple on Jan. 1, 2026. Rich families, not wanting to pay estate taxes on millions more dollars, rushed to give away as much as they could to take advantage of the limited-time higher gift exemptions. Then, Congress passed the tax provisions of Trump's signature legislation, popularly known as the One Big Beautiful Bill, last July, before the TCJA sunset. It made the huge inflation-adjusted exemptions permanent. Most wealthy Americans breathed a sigh of relief, but some regretted accelerating their giving when they could have held onto and enjoyed their riches a little longer, some advisers said.

What can people with regrets do?

Clawing back some of the assets you've given away can be tricky, but most of the time, there are a few options, advisers said.

Irrevocable trusts, long-known to be unchangeable and irreversible, have evolved over the years to be more flexible, Friedman said. "Decanting" is a legal process that allows trustees to "pour" assets from an old trust into a new one with more favorable terms such as giving trustees authority to distribute principal. "A lot depends on state law, but you can also move to a better [more favorable] state," she said. "The trustee has the power to move a trust to another jurisdiction."

Many irrevocable trusts nowadays also have independent third-party trust protectors who can modify trust terms, such as altering administrative provisions, removing or replacing trustees, changing governing law, or modifying beneficiary interests, Friedman said. In an irrevocable children's trust, the grantor, or the original donor, can take a loan from the trust without tax consequences as long as it's paid back with interest, she said. Otherwise, the IRS could say the parents are the true beneficiaries of the trust and count its assets toward their taxable estate.

Is it worth it to try to unwind gifts?

Although good tax attorneys, accountants and financial advisers can probably find a way to make changes, people must remember "there is a trade off," said Shannon Stevens, managing director and head office at Hightower Signature Wealth.

Unwinding or changing an irrevocable trust is doable but "expensive and very, very hard," said Rob Burnette, investment adviser representative and professional tax preparer at Outlook Financial Center.

Plus, "you can make some changes, but chances are, the trust will remain intact in some shape or form," Stevens said.

"So why do it? Creating the trusts were supposed to save money."

Are regrets even really warranted?

Families that fast-forwarded their gift giving shouldn't have regrets, advisers said.

"It wasn't wrong," Stevens said. "It's usually the right thing, but people are frustrated when plans change. And they did. Now, they look back and wonder why they did that."

Besides, "all the things they did, they probably would have ended up doing later anyway," Burnette said.

"The current labor market is neither overheating nor collapsing, but is increasingly sensitive to shocks."

Michael Feroli
J.P. Morgan chief U.S. economist

Layoffs

Continued from Page 1B

since cuts announced today won't land until up to two months after the announcement.

While these notices indicate the number of job losses, they don't provide any information on the other side of the ledger, which is how many people were hired. The net job gains or losses in April will be provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in its jobs report on May 8.

The agency's reports through March showed choppiness month over month, with a loss of 133,000 jobs in February between gains in January and March.

Warning signs

Nowadays, the layoff cycles are much shorter than before, said Bryan Creely, who founded A Life After Layoff, a career coaching company. Creely said before, a worker might expect a possible displacement once every decade, but now "it's really every 18 months to two years."

Creely said he is actively coaching about 25 people and has about 200 clients in a typical year.

While one-third of his clients seek help after being laid off, about another one-third are still employed but sense the layoff is coming.

"They're starting to notice those indicators, those warning signs, like, 'Suddenly my boss's tone has changed in my meetings, and they're saying some weird things in our town halls,'" Creely said.

For many workers, finding a fresh start has been hard. People who lost jobs recently have previously told USA TODAY how competitive the job market is and expressed worry about whether their roles would still exist in the near future. Nearly a quarter of U.S. households live paycheck to paycheck, according to a Bank of America report. A layoff might quickly turn into a financial crisis for some families.

The best advice from Creely for today's workers is to be prepared and keep an updated résumé. "In this market, we have to be more proactive and not wait for the other shoe to drop."

Why are we collecting WARN notices data despite limitations?

The WARN Act, passed in 1988, requires that employers with 100 or more full-time workers provide at least 60 days' written notice ahead of plant closures and mass layoffs. The mandatory advance notice helps workers with career transitions, where they can start a job search while still technically employed.

USA TODAY tracks WARN notices daily from 43 state labor departments and the District of Columbia. The tracker, which reflects information listed in the filings themselves, shows the latest mass layoff notices companies in the United States reported to state governments. The earliest were filed in the 1990s. Readers research the layoff notices by state, company and notice year to see where, when and why the layoffs are happening. California leads the nation in WARN layoffs, followed by Washington and Texas, which likely reflects their large worker populations or the volatile nature of key industries.

Though state requirements vary and the act doesn't cover small- or medium-sized companies, experts see the WARN filing as a near real-time economic indicator for the job market, while some other government statistics can lag by weeks or even months. Plus, other federal job-related data rarely provides the level of granularity that WARN notices do, as filings include details such as employer name, number of impacted workers, location, layoff announcement date, layoff effective date, and more.

The data, however, comes with caveats: seasonal patterns and any single large layoff announcement can distort month-to-month readings. January's spike in job cuts, for example, reflected concentrated layoffs at a handful of major companies.

"Layoffs in general have seasonality," said Sara Malik, assistant professor at the University of Utah's David Eccles School of Business.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Pelham: Utility company LineQuest has made the decision to shutter its operations at its Pelham facility, triggering over 100 layoffs.

ALASKA Fairbanks: The State Board of Education has approved the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School to open this fall, reversing the local district's earlier denial and creating new budget and logistical challenges for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, KTUU reported.

ARIZONA Flagstaff: American Airlines will fly an Airbus A319 jet on its route between Flagstaff and its home base, Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, from May to October. The new plane has almost double the capacity of the regional jet used on the route. It will mark the first time in the Flagstaff airport's history that a mainline aircraft will serve one of its routes, said Brian Gall, the airport's director.

ARKANSAS Little Rock: WalletHub ranked Arkansas second in the nation for drug abuse, KARK reported.

CALIFORNIA Stockton: The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors declared a local emergency April 28, as the invasive golden mussel continues to damage infrastructure and threaten water systems across the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

COLORADO Fort Collins: Platte River Power Authority is kicking off construction on what will be a first for the wholesale power provider for Fort Collins and three other communities: a four-hour battery storage system that should be online by the end of the year. The Weld Energy Storage project will be the utility's first utility-scale battery project, part of its efforts to go as far as it believes it can to rely on all-noncarbon energy sources.

CONNECTICUT Hartford: The General Assembly adopted a $28.1 billion state budget that orders major new investments in municipal aid and affordable childcare and restructures Connecticut's tax on hospitals to leverage more federal aid and assist the industry, The CT Mirror reported.

DELAWARE Dover: A 19-year-old man was shot at Delaware State University in the early evening of May 4, near the school's Conrad Hall cafeteria, officials in Dover have confirmed. The man, who is not a student at Delaware State, received a non-life-threatening injury, according to a statement issued by university President Tony Allen.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: Howard University and the University of the District of Columbia have both announced that Mayor Muriel Bowser will serve as their 2026 commencement keynote speaker on the morning of May 9, WUSA9 reported.

FLORIDA Deltona: Deltona High School has been selected to be part of a pilot program that provides drones equipped to disrupt a school shooter in as little as 15 seconds after the assailant begins to wield a gun. It can take three to eight minutes for a police officer to arrive in a similar situation.

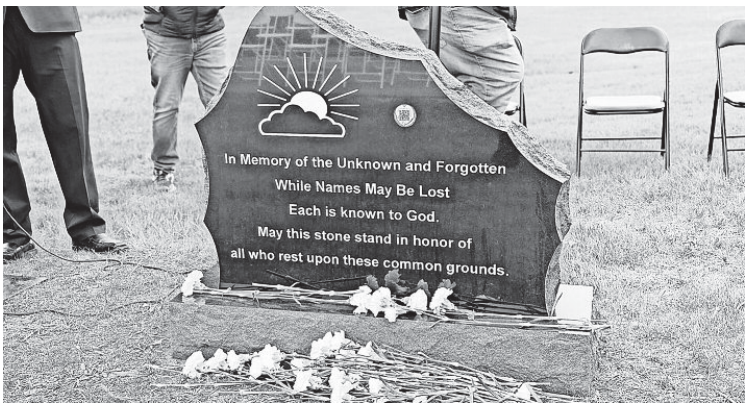
GEORGIA Atlanta: The Georgia Supreme Court disciplined a prosecutor in the state, finding her misuse of artificial intelligence tools led to fake and misleading case citations appearing in a murder case ruling. The state's high court barred Deborah Leslie, a Clayton County assistant district attorney, from appearing before the justices for six months and ordered her to complete additional legal education on ethics, brief writing and proper AI use.

HAWAII Honolulu: A newborn Hawaiian monk seal pup at Kaimana Beach has prompted officials to urge beachgoers to keep their distance as mother seal Kaiwi nurses and protects her offspring, Hawaii News Now reported.

IDAHO Moscow: A previously canceled $59 million federal grant to the University of Idaho – the largest in the school's history – has been reinstated, allowing the school and its partners to resume a five-year program helping farmers adopt climate-smart practices, Idaho Capital Sun reported.

ILLINOIS Springfield: Illinois film and television productions that meet green certification standards can now earn an extra 5% tax credit, making the state the first in the nation to offer such an incentive, according to a community announcement.

HIGHLIGHT: MICHIGAN



White carnations rest at the base of the newly dedicated memorial in Section AA at Lakeside Cemetery in Port Huron. ANDY JEFFREY/USA TODAY NETWORK

Port Huron: In temperatures more typical of late winter than early May, about 40 people gathered May 2 at Lakeside Cemetery to formally recognize a place that, for generations, went largely unnoticed. A light wind cut through the grounds, and by the end of the ceremony, snow flurries drifted down over Section AA – the cemetery's paupers' section – where hundreds are buried, many without names or markers. Still, people came. The one-hour dedication ceremony marked the official unveiling of a memorial stone and bench honoring those buried in the section, many of whom had long gone unrecognized.

INDIANA Indianapolis: Indiana is the most restrictive state in the nation when it comes to marijuana laws, and yet the cannabis market abounds, with Hoosiers spending about $1.8 billion annually on cannabis products, a new study finds.

IOWA Des Moines: Iowa has turned over its voter registration data to the federal government, including sensitive information such as partial Social Security numbers of the state's more than 2 million registered voters, according to Secretary of State Paul Pate.

KANSAS Topeka: Kansas lawmakers appear unlikely to return to Topeka before this year's elections for a special session on property taxes and gerrymandered redistricting. The call by a few for a special session comes after the Legislature failed to deliver property tax relief – a key campaign promise to voters in the last election – and after Republicans decided not to push congressional redistricting.

KENTUCKY Frankfort: Gov. Andy Beshear has rolled out a plan he believes will bring some relief to drivers in the commonwealth. Beshear said he would authorize a freeze on the state's gas tax – which currently sits at 26.4 cents per gallon – and prevent a pending rate increase to about 27 cents per gallon. He said he'd also authorize a state of emergency related to gas prices to reduce the rate by 10 cents per gallon, moves he said would save millions of dollars for residents around Kentucky.

LOUISIANA Bossier City: Officials said they reached a proposed agreement to bring in professional management for Mike Wood Pool, allowing it remain open this summer.

MAINE Augusta: Workers across Maine are now able to access paid family and medical leave in the case of illness, a new child, or to care for a loved one, Maine Morning Star reported.

MARYLAND Salisbury: Salisbury University continued its SU Centennial celebration, marking its 100th anniversary, by paying homage to a tradition popular on campus from the 1920s through the 1950s: a tree planting. University officials dedicated the new SU Centennial Tree, a bur oak, during an Arbor Day event in front of Holloway Hall.

MASSACHUSETTS Northampton: The Department of Education said it has opened an investigation into the all women's Smith College in Massachusetts for allowing transgender students to attend. Smith College has allowed transgender women to attend as students since fall 2015.

MINNESOTA St. Paul: The U.S. Justice Department filed a lawsuit to block Minnesota from moving forward with a long-running lawsuit seeking to hold Exxon Mobil and other oil industry participants responsible for harms caused by climate change.

MISSISSIPPI Jackson: The Jackson City Council is holding off on voting on Mayor John Hohrn's nominations to the Metro Jackson Water Authority Board, which could potentially take control of the city's water and wastewater systems.

MISSOURI Springfield: The Timken Belts plant in Springfield is set to close this summer, putting more than 280 workers out of jobs.

MONTANA Helena: Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen has ordered Gallatin County Attorney Audrey Cromwell to drop her three-day-old lawsuit against him and dismiss her outside legal counsel, KBZK reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: Officials said an investigation is underway after Calvert Elementary received a swatting call, KOLN reported.

NEVADA Reno: The debut of Reno's next pro soccer team will be delayed a year as the developers are planning to construct the new stadium in conjunction with an entertainment district in South Reno.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Somersworth: Mayor Matt Gerding and Superintendent John Shea are leading an initiative of "bold" and "innovative" thinking about the future of public schools in the Hilltop City and are encouraging Somersworth residents to get involved. In recent weeks, they have begun meetings of the Mayor's Commission on Reimagining and Redesigning the Somersworth School District.

NEW JERSEY Trenton: Unseasonable warmth in early spring led many of New Jersey's crops and fruit trees to bloom. But freeze events in April, after those plants blossomed, caused damage across the state, and it could result in fewer local fruits and vegetables available this year. Several farms reported losing the majority or all of their crops in the freeze.

NEW MEXICO Albuquerque: New Mexico has launched a new statewide broadband map that lets residents check internet availability, speeds, providers, and hotspot locations at more than 850,000 addresses, KOB4 reported.

NEW YORK Albany: Gov. Kathy Hochul on April 30 announced the start of a $542 million effort to expand high-speed internet to 58,617 unserved and underserved homes and businesses across New York.

NORTH CAROLINA Raleigh: A federal judge is weighing Kyrsten Sinema's request to drop the "homewrecker" lawsuit in North Carolina against her by the estranged wife of her one-time security guard and lover.

NORTH DAKOTA Dickinson: Federal agents have recovered more than $4.8 million stolen from Dickinson Public Schools, KXNET reported.

OHIO Coldwater: More than five dozen calves priced between $1,800 and $2,000 a piece were stolen from a farm in Ohio, according to the Mercer County Sheriff's Office. At some point between 10 p.m. May 2 and 6 a.m. May 3, local time, 64 calves were stolen from a farm in the village of Coldwater, roughly two hours north of Cincinnati.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: Construction continues on a 30-foot-tall arch on the Oklahoma Capitol grounds that has been 107 years in the making. Construction of the arch is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

OREGON Eugene: University of Oregon will start using its campus alert system to send out notifications when there is U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement activity on campus in May.

PENNSYLVANIA Harrisburg: Pennsylvania has sued the artificial intelligence company behind Character.AI to stop its chatbot from posing as doctors. Gov. Josh Shapiro called the lawsuit against Character Technologies the first of its kind by a U.S. governor.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: Rhode Island bars would be required to provide drink lids to prevent drugging under a new bill proposed by Sen. Pamela Lauria. Lauria's bill would apply to establishments that are licensed to serve liquor for on-site consumption.

SOUTH CAROLINA Spartanburg County: The measles outbreak centered in Spartanburg County was the largest the United States has seen since the illness was declared eliminated 25 years ago. Battling the outbreak over seven months cost South Carolina taxpayers $2.1 million.

SOUTH DAKOTA Pierre: A U.S. Supreme Court decision on bureaucratic overreach doesn't give South Dakota's lone death row inmate another chance to argue for a new trial or sentence, according to a ruling from the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, South Dakota Searchlight reported.

TENNESSEE Pigeon Forge: One of three bald eagles that escaped Dollywood during a storm in April has been returned to the park safely. The eagle, named Caesar, was recovered on May 2. Officials identified him by his orange leg band marked "SE."

TEXAS Austin: Nearly 100,000 Texas students are set to receive school vouchers to help pay for private school tuition ahead of the 2026-27 school year. Acting Comptroller Kelly Hancock announced that more than 53,000 low-income students had been awarded Texas Education Freedom Accounts through a random lottery.

UTAH Salt Lake City: Utah wildlife officials are proposing to stock about 50 white sturgeon – the continent's largest freshwater fish – into both Hobbs and Grantsville reservoirs, KSL reported.

VERMONT Burlington: State and federal health workers have started scattering small vaccine-laced bait throughout the Burlington area to protect wildlife amid rising rabies rates. Just under 1 million green, sweet-smelling, quarter-size vaccine packets will be distributed across the state, including those dropped by helicopter or plane in suburban and rural areas.

VIRGINIA Hopewell: Once on the brink of monetary disaster, Hopewell now finds itself on solid financial footing. The city announced it is caught up on its delinquent state-mandated audits and is poised to obtain highly sought-after credit ratings to pay for long-overdue projects.

WASHINGTON Longview: Divert, Inc. has opened a new facility designed to keep unsold food out of landfills by converting it into renewable energy and fertilizer, calling it the first of its kind in Washington state, KOMO News reported.

WEST VIRGINIA Morgantown: A groundbreaking ceremony was recently held by Covenant Christian School and Church on an expansion to add classroom space for its 170 students and build a new facility for its food pantry, WDTV reported.

WISCONSIN Madison: In 2025, manufacturing in Wisconsin contracted by about 8,600 jobs, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, there have not been closings of major facilities or mass layoffs. Instead, the job losses are tied to baby boom retirements and other labor force change such as workers changing jobs. But some manufacturers are having trouble filling vacancies and jobs remain available.

WYOMING Yellowstone National Park: Two hikers were injured by a bear or bears in Yellowstone National Park, the National Park Service confirmed in a statement. The two hikers sustained injuries in an attack by "one or more bears" on a trail near the Old Faithful geyser on May 4, the National Park Service said.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

‘Diversified’ portfolio more than stocks, bonds

Asset mix now comprises 11 investment classes

Daniel de Visé
USA TODAY

For armchair investors and retirement savers, “diversification” has come to mean a lot more than buying both stocks and bonds.

And a “diversified” portfolio, in the 2020s sense of the term, did really well in 2025.

Morningstar estimates that a broadly diversified asset mix, comprising 11 investment classes, gained 18.3% in 2025.

That’s a better return than investors would have reaped by investing solely in U.S. stocks, which rose by about 17% on the year.

And it’s a much better return than Morningstar tracked with the “plain vanilla” 60/40 portfolio, a mix of U.S. stocks and investment-grade bonds. That blend delivered a return of 13.3% in 2025.

In an April report titled 2026 Diversification Landscape, Morningstar looks back on a year that delivered big returns to investors who diversified beyond a traditional mix of domestic stocks and bonds, especially for those who invested in gold and international equities.

Gold prices rose by nearly 70% in 2025, Morningstar reports. Non-U.S. stocks rose by more than 30%.

Last year “was kind of a banner year for international diversification,” said Amy Arnott, a portfolio strategist at Morningstar and one of the report’s authors.

‘Diversification’ means more than stocks and bonds

The investment community has been abuzz with talk of broadening the definition of diversification in investing.

The Trump administration has pushed for retirement savers to gain access to alternative investments, including private equity, real estate, commodities and cryptocurrency.

Investment experts have urged investors to look beyond American stocks and bonds and warned against overreliance on the very largest stocks.



A traditional 60/40 portfolio includes only stocks and bonds. JEENAH MOON/REUTERS

Vanguard, for example, has predicted that value stocks, small-cap stocks and some foreign stocks will outperform the Magnificent Seven growth stocks in years to come.

Definitions of a diversified portfolio have steadily broadened over the years.

The 60/40 rule evolved from the 1950s work of economist Harry Markowitz, Investopedia reports, on the theory that investors should diversify to balance risk and returns.

Half a century ago, a 60/40 portfolio might have included only U.S. stocks and bonds. Today, even casual investors have easy access to many more categories of stocks and bonds, domestic and international, as well as several other asset classes.

11 ingredients in a diversified portfolio

For its April paper, Morningstar built a diversified portfolio with these ingredients:

- 20% larger-cap U.S. stocks, representing the biggest companies
- 10% non-U.S. stocks in developed markets
- 10% non-U.S. stocks in emerging markets
- 10% U.S. Treasury securities
- 10% U.S. investment-grade bonds
- 10% global bonds
- 10% high-yield bonds
- 5% small cap stocks, representing smaller companies
- 5% commodities
- 5% gold
- 5% real estate investment trusts

Many of those asset classes had strong years in 2025: most notably, gold.

“Basically, people are buying it because they think it’s going to keep going up,” Arnott said. “And that’s definitely what we saw in 2025.”

Non-U.S. stocks in developed markets rose 33% in 2025. Emerging-market stocks surged 30%.

Foreign stocks did well, in part, because “the dollar was very weak in 2025,” Arnott said. A weak dollar enhanced returns on international stocks.

Is the 60/40 portfolio dead?

The paper seems to vindicate investors who diversified well beyond the traditional 60/40 portfolio.

Or perhaps not. The paper also notes that, over longer spans, the 60/40 portfolio has performed admirably. In fact, it has consistently beaten the “diversified” portfolio.

Over the past three years, the 60/40 portfolio has gained an average 15.4% per year, compared with 14% for the diversified portfolio. Over five years, the 60/40 has gained 8%, compared with 7% for the diversified portfolio.

“If you zoom out, the classic 60/40 portfolio has been really hard to beat over long periods of time,” said Michelle Crumm, a certified financial planner in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Diversification “does matter,” Crumm said, “but more complexity doesn’t automatically mean that you’re going to have a better outcome.”

Are bonds making a comeback?

Many in the investing community have soured on the 60/40 portfolio – and on bonds, generally – in recent years. One reason is the events of 2022.

Bonds are supposed to provide a hedge against stocks. When stocks go down, bonds go up, or, at least, they don’t go down as much.

In 2022, the financial market seemed to turn upside down. Stocks lost 18.6% of their value that year, as measured by the S&P 500. And bonds lost 13.7% of their value, according to the Vanguard Total Bond Market Index. Inflation pushed that figure to 20%, the worst bond return in 97 years, according to a NASDAQ analysis. Bond funds took a bath in 2022 because of rising interest rates and inflation. The year “was definitely a very painful experience for a lot of people,” Arnott said.

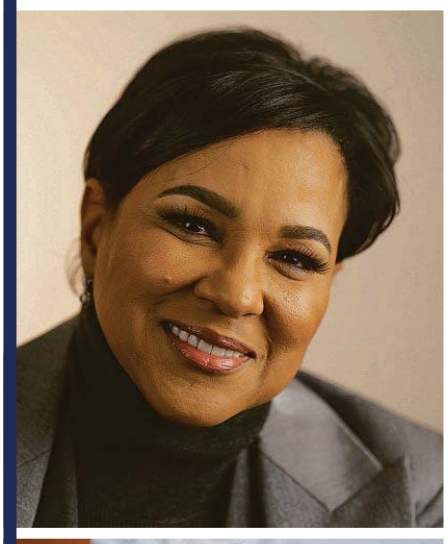
But bonds have returned to form, doing what bonds are supposed to do.

“In a week like the first week of April 2025, stocks were down about 9% but bonds were up about 1%,” Arnott said. “Overall, there were 25 weeks when stocks had negative returns in 2025, and investment-grade bonds had positive returns in 21 of those 25 weeks.”

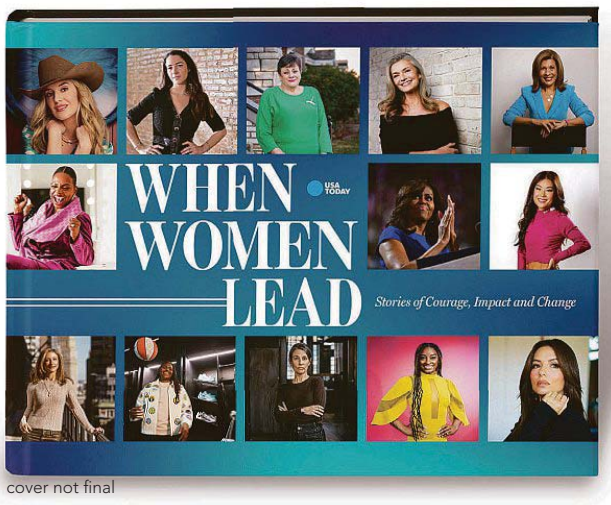
Arnott does not suggest everyday investors need to diversify into 11 different asset classes. But she also doesn’t think an all-stocks portfolio would be wise for most investors.

“In reality, the average investor would probably want to be somewhere in between,” she said. “You don’t necessarily want to own commodities, gold and REITs, but you probably do want to have some exposure to non-U.S. stocks.”

And some bonds.


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Title repeat up Aces' sleeves?

2026 season features clear contenders, bold climbers, fresh starts

Meghan L. Hall USA TODAY

When the WNBA season tips off on May 8, teams start separating themselves into competitive tiers. ● In 2025, the Las Vegas Aces finished one of the greatest title runs in league history. With a .500 record at the All-Star break, Las Vegas rattled off 16 straight wins to get to the postseason. The Aces then survived two down-to-the-wire playoff matchups with the Seattle Storm and Indiana Fever to reach the Finals, where they swept the Phoenix Mercury.

That sort of grit and determination places the Aces on a different level than many franchises and, for the 2026 season, automatically places them in the championship contender tier again. Who else has a chance to win a title this season? Which teams have more work to do?

From contenders to rebuilding, here's where each franchise lands in USA TODAY's tiers ahead of the season tip off. *(Each tier has teams listed in alphabetical order.)*:

Tier 1: Championship contenders

● **Atlanta Dream:** While Atlanta lost center Brittney Griner to free agency, it returned four of five starters, a major victory for a team pushing to surpass a franchise-best 30 wins achieved last season. The Dream also returned the leader of their bench unit, Sixth Player of the Year Naz Hillmon, and added two-time All-Star Angel Reese via trade. If Atlanta can find a combination of players who can contribute to its bench, it could make the Finals for the first time since 2013.

● **Indiana Fever:** The Fever's title hopes start and end with the health of Caitlin Clark, who played just 13 games last season because of a series of soft tissue injuries. Indiana still made it within one game of the

See WNBA, Page 7C

TOP: A'ja Wilson (22) led the Aces to their third WNBA title in four seasons in 2025. BOTTOM: The Dream rely on Naz Hillmon (00). PHOTOS BY CHRIS CODUTO/GETTY IMAGES AND TREVOR RUSZKOWSKI/IMAGN IMAGES



AFCA: CFP at 24, but year not longer

John Brice
USA TODAY

College football's largest professional organization for coaches publicly endorsed an expansion to the College Football Playoff, elimination of conference championship games and an earlier end to the season.

"Expanding the Playoff is inevitable," New Mexico coach Jason Eck told USA TODAY Sports. "Getting the season completed earlier is crucial for the future of college football."

While addressing the football calendar at its recent AFCA board of trustees meeting, the association declared its formal support for an expansion to the current 12-team CFP. The AFCA also outlined a method to conclude the Playoff by the second weekend of January.

"Future playoff models should maximize the number of participants while honoring the proposed completion date," the AFCA said in a statement posted to its website.

In a late April interview with USA

See AFCA, Page 7C



Indiana won the 2025 season College Football Playoff title game on Jan. 19. PATRICK SMITH/GETTY IMAGES



Jarrett Bell
Columnist
USA TODAY

Out of grief rises mental well-being campaign

This is grief with a purpose.

More than four years since the tragedy of losing his only son, Dwayne Haskins Sr. is so determined to add depth to the legacy of the former NFL quarterback's complicated life with compassion that he is certain will help others.

Here are some words for this: Admirable. Courageous. Spiritual.

Haskins, through the family's foundation, will host a talk-back discussion on mental health on May 16 at the Gaithersburg Arts Barn in Maryland that, following a community walk in conjunction with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), will honor his son's life and launch an awareness campaign. He is convinced that his son – a Heisman Trophy finalist in 2018 who led the NCAA with 4,831 passing yards and 50 touchdowns in his lone season as a starter at Ohio State, yet was cut less than two seasons after Washington drafted him in the first round in 2019 – suffered from unchecked mental health issues as his career and life quickly spiraled off-course.

"Bro, it's personal to me," Haskins told USA TODAY Sports, a day after commemorating Dwayne Jr.'s 29th birthday on May 3. "I've never said anything about Dwayne publicly."

See BELL, Page 7C

Rory McIlroy motivated for more majors after second Masters win

Adam Schupak
Golfweek | USA TODAY NETWORK



Rory McIlroy speaks during the green jacket ceremony after winning the 2026 Masters tournament at Augusta National Golf Club. KYLE TERADA/IMAGN IMAGES

As a past champion at the Masters, CBS Sports' Trevor Immelman had some rare access to Rory McIlroy's successful title defense of the green jacket last month – from a seat at his Champions Dinner to the green jacket presentation at Butler Cabin – and he observed a newfound comfort for the Northern Irishman at Augusta National Golf Club.

"It was the whole way that he managed the week. And it just felt like he came there with so much less uncertainty and anxiety than I'd ever seen from him before," said Immelman, the 2008 Masters champ. "He just seemed throughout the week – whether it be at the Champions Dinner or in the locker room and around the club – just seemed to be so much more light than what I've ever experienced from him before at the Masters having won the year before.

"And you could just really feel his comfort level throughout the whole week. Like he was totally comfortable and prepared for whatever was going to happen. ... even watching the green jacket presentation down in Butler Cabin. As Jim (Nantz) was interviewing him and he was there with the chairman, the atmosphere in the room felt different to me than the year before.

"I mean, the year before it was such relief that he had finally got it done. Whereas this time around he just seemed so comfortable with everything that was happening, and that was the thing that I really took out of it."

McIlroy became just the fourth player to successfully defend his title at the Masters – and the first since Tiger Woods in 2002 – earning his sixth major championship. Even McIlroy agreed that winning at Augusta National, a year after completing the career Grand Slam, felt different this time.

"I felt like winning the Grand Slam was like this, was going to be this life-changing thing, and in some ways it was, but in other ways I had to remember like, no, I still have a lot of my career left and I want to keep playing and keep competing," McIlroy said on May 6 during a news conference ahead of the Truist Championship. "This year, I think winning was validation for all the work that I've put in over the last few years to get myself back to this place where I'm winning majors."

It's funny how fast McIlroy went from seemingly being resigned to being a nearly-man at the Masters to a two-time champ, and he summed up how being part of that exclusive club that gets to wear a green jacket around the property has almost become old hat with a cute story about 5-year-old daughter Poppy.

"I think for Poppy it sort of seems normal for her now to just go into Butler Cabin at the end of the day and have a grilled cheese and talk with the chairman," he said.

McIlroy returns to work this week in Charlotte after taking three weeks off and skipping two PGA Tour signature events.

He took a trip to New York with his wife, was a guest of President Donald Trump, who recognized his Masters achievement mid-speech, at a State Dinner for King Charles III at the White House eight days ago, and gave himself a good 10 days to let this latest victory soak in before it was back to the grindstone to prep for this next stretch, which includes the PGA Championship next week.

"I'm not concerned about him taking this time off at all," Immelman said. "He quite frankly did it before the Masters and had a great week there."

It doesn't hurt that McIlroy returns at one of his favorite hunting grounds, site of his first PGA Tour victory in 2010, and the course Jordan Spieth dubbed "Rory McIlroy Country Club." McIlroy, who celebrated his 37th birthday on May 4, has won four times in all at Quail Hollow Club and is seeking to become the first since Woods at Augusta National to win at the same course five or more times.

As a small measure of his success at Quail Hollow, McIlroy has carded 20 birdies on the Green Mile, the nickname given to the challenging closing stretch consisting of Nos. 16-18, the most of any player since 2010, and five more than his closest competitor. That includes an 80-foot bomb, the longest putt made by a competitor on the 17th hole, which he dropped during the third round in 2016.

But a year ago, McIlroy showed up at Quail Hollow and laid an egg at the PGA Championship, a nonfactor who barely made the cut and finished tied for 47th. He suffered through an extended post-Masters hangover as he struggled to set new goals after reaching the top of his personal mountain. But just as that winning feeling at the Masters was different this time, so, too, is McIlroy's drive to push beyond six majors. He's even entertained the idea of doing the career Grand Slam twice (he's already half way there).

"I feel like if anything I'm more motivated after what happened at Augusta this year than I've ever been," he said.

PGA TOUR Truist Championship

Course: Quail Hollow Club (Par 71, 7,583 yards) in Charlotte.
Purse: $20 million
TV: May 7-8: 2-6 p.m. ET (Golf Channel); May 9: 1-3 p.m. (Golf Channel) and 3-6:30 p.m. (CBS); May 10: 1-3 p.m. (Golf Channel) and 3-6 p.m. (CBS).
Streaming (ESPN+): May 7-8: 7:30 a.m.-6 p.m. ET; May 9-10: 7:15 a.m.-6 p.m.
X: @TruistChamp

Keep an eye on ...

- **Xander Schauffele.** He is entering the week with five consecutive rounds on the 60s, the longest active streak on the PGA Tour this season. Schauffele is making his seventh career start at Quail Hollow Club this week, recording two runner-up finishes at the 2023 and 2024 Truist Championships.
- **Ludvig Åberg.** In his last four starts, the Swede has three top-five finishes, his best result in that span coming at his most recent start, a T-4 at the RBC Heritage.
- **Si Woo Kim.** His six top-10 finishes, including back-to-back top-fives, are the most in a season in his PGA Tour career and tied for the most of any player this season with Scottie Scheffler. Kim's 69.79% driving accuracy is on pace to be his highest percentage in a season during his career. In the last two PGA Tour seasons, Kim has 99 rounds under par, the most of any player in that span.

Myrtle Beach Classic

Course: Dunes Golf and Beach Club (Par 71, 7,347 Yards) in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.
Purse: $4 million
TV (Golf Channel): May 7-8: 10 a.m.-noon ET; May 9-10: 3-5 p.m.
X: @MyrtleBeachCl
NOTE: The field includes five-time major champion Brooks Koepka, 18-year-old Blades Brown and notable tour veterans including Billy Horschel, Matt Kuchar and Brandt Snedeker.

– Golfweek's Adam Schupak and Field Level Media

PROFESSIONAL GOLF OTHER TOUR TOURNAMENTS

LIV GOLF LEAGUE
LIV Golf Virginia

Course: Trump National DC (Par 72, 7,679 yards) in Sterling, Virginia.
Purses: Individual: $30 million (winner: $4M); Team: $10M (winners: $3M).
TV: May 7: 1-6 p.m. ET (Fox One); May 8: Noon-2 p.m. (Fox); May 9: 1-6 p.m. (Fox Business News); May 10: Noon-5 p.m. (Fox)
X: @livgolf_league
NOTES: Joaquin Niemann is the defending individual champion and Crushers GC the defending team champion. Jon Rahm is the individual season leader and Ripper GC the team season leader. ... This is the seventh of 13 events this season, with the scheduled New Orleans event in June postponed. It's the league's third event in Virginia and its second at Trump National DC, with Harold Varner winning in 2023. ... The top player who is not otherwise exempt and in the top three of the 2026 LIV Golf individual standings will earn an entry into next month's U.S. Open. Rahm and Bryson DeChambeau lead the standings and are already exempt, with 11 players still holding a mathematical chance of claiming the third spot. ... The daily shotgun start includes 13 teams and 57 total players, including five wild cards.

LPGA TOUR
Mizuho Americas Open

Course: Mountain Ridge Country Club (Par 72, 6,735 yards) in West Caldwell, New Jersey.
Purse: $3.25 million (winner: $487,500).
TV (Golf Channel): May 7-8: 10-noon ET; May 9: 5:30-7:30 p.m.; May 10: 1-3 p.m. (Golf Channel).
Streaming (GolfChannel.com): May 7-8: Noon-2 p.m. ET; May 9: 5-7:30 p.m.; May 10: 1-3 p.m.
X: @LPGA
NOTES: Jeeno Thitikul is the defending champion and Nelly Korda the Race to CME Globe points leader. ... This is the first time since the event began in 2023 that it is not being held at Liberty National Golf Club. ... Tournament host Michelle Wie West is in the field competing in an LPGA event for the first time since the 2023 U.S. Women's Open. She will also compete in this year's U.S. Women's Open.

PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS
Insperity Invitational

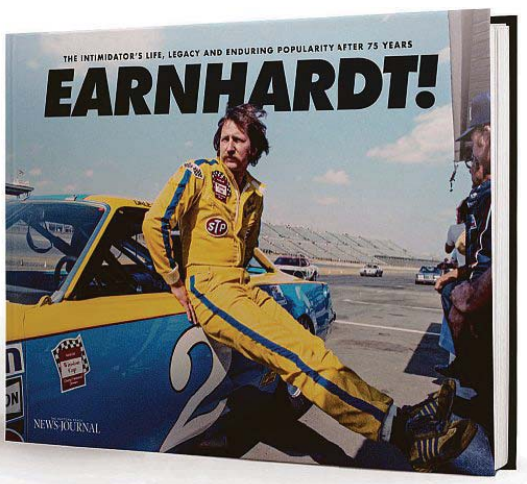
Course: The Woodlands (Texas) Country Club (Par 72, 7,002 yards).
Purse: $3 million (winner: $450,000).
TV (Golf Channel): May 8: 7-9 p.m. ET, tape delay; May 9: 8:30-10:30 p.m., tape delay); May 10: 5-7 p.m.
X: @ChampionsTour
NOTES: Stewart Cink is the defending champion and the 2026 Charles Schwab Cup leader. ... Bernhard Langer holds the tournament scoring record of 25-under 191 set in 2007. ... Cink has won four of the first eight events this season and leads the standings by more than twice as much money earned than No. 2 Zach Johnson. ... Langer is one of seven World Golf Hall of Fame members in the 78-player field.

DP WORLD TOUR
Estrella Damm Catalunya Championship

Course: Real Club de Golf El Prat (Par 72, 7,057 yards) in Barcelona.
Purse: $2.75M (winner: $458,333)
TV (Golf Channel): May 7-8: 7:30-10 a.m. ET; May 9: 7:30 a.m.-noon; May 10: 7 a.m.-noon.
X: @DPWorldTour
NOTES: Eugenio Chacarra is the defending champion and Patrick Reed the 2026 Race to Dubai leader. ... This begins the six-event European Swing, the fourth of five Global Swings on the 2026 Race to Dubai. The player with the most points at the end of each Swing earns a $200,000 bonus and entry into every event in Phase Two of the season called the Back 9.

– Field Level Media | Reuters

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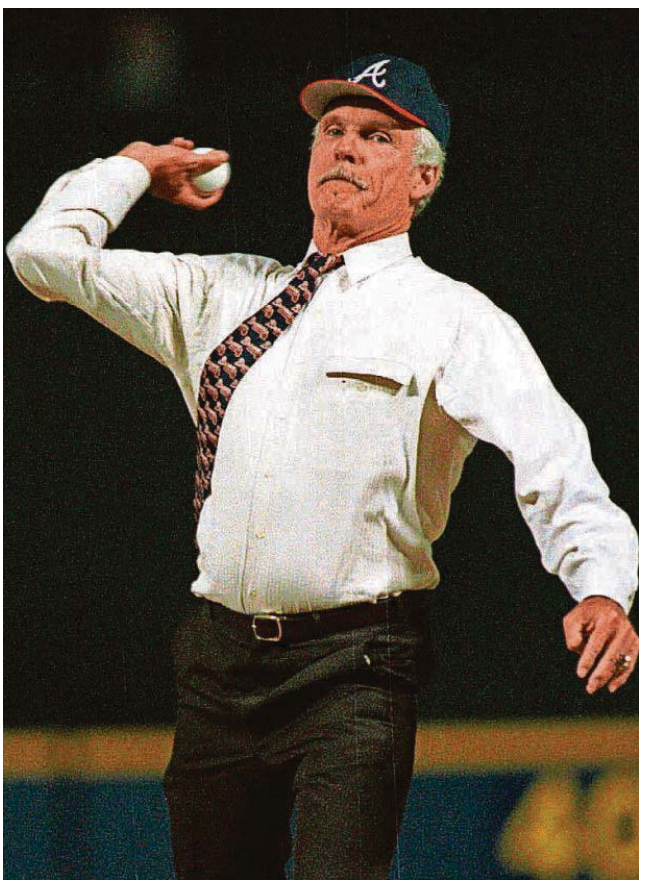


THE DAYTONA BEACH NEWS-JOURNAL

Ted Turner made his team the main character



Gabe Lacques
Columnist
USA TODAY



Ted Turner throws out the first pitch at the Braves' new stadium, Turner Field, in 1997. AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

It was once the simplest – or, as the robber barons of today say, "frictionless" – broadcast experience: Turn on TBS. Watch the Atlanta Braves.

For baseball fans in the Atlanta area, it was even more basic: Flip the dial to Channel 17. Watch baseball. Become a fan.

Or, eventually, a superfan, thanks to a superstation.

The sports and broadcast world Ted Turner left when he died May 6 at 87 was nothing like the universe he had a large part in constructing as owner of Atlanta's Braves and Hawks. In the days before his passing, scores of NBA fans were enraged that playoff games – the only ones that really count of the thousands contested a year – were snatched from their standard carriers and placed behind Jeff Bezos' Prime Video wall.

Wanna watch the Braves nowadays?

That will require a subscription to their broadcast and streaming arm, yet you may need Apple TV on occasion, and oh, perhaps Peacock, and with any luck they won't be plucked for a Netflix game and yes, old-school basic cable might be mandatory should they land on an FS1 national broadcast.

Old man yells at cloud warning: Back in my day, we never needed any of that to see Zane Smith or Rick Mahler get their teeth kicked in by the Mets or Cardinals.

As we gaze upon this atomized and extremely stratified media and entertainment landscape, it is stunning to think that the Braves – the Atlanta Braves! – became a reliable segment of the sports monoculture.

It's hard to remember in the wake of the 14 consecutive division titles that would come in the 1990s and 2000s, the lone World Series championship in that run landing in 1995, but the Braves were an awful, awful team for a long while.

Between 1975 and 1990, they had just three winning seasons and one playoff berth, losing 89 to 106 games between 1985 and 1990. In that span, Turner went from media rights holder to owner of the team.

Not that it was easy. The low point likely came in Turner's second season as owner, when he made an ill-fated attempt to manage the team while it was mired in a 16-game losing streak. Commissioner Bowie Kuhn put a kibosh on that after one day, claiming individuals with ownership stakes in the club couldn't manage it.

"They must have put that rule in yesterday," Turner, then 38, groused.

Eventually, they got it right, even if in real time, the construction job laid out by Bobby Cox and John Schuerholz, and eventually overseen from the dugout by Cox, seemed like a miracle.

Yeah, the Braves got so good you became sick of them.

That's success.

But before then, they were the epitome of baseball comfort food. Nothing on TV in the afternoon? Flip it to TBS and somehow, you'd stick around, even as Skip Caray might have said, "And so that brings on Paul Assenmacher, Atlanta trailing 11-1."

It forged a concept they now call "Braves Country," the franchise dominating what's now a booming part of the nation, from the Carolinas down into SEC territory, uncontested at least until they throw a team in Nashville or Charlotte. Yet you could be on the West Coast and know of this erratic but promising lefty named Tom Glavine. Or in the Upper Midwest, pondering whether that trade for Terry Pendleton really was having an outsize effect on the 1991 squad.

It's interesting to hear the modern fan bemoan the fact their team's game – just one game – got snatched up by Apple TV or FS1. Kids, back in the day we'd be lucky to get 50 or 60 of our team's games on TV, maybe more if your parents or your friends' parents paid big bucks for a subscription to "SportsChannel" or whatever the very premium all-sports offering was in your area.

Yet there were always the Braves. The Cubs, too, as WGN followed in the superstation model, though their games were typically over or almost over by the time a kid got home from school, thanks to the Wrigley Field factor.

But TBS was everywhere and always had an absolute banger of an afternoon lineup – shows, movies, game shows – as Turner acquired the rights to them all. A glorious library, one best shared with the people.

Less glorious?

The Atlanta Hawks, Turner's NBA entry that still has yet to reach an NBA Finals. Counterpoint: If you're going to be a television product, never a bad idea to employ a player known as the Human Highlight Film.

As baseball lurches toward a lockout, you wonder what effect Turner might have in the room. As the game stood on the verge of its nuclear winter of 1994-95, Turner gazed upon a landscape still reeling from ownership collusion a few years earlier, and about to take a massive step back by canceling the 1994 World Series.

"Gentlemen," he famously told his colleagues who enjoyed the antitrust exemption granted by Congress, "we have the only legal monopoly in the country and we are (expletive) it up."

Those same owners would follow Turner's lead, establishing regional sports networks, many of them team-owned, as baseball revenue zoomed to stratospheric levels, to the point that the San Diego Padres are now a $4 billion property.

Yet Turner was the first one in, enjoying a national imprint for a ball club he bought for $500,000 in 1976. Along the way, he changed the way we view sports, his eponymous networks still a presence in our daily diet.

The landscape is a lot more cluttered now – much of it Turner's doing, unwittingly or not. He essentially invented the 24-hour news cycle with CNN, which spawned Fox News, a 30-year spiral of disinformation that's only deepened in time.

Basic cable once was a highly affordable utility, yet became so prohibitive in cost – thanks in large part to lobbying efforts that killed any chance at an a la carte option viewers would have appreciated – that it eventually opened the door for streaming.

And now, here we are, needing an abacus to see who's broadcasting what while sports leagues sign up any desperate media entity willing to pay a billion dollars for live sports inventory.

Alas. Turner's vision might have tipped this snowball down the mountain, and no entity is powerful enough to stop it.

But for generations of fans who leaned on Maddux, Glavine and Smoltz as their Larry, Moe and Curly, his vision was perfect.

Legal issue resolved, who might sign Stefon Diggs?

Nate Davis
USA TODAY



Stefon Diggs (8) celebrates with Patriots teammates after scoring a TD against the Texans in last season's AFC divisional playoffs. WINSLOW TOWNSON/GETTY IMAGES

More than a week clear of the 2026 NFL Draft, Stefon Diggs remains one of the league's most high-profile free agents. However, with his legal issues seeming resolved – a jury in Dedham, Massachusetts, on May 5 found Diggs not guilty of strangulation and assault and battery charges stemming from allegations brought by his former live-in chef – a pathway for his ongoing employment in the league could soon materialize.

"I just think teams have been reluctant to sign him with these false charges hanging over his head," Mitchell Schuster, an attorney for Diggs, said.

"Now that he's been exonerated and his truth has been heard and his position – that this never occurred and he's been falsely accused – he's been vindicated. I believe that a team will reach out and sign him imminently.

"And they'll be lucky to get him."

That said, even with his off-field issues clearing up, Diggs, a four-time Pro Bowler 58 catches shy of 1,000 for his career, will likely face a very different market for his services. Not only will he be 33 in November, but Diggs' next team will also be his fourth in the last four seasons.

An intelligent, engaging and productive player – he had 85 receptions for 1,013 yards and four TDs in 2025 for the AFC champion New England Patriots (despite missing more than half of the 2024 campaign with a torn ACL) – Diggs has also been known to wear out his welcome.

He signed a three-year, $63.5 million deal with the Pats a year ago but was released in March by a team that immediately went out and signed Romeo Doubs, a far less accomplished receiver than Diggs, and is widely expected to trade for Philadelphia Eagles wideout A.J. Brown sometime after June 1, once Philly can more easily absorb the salary cap ramifications of such a transaction. Furthermore, most teams have already exhausted their free agent budgets, so Diggs may essentially be looking at a short-term, incentive-laden arrangement that could land him right back on the market in 2027.

Given such considerations, which teams might be the most logical destinations for his services in 2026? These six would seem to make a lot of sense.

Washington Commanders

After what seems like a one-and-done relationship with free agent Deebo Samuel, the Commanders have very little established wideout experience behind Terry McLaurin, who is coming off his worst NFL season. Diggs, who hails from nearby Gaithersburg, Maryland, and attended the University of Maryland, would diversify and elevate this passing attack for third-year QB Jayden Daniels, whether or not 49ers WR Brandon Aiyuk eventually lands here. And with nearly $50 million in available salary cap space, the Commanders could certainly afford to import Diggs better than most.

Indianapolis Colts

With more than $25 million in their cap coffers, a team that may be in win-now mode – at least as it applies to GM Chris Ballard, coach Shane Steichen and even (to some degree) QB Daniel Jones – might also consider taking a flier on Diggs. Alec Pierce may now be making No. 1 wide receiver money, but he has yet to prove he can fulfill the role on the field. And with Michael Pittman now in Pittsburgh, Diggs could be a more appealing complementary option than Josh Downs or Nick Westbrook-Ikhine.

Los Angeles Rams

They've got a similar amount of cash in their free agent slush fund as the Colts – though the sooner LA extends Puka Nacua, the less he'll cost the Rams in the long run. Yet for a team so roundly criticized for picking QB Ty Simpson in the first round of the draft, adding Diggs on a short-term contract could nicely bolster a team clearly in a Super Bowl window of opportunity while costing a lot less than, say, trading for Brown. Diggs, who typically splits time between the slot and lining up wide, could also reduce the load on fellow graybeard Davante Adams, who is a year older than Diggs and limped down the stretch with hamstring issues in 2025. The Rams also simply lack depth at the position beyond Nacua and Adams.

Houston Texans

After getting a one-way ticket out of Buffalo in 2024, Diggs played well for the Texans – before injuring his knee anyway. And given Houston's lack of consistent wideout production beyond Nico Collins in 2025, restoring Diggs to a roster that could be as good as any in the AFC makes some sense given his familiarity with QB C.J. Stroud specifically and the operation generally.

Denver Broncos

Another team squarely in the mix to emerge from the AFC as a Super Bowl 61 participant, they might have reached the promised land last season had QB Bo Nix not injured his ankle before the AFC championship game. And while the Broncos already made the high-profile acquisition of WR Jaylen Waddle in a predraft trade with Miami, neither he nor Courtland Sutton typically work out of the slot. Diggs could be a low-cost, high-ceiling upgrade for a team that might be one more move away from a long-awaited Super Sunday return.

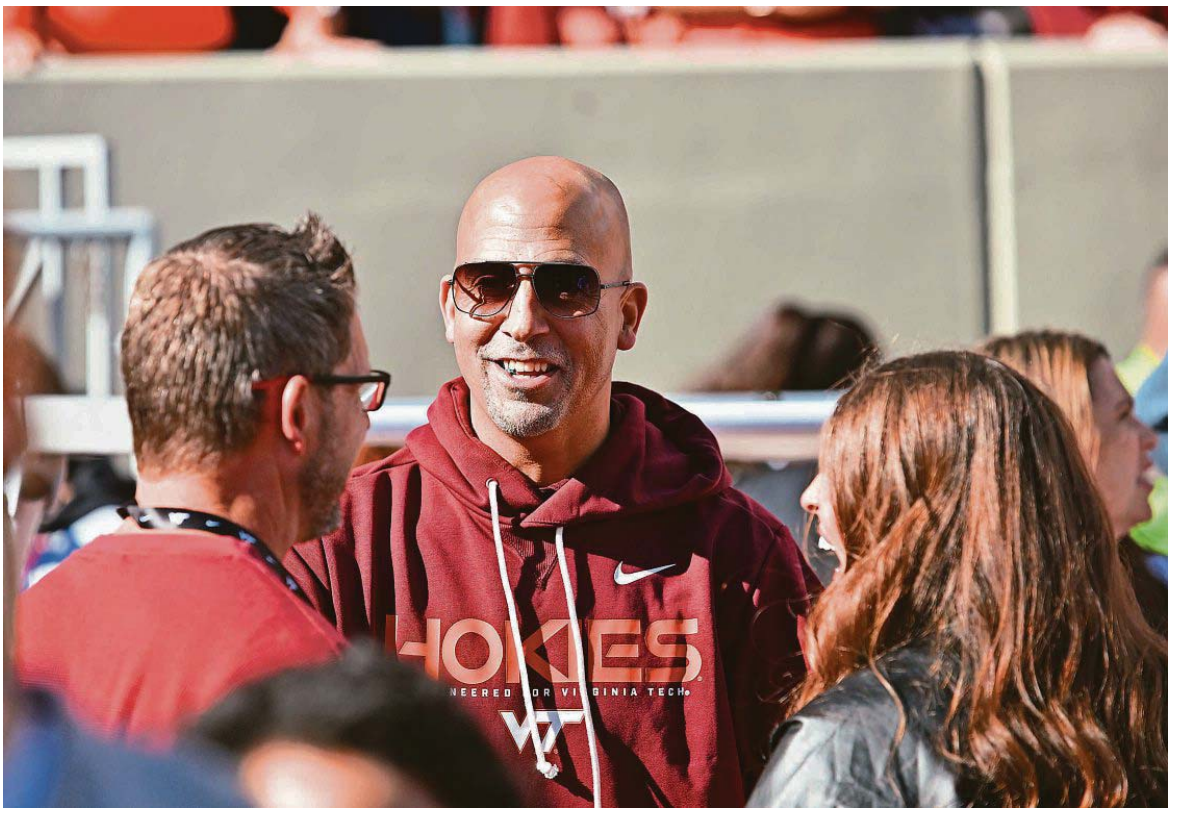
Kansas City Chiefs

Why not ... other than a tight cap situation (K.C. has about $6 million at present)? But a team that's cycled through vets like DeAndre Hopkins and Hollywood Brown in recent years could get a boost from Diggs – and at a time when QB Patrick Mahomes, who is recovering from a knee injury that prematurely ended his 2025 season, could use another reliable vet as a safety blanket as he gets his sea legs back in September.

Franklin forfeits dough to coach again



Matt Hayes
College football columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK



James Franklin speaks to Virginia Tech fans on the sideline before the school's game Nov. 22 at Lane Stadium, five days after he was named the new Hokies coach for 2026. BRIAN BISHOP/IMAGN IMAGES

Turned down a $49M vacation for Hokies job

BLACKSBURG, VA – We'll get into the money ordeal, just not the way you'd think. Not through the fascinating lens of who in their right mind walks away from $40 million?

James Franklin does, and before we examine the why and what he was thinking, we need to attack this money thing from a different angle. Not the money of losing, and getting paid tens of millions to not coach.

But the money of winning, and what it now costs to field a championship roster in the name, image and likeness-driven era of college football.

"I'll give Penn State credit, they went all in last year," Franklin told USA TODAY Sports in a wide-ranging interview. "But they went all in for one year."

That's where this money trail begins. Not with Franklin letting Penn State off the hook for $40 million by accepting the Virginia Tech job in December and allowing the mitigation clause in his $49 million buyout from Penn State to kick in.

But with Penn State, a college football blue blood for decades – a blue blood in dire straits when Franklin arrived in 2014 – not acting like one until it was forced to see the ugly truth in 2024.

You remember the 2024 season, right? Penn State lost a gut-punch of a game at home to Ohio State – yet another loss in a big game for Franklin – and lost in the Big Ten championship game to Oregon. The Lions played that season, Franklin told USA TODAY Sports, with an NIL budget of $7 million. *Seven million*.

There were Group of Five schools with larger budgets.

Ohio State, the eventual national champion, played with a budget in excess of $20 million. So did Notre Dame, the national runner-up. So did many other blue blood, Power Four conference programs chasing the biggest prize of all. Or at least a ticket to the College Football Playoff ride.

"We were still competing against schools that had been all in every year of the NIL market," Franklin said. "Schools that did whatever it took."

Like Ohio State going out and buying the best young defensive player in college football (Caleb Downs), the best running back in the SEC (Quinshon Judkins), the best high school player (Jeremiah Smith) and a Power Four conference championship-winning quarterback (Will Howard) heading into 2024. Or Notre Dame throwing big money at quarterback Riley Leonard and wide receiver Beaux Collins.

You remember 2024, right? Franklin and his staff convinced players to play for less at Penn State, and the Lions reached the CFP and beat SMU and Boise State – and were a game away from playing in a national title game rematch against Ohio State.

Wait, not a game away. A play away.

One lousy play in a 27-24 loss to Notre Dame in the national semifinal, an interception from quarterback Drew Allar at Penn State's 28 to set up the Irish game-winning field goal. The score was tied at 24, there were 38 seconds remaining in regulation, the Lions got 13 from running back Nick Singleton on first down, and there were 33 seconds to play, and it's the CFP, and it's now or never, and it's time to end this thing. Forget overtime.

And then it happened.

"Can't even begin to explain the disappointment," Allar said.

Franklin, sitting right next to Allar in the postgame aftermath, did what he always does. Protect players, shoulder the blame, and then declared, "There's going to be a ton of guys coming back next year that are going to be hungry and are going to be motivated for more."

Which brings us all the way back to the $7 million.

Penn State finally realized after a punch to the gut to end 2024 it had to spend to win. So after not completing a pass to a wide receiver in the national semifinal (that's not a misprint), Penn State went out and spent millions in the transfer portal on wide receivers Trebor Pena, Devonte Ross and Kyron Hudson. The school also spent a truckload to keep critical pieces from the 2024 roster from heading to the NFL – or to other college programs.

A year after Ohio State went all in, Penn State did, too. The first time in the NIL era both teams were on the same financial level.

Then Allar threw another galling interception in Week 4 – this time at home in overtime against Oregon, ending the most anticipated regular-season game in decades – and the 2025 season was gutted for all to see, like a prized buck in the rich hunting grounds of Central Pennsylvania.

Right there in Happy Valley, where Penn State's all-in hand busted despite a full house.

A week after that, the Lions lost by five at UCLA, and then lost by one at home to Northwestern. And that was it. Franklin's career at Penn State – which before the 2025 season included 34 wins over the previous three seasons, six double-digit win seasons in 10 non-COVID years, and a 4-21 record vs. the Top 10 – was over.

One play in January, and three losses before the calendar escaped October. And the whole damn thing was blown up.

Suddenly, firing a coach just six games removed from leading your program within a whiff of playing for it all came quickly into focus. The panic move from school President Neeli Bendapudi and athletic director Pat Kraft fell in line with the rest of reactionary NIL world.

It's not personal, it's just now or never.

"Football is our backbone," Kraft said. "We have invested at the highest level. With that comes high expectations."

It's here where we reintroduce the concept of what numbskull would willingly walk away from $40 million? The same guy who had his heart ripped out with a six-game prove-it season.

The same guy who 12 years earlier followed Bill O'Brien's gem of a job breathing life into Penn State after the horrific Jerry Sandusky scandal cost the program its soul, and then won the Big Ten in his third year. The same guy who couldn't beat Ohio State enough (who has?), and couldn't get out of the East Division while battling the Buckeyes and Michigan year after year. The same guy who, for some reason, had a woefully substandard NIL budget every season but one at Penn State.

Then got fired six games into the first time Penn State went all in.

So yeah, now it's time for the answer, time for Franklin to explain what in the world he was thinking when he walked away from $40 million – and gave Penn State a financial lifeboat in the process? By agreeing to coach at Virginia Tech, Franklin's buyout from Penn State was mitigated from $49 million to $9 million. So the Lions, pinching NIL pennies until 2025, saved 40-large after firing the second-winningest coach in school history.

"You go through that deal, and you're thinking, I don't want to let them off the hook financially. That's something you're struggling with," Franklin said. "But it wasn't about me penalizing Penn State. At that point, it was about what do I need to do for my family and for myself to be happy and move on?"

He taps his index fingers on his desk inside the Merryman Athletic Center, a few Michael Vick deep balls from Lane Stadium. The house Frank Beamer built, where all of those hard-working, overachieving Hokies of the past carried that beat-up lunch pail winning season after winning season. And the explanation is just beginning.

"It's unusual to stay at a place now for 12 years." Franklin said. "You pour your heart and soul into something. There were 12-15 times where I could've left for another job, but I was committed to that place, and I was committed to those people."

He trails off again because he's been avoiding this answer for months, mainly because he doesn't want to make excuses for a Penn State run he's intensely proud of, and he really doesn't want to rehash it. What's done is done.

Do you really want to know why a man walks away from a $49 million vacation?

"This place, Virginia Tech," Franklin continues. "This place *wanted us*. You know what that feels like? They *wanted us*. That's powerful. Money can't replace that."

Getting the band back together

We're not done with the money theme just yet. It's time to add a few actors to the Shakespearean drama.

When Franklin finally made the decision he wanted to coach again, he wanted to do everything he could to replicate what he built at Penn State. In other words, the structural pieces in place to build and grow and win.

The first person he reached out to was Brent Pry, his longtime defensive coordinator at Vanderbilt and Penn State. The one assistant who knew Franklin better than any other, who knew the program and the process and exactly how to piece it all together.

And the man who had just been fired as head coach of Virginia Tech.

"How about that for a plot twist?" Pry says.

Virginia Tech fired Pry after a 0-3 start to begin 2025 and zeroed in on Franklin not long after he was fired by Penn State. But that's massively underselling it.

Hokies athletic director Whit Babcock met Franklin at the Atlanta airport, and had an entire plan in place for how the university would strengthen its financial commitment to football, and how the long, cold winter of Virginia Tech football – the golden years of Beamer Ball ended in 2011, four years before he retired in 2015 – were over. Babcock's plan, Franklin says, had every answer for every question.

"I don't think we ever talked about my contract," Franklin said. "They had a number they were comfortable with, and I don't think we ever talked about it again. It was all just about, what do we need to do to put Virginia Tech back on the map?"

But before that reality unfolded, Franklin and Pry talked at length about coaching together again if Franklin found the right job. Once Babcock full-court pressed Franklin with the right job, the 800-pound you've-got-to-be-kidding-me had to be addressed.

Franklin wanted the guy Babcock just fired – the coach he just agreed to pay $6 million to not coach in Blacksburg after a 16-24 record over three seasons and three games – as his defensive coordinator.

More than any other piece of the band Franklin was stitching back together – including former Penn State assistants Ty Howle (offensive coordinator), Danny O'Brien (quarterbacks), Sean Spencer (defensive line), Chuck Losey (strength coach), Andy Frank (general manager), Kevin Threlkel (chief of staff) – Pry was critical.

It wasn't just Babcock who had to be convinced of the strange move, Pry had to buy it, too – and agree to let Tech off the hook for a majority of the $6 million because of his mitigation clause.

Somehow, the financial dysfunction all fit perfectly together.

"I do think there's an aspect of talking about it, and then the reality of actually doing it and what walking back in this building is going to be like for Brent," Franklin said. "You know, the humility that you have to have to do that, and to walk past this office. It takes a special guy who has a lot of love for this place."

Pry, maybe the most unassuming coach in a fraternity of peacocks, made the deal and moved a couple of offices down from Franklin – and from his old office.

"Now looking back, I should've demanded access to the head coach's bathroom," Pry deadpanned.

Franklin's rationale, his pitch to Babcock, was simple: If Pry is good enough to be hired by an SEC school as defensive coordinator, he's good enough to do the same job at Virginia Tech.

"I think once everybody took the emotion out of it and stepped back, it was like, yeah, this could make a lot of sense," Franklin said.

The parallel world

When Franklin left Vanderbilt after the 2013 season to accept the Penn State job, five high school recruits who were committed to the Commodores followed him to Happy Valley. One was quarterback Trace McSorley, who would become one of the greatest players in school history, and the most valuable player of the 2016 Big Ten championship game.

By the time national signing day had come and gone last December, 11 high school recruits had flipped from Penn State to Virginia Tech, and not long after the transfer portal opened a month later, 12 Penn State players transferred to the Hokies – including rising sophomore quarterback Ethan Grunkemeyer.

The very player Franklin will structure this buil-dout – which looks a whole lot like the beginning of the Penn State build-out in 2014 – around.

"What I came here for," Grunkemeyer said. "To help (Franklin) turn this around."

That first Penn State recruiting class was the most important in Franklin's 12 seasons. Not just for how it set the foundation for the first Big Ten championship since 2008, but how it proved the staff could develop players and place them in the NFL – the No. 1 priority for players prior to the advent of NIL and free player movement.

Ten of 25 players from the NCAA sanction-saddled 2014 recurring class played in the NFL, despite 18 of the 25 not ranked nationally by the 247Sports composite. It should come as no surprise then that the 11 Penn State recruits flipped to Virginia Tech when Franklin accepted the job.

Or that 12 more players on the Penn State roster – including Grunkemeyer, starters TE Luke Reynolds and LB Keon

Continued on next page

NBA CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS

Thunder overpower Lakers; Pistons pop Cavs

Lorenzo Reyes
USA TODAY

The back half of the NBA playoff conference semifinals tipped off with another pair of series openers.

In the first game May 5, the No. 1 Pistons built an early lead against the No. 4 Cavaliers, extending it to as many as 18 points, but Detroit needed to fend off a Cleveland rally in the fourth to defend home court, 111-101.

In the nightcap, the No. 1 Thunder continued their quest to repeat with a defensive masterclass at home against the No. 4 Lakers 108-90.

The winners and losers from the games May 5:



Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander drives to the rim in front of the Lakers' Luke Kennard during Game 1 of their series May 5. JOSHUA GATELEY/GETTY IMAGES

Winners

Jared McCain, Cason Wallace and the Thunder bench deliver: Oklahoma City's bench is one of its several strengths, and the group was ready in Game 1. The Thunder bench outscored LA's by a 34-15 margin, which put intense pressure on the Lakers when their starters sat.

Jared McCain led the way with 12 points, but Isaiah Joe chipped in nine and Alex Caruso and Cason Wallce added five points apiece. It's not just offense, however, where this group makes its mark. Wallace and Caruso are excellent defenders, and Wallace – as he has most of the season – was a menace; he swiped three steals and also recorded one block.

So on a night when the Lakers threw bodies at Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the role players delivered.

Detroit gets to the line: How does a team shoot a worse percentage than its opponent, have only one more field goal, yet win by 10? Get to the free-throw line.

The plan for the Pistons early in the game was clear: attack the paint and put Cavs defenders in compromising positions. The Pistons went to the line 35 times and converted 27 of those for a solid 77.1% from the stripe.

And for all the free throws the Pistons shot, the Cavaliers were on the opposite end, going 15 of 16 (93.8%). That means that, in a 10-point game, Detroit's advantage from the line created a plus-12 edge.

"I want to separate this from the game," Donovan Mitchell told reporters after the loss. "The free-throw disparity is not why we lost tonight – I want to make sure I say that, but I don't know, I'm trying to get downhill.

"A friend of mine (Jaylen Brown) got fined for talking about flopping, so I'm not going to try to double down, but, like, I feel like that's what I've got to do at this point. I'm trying to get downhill, get to the bucket and sometimes people are in my way and I'm trying to fight through contact and I'm not getting these calls."

Pistons turn turnovers into points: The other reason Detroit launched massive runs was because it turned defense into offense. Detroit's perimeter players smothered Cleveland's guards, jumping passing lanes and forcing tough passes in pick-and-roll actions. That flustered the Cavs and led to easy Pistons points in transition.

The Pistons forced 19 turnovers (compared to only 11 committed), which led to a 31-16 edge in points off turnovers.

Not surprisingly, Detroit also sprinted to a 15-6 advantage in fast-break points.

The Pistons find balance: They'll still want more offense out of Jalen Duren (11 points on 4 of 11 shooting), but the Pistons didn't need to rely entirely on Cade Cunningham. And, for Detroit, that's a recipe for success.

Tobias Harris (20 points) continued his hot start to the playoffs, Duncan Robinson (19) drained 5 3-pointers and Daniss Jenkins (12) provided a spark off the bench.

Losers

Austin Reaves: Essentially, with Dončić out, the Lakers need to play as close to perfect hoops as possible to have a chance against the defending champs. Austin Reaves is playing in just his third game since returning from an oblique injury, so some initial struggles are to be expected. Los Angeles, however, cannot afford that.

Reaves was harassed by Oklahoma City's perimeter defense and he shot just 3 of 16 from the field, finishing with only eight points.

One issue Reaves may face in this series is the size and length of the Thunder defenders. Whether it was Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Cason Wallace, Luguentz Dort, Alex Caruso – all excellent defenders in their own right – their physicality made it tough for Reaves all night long.

Cavaliers' James Harden and Donovan Mitchell: Simply put: There's no way the Cavaliers will have a chance in this series if their top two scorers struggle through three quarters the way they did May 5. Mitchell showed some promise in the first half, scoring 14 points on 6 of 11 shooting. Yet he scored only three in the third quarter.

The night for Harden was even worse. After averaging 23.6 points per game in the regular season, Harden had committed more turnovers (five) through three quarters than he had made field goals (two).

The pair did pick it up in the fourth to combine for 19 points, but playing from behind is a tough task against Detroit.

Jarrett Allen's early fouls cost Cavs: He was, arguably, the biggest reason why Cleveland topped the Toronto Raptors in Game 7 in the first round. Allen was a force May 3, scoring 22 points and hauling in 19 rebounds, eight of which were offensive.

In Game 1 of the semifinals it was a different story. The Pistons went right at Allen in the first quarter, drawing three early fouls on him in the first 5:58 of the game. That took him out of the game completely, and he finished the night with just two points and three rebounds in 18:22 on the floor.

Jarred Vanderbilt injury worsens Lakers' tough luck: It's bad enough that Luka Dončić (left hamstring strain) remains out and may miss the entire Eastern semifinals against the Thunder, but things got worse for Los Angeles.

Backup forward Jarred Vanderbilt suffered a right hand injury when his fingers swiped against the left side of the backboard as he attempted to block a shot. The NBC broadcast reported the injury was "gruesome" and indicated that Lakers trainers had to put a towel over it to conceal the injury. The Lakers ruled him out for the rest of the game.

Continued from previous page

Wylie, and 2026 projected starters S Kenny Woseley Jr. and DE Mylachi Williams – followed Franklin to Virginia Tech.

Grunkemeyer, like all quarterbacks, is the key. He got his chance when Allar sustained a season-ending injury and completed nearly 70% of his passes for 1,339 yards and eight touchdowns. So if you're going to dream at Virginia Tech, dream big.

It's not so much Grunkemeyer's numbers in his first season as a starter, as it is what happened in early November against eventual national champion Indiana. A moment where Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza's remarkable, last-minute, game-winning touchdown pass in Happy Valley kept the Hoosier's unbeaten season alive.

Grunkemeyer outplayed Mendoza that day, then won his last four starts of the season – including a bowl win over Clemson. Grunkemeyer didn't throw an interception over the final four games of the season.

But what would've been the biggest upset of the season was simply another side note to the untethering of the program in an all-in season. From everything that could go right prior to the beginning of the season, to everything that could go wrong once the heavy lifting began in late September.

"The upgrade in NIL needed to be done, considering how NIL was being used before (2025)," Grunkemeyer said. "But then that comes with expectations, and as players, we have to do our part. Players should be getting paid, and the one thing (Franklin) does a really good job of is you wouldn't know who is getting paid by the standard he sets and the culture we have."

Not long ago, Franklin and his wife, Fumi, vacationed in The Bahamas to decompress from yet another grind of a football season. As he was walking through the lobby at the resort, Franklin ran into Amani Oruwariye, an overlooked cornerback recruit from his first recruiting class at Penn State.

It was Vanderbilt, Boston College and Cincinnati showing interest in Oruwariye more than a decade ago, and that's about it. So when Franklin left Vanderbilt for Penn State, he took Oruwariye – an unranked national recruit in the 247Sports composite, and 33rd best at his position – to Happy Valley and turned him into an All-Big Ten player.

Oruwariye has played six seasons in the NFL and is currently a backup for the Baltimore Ravens. He's the story Franklin has sold to every player on the Virginia Tech roster. To the high school recruits who decommitted from Penn State and signed with Virginia Tech, to the Penn State players who followed Franklin to Blacksburg, to critical Hokies players who were kept in the fold from Babcock's commitment to financial support.

You want to play football and get to the NFL? We want you here, and we'll get you there. There's a track record.

Besides, everybody loves to be wanted. And paid.

"It's kind of an interesting parallel," Franklin says. "The business model has changed, and you better be bold and aggressive under the new model. You better embrace it, and you better go after it. You can't sit and hope for the best."

Even when you have $49 million reasons to do just that.

Matt Hayes is the senior national college football writer for USA TODAY Sports Network. Follow him on X: @MattHayesCFB

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NOTICES — PUBLIC NOTICE

Request for Proposal (RFP)

E&I Cooperative Services, Inc. invites the submission of sealed proposals for:

RFP#EI00417-2026 for Architectural Design Firms
Proposals are due by 1:00 PM ET on Monday, June 1st, 2026

Respondents must submit their RFP response using E&I's Electronic Sourcing Solution which is accessible via https://www.eandi.org/contract-finder/rfp-development/. E&I does not accept hard copy submissions or submissions through any other medium other than its Electronic Sourcing Solution.

E&I is committed to developing mutually advantageous business relationships with minority, women, disabled, veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.

The City of Tucson, AZ is accepting proposals from qualified firms to provide Temporary Employment and Staffing Services (RFP 260222). To be considered, Offerors must submit a proposal to the City of Tucson in accordance with the solicitation documentation available at: https://procurement.opengov.com/portal/tucson-az/projects/256194.

PROPOSAL DUE DATE: 5/22/2026 prior to 2:00 p.m. MST

The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS) has posted procurement solicitations at www.tips-usa.com for the following categories:

260501 Agricultural and Animal Equipment, Supplies, and Services
260502 Electrical and Plumbing Supplies and Equipment
260503 Paint and Coating Supplies, Equipment, and Equipment Repairs
260504 MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Operations of Facilities and Grounds) Supplies, Equipment, Tool Rental, Sales and Services

The proposal is due and will be opened on **June 19th, 2026, at 3:00 pm local time.**
Call 866-839-8477 for problems with website or questions.

NOTICES — PUBLIC NOTICE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Sourcewell, a State of Minnesota local government unit and service cooperative, is requesting proposals for Trailers with Related Equipment and Services to result in a procurement solution for use by its Participating Entities.

Sourcewell Participating Entities include thousands of governmental, higher education, K-12 education, nonprofit, tribal government, and other public agencies located in the United States and Canada.

Sourcewell encourages the use of Small, Minority-owned, Women's Business Enterprise, Veteran-owned Business Enterprise (S/M/WBE/VBE) suppliers both as prime and subcontractors and encourages the participation of these suppliers in the solicitation process.

A full copy of the Request for Proposals can be found on the Sourcewell Procurement Portal https://proportal.sourcewell-mn.gov.

Only proposals submitted through the Sourcewell Procurement Portal will be considered.

Proposals are due no later than June 25, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. Central Time, and late proposals will not be considered.

NOTICES — PUBLIC NOTICE

The Region 4 Education Service Center (ESC), Houston, TX is requesting proposals from qualified and experienced firms to provide:

- **Sport Surfaces, Installation and Related Materials (RFP No. 26-16)**

PROPOSAL DUE DATE:
JUNE 23, 2026, BEFORE 02:00 PM LOCAL TIME.

In order to be considered, the Offeror must complete and submit a proposal to Region 4 ESC in accordance with the solicitation documentation available at https://region4esc.ionwave.net or at https://esc4.net.

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Playoffs
CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS
(Best-of-7 series; x- if necessary)
EASTERN CONFERENCE
New York Knicks 1, Philadelphia 76ers 0
May 4: New York 137, Philadelphia 98
May 6: Philadelphia vs. New York
May 8: New York vs. Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
May 10: New York vs. Philadelphia, 3:30 p.m.
x-May 12: Philadelphia vs. New York, TBD
x-May 14: New York vs. Philadelphia, TBD
x-May 17: Philadelphia vs. New York, TBD
Detroit Pistons 1, Cleveland Cavaliers 0
May 5: Detroit 111, Cleveland 101
May 7: Cleveland vs. Detroit, 7 p.m.
May 9: Detroit vs. Cleveland, 3 p.m.
May 11: Detroit vs. Cleveland, 8 p.m.
x-May 13: Cleveland vs. Detroit, TBD
x-May 15: Detroit vs. Cleveland, TBD
x-May 17: Cleveland vs. Detroit, TBD
WESTERN CONFERENCE
Minnesota Timberwolves 1, San Antonio Spurs 0
May 4: Minnesota 104, San Antonio 102
May 6: Minnesota vs. San Antonio
May 8: San Antonio vs. Minnesota, 9:30 p.m.
May 10: San Antonio vs. Minnesota, 7:30 p.m.
x-May 12: Minnesota vs. San Antonio, TBD
x-May 15: San Antonio vs. Minnesota, TBD
x-May 17: Minnesota vs. San Antonio, TBD
Oklahoma City Thunder 1, L.A. Lakers 0
May 5: Oklahoma City 108, LA 90
May 7: LA vs. Oklahoma City, 9:30 p.m.
May 9: Oklahoma City vs. LA, 8:30 p.m.
May 11: Oklahoma City vs. LA, 10:30 p.m.
x-May 13: LA vs. Oklahoma City, TBD
x-May 16: Oklahoma City vs. LA, TBD
x-May 18: LA vs. Oklahoma City, TBD

FOOTBALL

UFL

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
DC Defenders	5	1	0	.833	196	105
St. Louis Battlehawks	4	2	0	.667	128	119
Orlando Storm	4	2	0	.667	121	97
Dallas Renegades	3	3	0	.500	140	154
Columbus Aviators	2	4	0	.333	130	143
Louisville Kings	2	4	0	.333	123	126
Houston Gamblers	2	4	0	.333	102	162
Birmingham Stallions	2	4	0	.333	113	147

Friday's Game
Columbus at St. Louis, 8 p.m.
Saturday's Games
Louisville at DC, 1:30 p.m.
Dallas at Birmingham, 8 p.m.
Sunday's Game
Orlando at Houston, 6 p.m.

NHL

Stanley Cup Playoff
SECOND ROUND
(Best-of-7 series; x- if necessary)
EASTERN CONFERENCE
Carolina Hurricanes 2, Philadelphia Flyers 0
May 2: Carolina 3, Philadelphia 0
May 4: Carolina 3, Philadelphia 2 (OT)
May 7: Carolina vs. Philadelphia, 8 p.m.
May 9: Carolina vs. Philadelphia, 6 p.m.
x-May 11: Philadelphia vs. Carolina, TBD
x-May 13: Carolina vs. Philadelphia, TBD
x-May 16: Philadelphia vs. Carolina, TBD
Montreal Canadiens vs. Buffalo Sabres
May 6: Montreal vs. Buffalo
May 8: Montreal vs. Buffalo, 7 p.m.
May 10: Buffalo vs. Montreal, 7 p.m.
May 12: Buffalo vs. Montreal, TBD
x-May 14: Montreal vs. Buffalo, TBD
x-May 16: Buffalo vs. Montreal, TBD
x-May 17: Montreal vs. Buffalo, TBD
WESTERN CONFERENCE
Colorado Avalanche 2, Minnesota Wild 0
May 3: Colorado 9, Minnesota 6
May 5: Colorado 5, Minnesota 2
May 9: Colorado vs. Minnesota, 9 p.m.
May 11: Colorado vs. Minnesota, TBD
x-May 13: Minnesota vs. Colorado, TBD
x-May 15: Colorado vs. Minnesota, TBD
x-May 17: Minnesota vs. Colorado, TBD
Vegas Golden Knights 1, Anaheim Ducks 0
May 4: Vegas 3, Anaheim 1
May 6: Anaheim vs. Vegas
May 8: Vegas vs. Anaheim, 9:30 p.m.
May 10: Vegas vs. Anaheim, 9:30 p.m.
x-May 12: Anaheim vs. Vegas, TBD
x-May 14: Vegas vs. Anaheim, TBD
x-May 16: Anaheim vs. Vegas, TBD

PWHL

Playoffs
Tuesday's Score
Minnesota at Montreal, Minnesota leads series, 1-0
Thursday's Game
Montreal at Minnesota, 7 p.m.
Friday's Game
Boston at Ottawa, 7 p.m., Series tied, 1-1

SOCCER

English Premier League

	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Arsenal	35	23	7	5	67	26	76
Man City	34	21	8	5	69	32	71
Man United	35	18	10	7	63	48	64
Liverpool	35	17	7	11	59	47	58
Aston Villa	35	17	7	11	48	44	58
Bournemouth	35	12	16	7	55	52	52
Brentford	35	14	9	12	52	46	51
Brighton	35	13	11	11	49	42	50
Everton	35	13	9	13	44	44	50
Chelsea	35	13	9	13	54	48	48
Fulham	35	14	6	15	44	49	48
Sunderland	35	12	11	12	37	46	47
Newcastle	35	13	6	16	49	51	45
Leeds United	35	10	13	12	47	52	43
Crystal Palace	34	11	10	13	36	42	43
Nott'm Forest	35	11	9	15	44	46	42
Tottenham	35	9	10	16	45	54	37
West Ham	35	9	9	17	42	61	36
Burnley	35	4	8	23	35	71	20
Wolverhampton	35	3	9	23	25	63	18

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.
Saturday's Games
Chelsea at Liverpool, 7:30 a.m.
AFC Bournemouth at Fulham, 10 a.m.
Wolverhampton at Brighton, 10 a.m.
Manchester United at Sunderland, 10 a.m.
Brentford at Manchester City, 12:30 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Everton at Crystal Palace, 9 a.m.
Aston Villa at Burnley, 9 a.m.
Newcastle at Nottingham Forest, 9 a.m.
Arsenal at West Ham United, 11:30 a.m.

MLS
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	7	1	2	23	21	6
New England	6	3	1	19	18	12
Inter Miami CF	5	2	4	19	22	19
Chicago	5	3	2	17	19	11
D.C. United	4	4	3	15	13	15
Cincinnati	4	4	3	15	22	25
Charlotte FC	4	5	2	14	18	19
Toronto FC	3	3	5	14	18	20
NY City FC	3	5	3	12	19	18
Columbus	3	5	3	12	16	16
NY Red Bulls	3	5	3	12	16	27
Atlanta	3	7	1	10	12	18
Orlando City	3	7	1	10	16	32
CF Montreal	3	7	0	9	14	23
Philadelphia	1	7	3	6	9	17

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Jose	9	1	1	28	26	7
Vancouver	8	1	1	25	26	6
Los Angeles FC	6	2	3	21	19	8
Seattle	6	1	2	20	13	5
Minnesota	6	3	2	20	14	16
Real Salt Lake	6	3	1	19	19	14
FC Dallas	4	3	4	16	20	15
Houston	5	5	0	15	13	18
Colorado	4	6	1	13	22	19
LA Galaxy	3	4	4	13	16	17
Austin FC	3	4	4	13	16	19
San Diego FC	3	5	3	12	19	19
Portland	3	6	1	10	13	21
Saint Louis	1	6	3	6	9	18
Sporting KC	1	7	2	5	8	26

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.
Saturday's Games
Inter Miami CF at Toronto FC, 1 p.m.
NY Red Bulls at Chicago, 2:30 p.m.
Orlando City at CF Montreal, 4:30 p.m.
Cincinnati at Charlotte FC, 7:30 p.m.
LA Galaxy at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.
Philadelphia at New England, 7:30 p.m.
Real Salt Lake at FC Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
D.C. United at Nashville, 9 p.m.
Saint Louis at Colorado, 9:30 p.m.
Sporting KC at Portland, 10:30 p.m.
San Diego FC at Seattle, 10:30 p.m.
Vancouver at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.



Sports Weekly

On newsstands: We take a look at NFL veterans who are on thin ice after the draft as some of the established players are at risk of a job loss – and that may include a few in Cleveland this year.

In MLB, the San Francisco Giants were aiming to try something different in hiring Tony Vitello as the first manager to transition from college baseball directly to the major leagues. Yet this was not what they had in mind. Plus, we remember longtime New York Yankees radio announcer John Sterling. We recap the history-making Kentucky Derby with a look at the winning female trainer and winning jockey. As usual, we have MLB stats and power rankings and MLB, NHL and NBA box scores. You can order the edition at onlinestore.usatoday.com and subscribe to the magazine by going to mysportsweekly.com or by calling 800-872-1415.

NWSL

	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Portland	6	1	1	19	14	6
Washington	4	1	3	15	14	6
San Diego	5	3	0	15	11	8
Gotham	4	2	2	14	8	4
Utah	4	2	1	13	10	6
Seattle	3	2	2	11	7	7
Houston	3	2	1	10	9	6
Angel City	3	3	0	9	11	7
North Carolina	2	2	3	9	9	10
Bay	3	3	0	9	7	10
Kansas City	3	4	0	9	7	14
Orlando	2	3	2	8	11	11
Denver Summit	1	3	3	6	8	9
Chicago	2	6	0	6	4	15
Louisville	1	5	1	4	10	14
Boston Legacy	1	5	1	4	6	13

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.
Wednesday's Game
Houston at Utah
Friday's Games
Portland at Louisville, 6:30 p.m.
North Carolina at Orlando, 8 p.m.

Champions League
SEMIFINALS
Tuesday's Score
Arsenal 1, Atlético Madrid 0; Arsenal advances 2-1 on aggregate.
Wednesday's Game
Bayern Munich vs. Paris Saint-Germain

COLLEGE LACROSSE

NCAA men's schedule
Opening Round
Wednesday's Games
Marist vs. Stony Brook
Jacksonville vs. Robert Morris
Saturday's Games
No. 3 North Carolina (12-4) vs. UAlbany (11-5), Noon
No. 8 Penn St (9-5) vs. Army (13-3), 2:30 p.m.
No. 7 Cornell (11-4) vs. John's Hopkins (9-5), 5
No. 4 Richmond (14-1) vs. Duke (9-4), 7:30
Sunday's Games
No. 2 Notre Dame (10-2) vs. Jacksonville/Robert Morris, Noon
No. 1 Princeton (13-2) vs. Marist/Stony Brook, 2:30 p.m.
No. 6 Syracuse (11-6) vs. Yale (9-5), 5 p.m.
No. 5 Virginia (10-6) vs. Georgetown (10-4), 7:30 p.m.

NCAA women's schedule
Friday's Games
No. 1 vs. No. 8 bracket
Bye: No. 1 Northwestern (15-3)
James Madison (13-6) vs Notre Dame (12-5), 4
Jacksonville (13-5) vs. No. 8 Colorado (14-3), 6
Florida (15-3) vs. Denver (15-3), 9 p.m.
No. 5 vs. No. 4 bracket
No. 5 Stony Brook (17-2) vs. Stonehill (13-6), 1
No. 4 Johns Hopkins (14-4) vs. UAlbany (12-5), 2 p.m.
Boston College (9-7) vs. Yale (13-4), 4 p.m.
Army (14-4) vs. Fairfield (15-3), 6 p.m.
No. 3 vs. No. 6 bracket
Bye: No. 3 Maryland (16-3)
Princeton (11-6) vs. Rutgers (10-8), 2 p.m.
No. 6 Navy (18-1) vs. Massachusetts (16-2), 3
Syracuse (13-5) vs. Loyola Maryland (12-7), 7
No. 2 vs. No. 7 bracket
Bye: No. 2 North Carolina (16-1)
No. 7 Michigan (12-6) vs. Mercer (13-6), 3 p.m.
Clemson (14-5) vs. Davidson (15-4), 5 p.m.
Stanford (15-4) vs. Penn State (12-6), 6 p.m.

MLB

Tuesday's Scores
Boston 10, Detroit 3
Tampa Bay 4, Toronto 3
Baltimore 9, Miami 7
Philadelphia 9, Athletics 1
Minnesota 11, Washington 3
N.Y. Yankees 7, Texas 4
Kansas City 5, Cleveland 3
Chicago Cubs 3, Cincinnati 2, 10 innings
Houston 2, L.A. Dodgers 1
L.A. Angels 4, Chi. White Sox 3
Arizona 9, Pittsburgh 0
Atlanta 3, Seattle 2
San Diego 10, San Francisco 5
Milwaukee at St. Louis, PPD Rain
N.Y. Mets at Colorado, PPD Snow
Wednesday's Games
Toronto at Tampa Bay
Milwaukee at St. Louis
L.A. Dodgers at Houston
San Diego at San Francisco
Chi. White Sox at L.A. Angels
Atlanta at Seattle
Boston at Detroit
Baltimore at Miami
Athletics at Philadelphia
Minnesota at Washington
Texas at N.Y. Yankees
Cleveland at Kansas City
Cincinnati at Chicago Cubs
N.Y. Mets at Colorado
Pittsburgh at Arizona
Thursday's Games
Texas at N.Y. Yankees, 12:35 p.m.
Minnesota at Washington, 1:05 p.m.
Cleveland at Kansas City, 2:10 p.m.
Cincinnati at Chicago Cubs, 2:20 p.m.
N.Y. Mets at Colorado, 3:10 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Arizona, 3:40 p.m.
Baltimore at Miami, 6:40 p.m.
Athletics at Philadelphia, 6:40 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
St. Louis at San Diego, 10:10 p.m.

NHL DRAFT LOTTERY WINNERS, LOSERS

Leafs GM's fortunes dramatically change

Mike Brehm USA TODAY

The Toronto Maple Leafs had a contentious introduction for general manager John Chayka, with one reporter questioning the due diligence that went into the decision.

Chayka now had a gift fall into his lap a day later as the team tries to get back to the playoffs quickly after the end of its nine-year run.

The Maple Leafs won the draft lottery and the right to pick No. 1 overall for the first time since selecting Auston Matthews in 2016. The San Jose Sharks won the second drawing and will choose second.

The winners and losers of the lottery May 5:

Winners

Toronto Maple Leafs: The Maple Leafs can choose between Gavin McKenna or Ivar Stenberg in June. Both have the talent to make a quick impact on the franchise and help with the scoring. And adding someone of that caliber to the team could help sway Auston Matthews' decision when he's eligible for a contract extension on July 1, 2027.

San Jose Sharks: The Sharks showed massive improvement in 2024 No. 1 pick Macklin Celebrini's second season. They finished four points out of a playoff spot and now will add Stenberg or McKenna to a young team that already has Celebrini, Will Smith and Michael Misa.

Draft lottery show presentation: Last year's show was dull and reminded people why it's done offstage. But there were different touches this year. Having New York Islanders No. 1 pick Matthew Schaefer and Matt Martin's kids explain how the lottery works was cute. They also didn't show each ball being loaded into the chute, as they did last year. They cut to commercial and showed it as an inset. Overall, the production values were better.

Losers

Vancouver Canucks: The Canucks never have chosen No. 1 overall and they won't again. Not only that, the NHL's worst team in 2025-26 dropped to third place. They'll get a very good prospect but not as good as McKenna or Stenberg.

Chicago Blackhawks: The Blachawks, the league's second-worst team, could have had Stenberg or McKenna to play alongside Connor Bedard and Anton Frondell. But they drop to the fourth pick.

Boston Bruins: The Bruins acquired the Leafs' 2026 No. 1 pick in the Brandon Carlo trade. The pick was top-five protected, so Boston won't get it in what is considered a deep draft. Instead, the first-round pick transfers to a future year and is unprotected.

WEATHER

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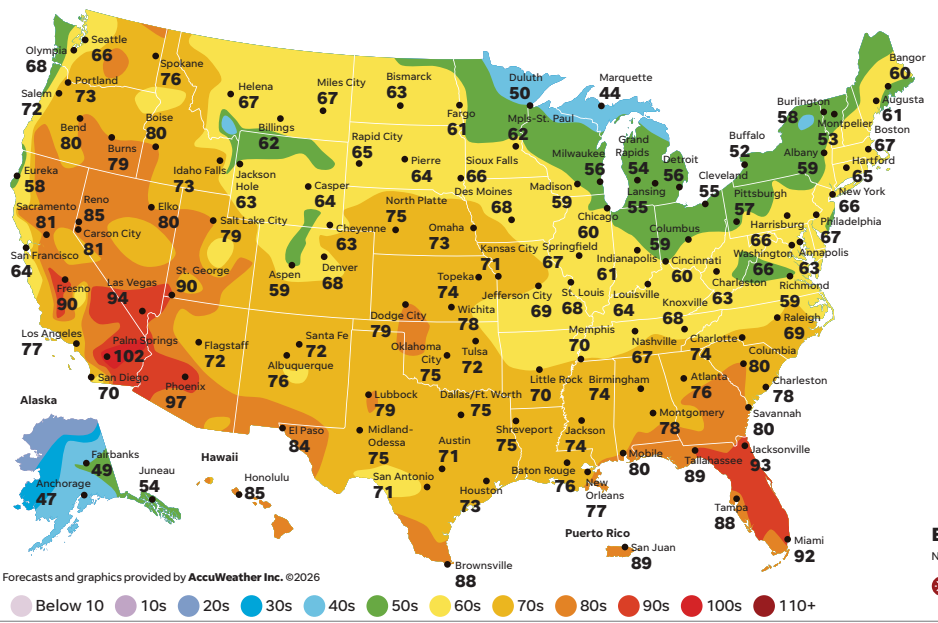
TODAY'S FORECAST

A storm moving offshore today will spread thunderstorms from southern **Virginia** to **Louisiana** early. Some thunderstorms may be severe and capable of bringing damaging wind gusts, hail and even a tornado. Showers will extend through much of the **mid-Atlantic**.

Late in the day, spotty showers will dot the **Great Lakes**. A few drenching thunderstorms will occur in central **Texas**. Outside of showers in **Montana** and **Wyoming**, the rest of the nation will be dry.

Cooler air will shift from the **Mississippi Valley** into the **East Coast** as warmer air surges into the **West Coast**, the **Rockies** and the **Plains**. Sunshine will be abundant from **California** to **Kansas**, with a partly cloudy sky elsewhere. Warmth will linger in the **Florida** Peninsula.

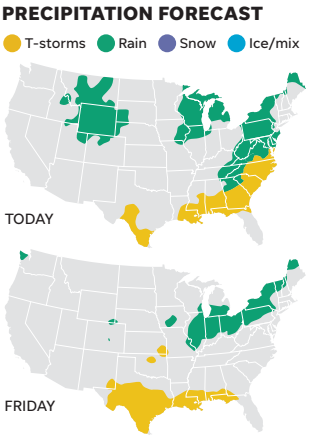
TODAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



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PRECIPITATION FORECAST



EXTREMES

Note: For contiguous 48 states through Tuesday

HOTTEST: 101° Zapata, Texas
COLDEST: 15° Bryce Canyon, Utah

TOP TRAVEL CITIES

Air quality index **(AQI)**

	THU	FRI	SAT	AQI
ATLANTA	Showers 76/55	Partly sunny 74/60	Mostly cloudy 77/64	Good
BALTIMORE	Shower 68/47	Partly sunny 67/54	Showers around 68/51	Good
BOSTON	Breezy 67/46	Breezy 63/46	Showers around 58/51	Good
CHARLOTTE	T-storms 74/51	Partly sunny 72/56	Partly sunny 78/61	Good
CHICAGO	A P.M. shower 60/44	A few showers 63/48	Warmer 75/48	Moderate
DALLAS/FT. WORTH	Pleasant 75/61	Partly sunny 80/65	Stray t-storm 83/69	Moderate
DENVER	Breezy 68/42	Partly sunny 71/51	Windy 75/42	Moderate
DETROIT	Breezy 56/42	Shower 64/47	Breezy 68/51	Good
HONOLULU	Partly sunny 85/71	Partly sunny 86/72	Showers around 85/71	Good
HOUSTON	Not as warm 73/66	T-storms 74/69	T-storms 80/68	Moderate
LAS VEGAS	Sunny, warm 94/72	Very hot 100/74	Very hot 100/73	Moderate
LOS ANGELES	Mostly sunny 77/58	Mostly sunny 78/60	Some sun 79/58	Moderate
MIAMI	Partly sunny 92/74	Partly sunny 93/76	Stray t-storm 90/78	Good
MPLS-ST. PAUL	Partly sunny 62/43	Breezy 69/49	Mostly cloudy 68/42	Good
NEW ORLEANS	T-storm 77/71	T-storms 77/73	T-storms 78/73	Good
NEW YORK	Mostly cloudy 66/49	Partly sunny 62/52	Showers around 61/51	Moderate
ORLANDO	Very hot 97/71	Stray t-shower 92/73	Very warm 92/71	Moderate
PHILADELPHIA	Shower 67/50	Sun, clouds 67/54	Showers around 64/53	Good
PHOENIX	Mostly sunny 97/71	Sunny, hot 101/75	Hot 105/77	Moderate
SALT LAKE CITY	Pleasant 79/56	Partly sunny 78/54	Mostly sunny 76/54	Good
SAN DIEGO	Partly sunny 70/61	Partly sunny 71/62	Some sun 73/62	Moderate
SAN FRANCISCO	Clearing 64/53	Breezy 65/53	Mostly sunny 68/53	Good
SEATTLE	Turning sunny 66/49	Partly sunny 62/51	Warmer 71/49	Moderate
WASHINGTON	Shower 66/49	Partly sunny 70/55	Showers around 72/53	Good

c Cloudy f Fog i Ice r Rain sf Snowflurries sn Snow w Windy dr Drizzle h Haze pc Partly cloudy s Sunny sh Showers t Thunderstorms

U.S. CITIES

	TODAY	FRI
Akron, Ohio	55/40c	58/49pc
Albany, N.Y.	59/40c	59/41pc
Albuquerque	76/49s	82/55s
Allentown, Pa.	64/41c	61/45pc
Amarillo, Texas	79/52s	84/54s
Anaheim, Calif.	78/60s	81/59pc
Anchorage, Alaska	47/38c	47/37c
Aspen, Colo.	59/35pc	65/36c
Atlantic City, N.J.	61/50c	64/56pc
Augusta, Ga.	81/56t	73/60pc
Austin, Texas	71/63c	77/67t
Bakersfield, Calif.	90/62s	90/61s
Baton Rouge, La.	76/66t	76/67t
Billings, Mont.	62/46t	73/50c
Birmingham, Ala.	74/54c	75/59pc
Bismarck, N.D.	63/36pc	74/44s
Boise, Idaho	80/51pc	78/50c
Buffalo, N.Y.	52/40pc	52/44sh
Burlington, Vt.	58/40c	57/42c
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	63/40pc	67/44pc
Charleston, S.C.	78/61t	76/66pc
Charleston, W.Va.	63/39c	69/49pc
Cheyenne, Wyo.	63/41t	65/48sh
Cincinnati	60/43pc	68/52c
Cleveland	55/44pc	61/51c
Colorado Springs	66/45pc	72/44pc
Columbia, S.C.	80/59t	76/58pc
Columbus, Ohio	59/44pc	63/53c
Corpus Christi, Texas	74/70t	84/73t
Dayton, Ohio	58/46pc	65/52c
Daytona Beach, Fla.	96/72pc	85/72c
Des Moines, Iowa	68/44sh	71/49r
Duluth, Minn.	50/32c	61/40pc
Durham, N.C.	69/47t	72/53h
El Paso, Texas	84/61s	88/63s
Fairbanks, Alaska	49/33c	52/36c
Flagstaff, Ariz.	72/38s	78/43s
Fargo, N.D.	61/37pc	71/44pc
Fort Myers, Fla.	91/71s	93/73pc
Fort Smith, Ark.	73/50s	82/60s
Fort Wayne, Ind.	57/47pc	61/47sh
Fresno, Calif.	90/60s	90/58s
Grand Rapids, Mich.	54/38pc	58/42pc
Green Bay, Wis.	55/35pc	65/44pc
Greensboro, N.C.	66/46t	70/51pc
Greenville, S.C.	77/49sh	70/51pc
Harrisburg, Pa.	66/45c	65/50c
Hartford, Conn.	65/42c	61/43pc
Indianapolis	61/46pc	66/50sh
Islip, N.Y.	63/47c	61/50pc
Jackson, Miss.	74/60c	70/64c
Jacksonville, Fla.	93/69t	82/69c
Jefferson City, Mo.	69/50pc	73/49t
Kansas City	71/52s	69/49pc
Key West, Fla.	88/79s	89/80s
Knoxville, Tenn.	68/46c	71/52s
Laredo, Texas	76/69t	85/72t
Lexington, Ky.	63/43c	72/55pc
Lincoln, Neb.	75/50s	79/47pc
Little Rock, Ark.	70/52c	82/60s
Long Beach, Calif.	75/61s	75/61pc
Louisville, Ky.	64/48pc	72/57c
Lubbock, Texas	79/53s	90/60s
Madison, Wis.	59/35pc	63/45pc
Manchester, N.H.	65/42c	59/41w
Memphis, Tenn.	70/53c	77/60s
Milwaukee	56/42pc	61/48sh
Mobile, Ala.	80/64t	73/67t
Modesto, Calif.	85/54s	85/54s
Montgomery, Ala.	78/58t	71/62pc
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	75/57t	70/65pc
Nags Head, N.C.	69/53t	61/56pc
Nashville, Tenn.	67/44c	77/56s
Newark, N.J.	67/50c	67/54pc
New Haven, Conn.	64/46c	63/49pc
Norfolk, Va.	66/53t	70/55pc
Oakland, Calif.	66/53pc	67/54pc
Oklahoma City	75/51s	85/57s
Omaha, Neb.	73/47pc	76/49pc
Palm Springs, Calif.	102/74s	104/74s
Pensacola, Fla.	81/66t	74/70t
Pierre, S.D.	64/40pc	71/49pc
Pittsburgh	57/39c	59/49sh
Portland, Maine	62/40c	59/40pc
Portland, Ore.	73/53pc	70/53c
Providence, R.I.	65/43c	62/42pc
Raleigh, N.C.	69/48t	72/55pc
Rapid City, S.D.	65/44t	71/51pc
Reno, Nev.	85/50s	83/53pc
Richmond, Va.	59/46sh	70/52s
Rochester, N.Y.	52/38pc	55/43sh
Sacramento, Calif.	81/51s	82/53s
San Antonio	71/64c	79/66t
San Jose, Calif.	74/53pc	75/53pc
Santa Fe, N.M.	72/40s	80/44pc
Sarasota, Fla.	86/74s	87/74pc
Savannah, Ga.	80/62t	75/65pc
Scottsdale, Ariz.	95/67s	99/70s
Shreveport, La.	75/61c	75/66pc
Sioux Falls, S.D.	66/42s	73/47pc
South Bend, Ind.	58/42pc	63/47sh
Spokane, Wash.	76/52pc	73/46c
Springfield, Mo.	66/48s	74/52t
Springfield, Ill.	67/49pc	67/47sh
St. Louis	68/53pc	73/52sh
St. Petersburg, Fla.	89/72pc	87/72pc
Syracuse, N.Y.	54/39c	56/42sh
Tallahassee, Fla.	89/68t	82/66t
Tampa, Fla.	88/75pc	90/74c
Toledo, Ohio	56/43pc	64/48sh
Topeka, Kan.	74/54s	74/48pc
Tucson, Ariz.	87/62s	94/64s
Tupelo, Miss.	70/50c	76/58s
Tulsa, Okla.	72/54s	83/56t
Virginia Beach, Va.	66/54t	66/58pc
Wichita, Kan.	78/52s	79/52s
Wilmington, Del.	67/47c	67/53pc
Winston-Salem, N.C.	67/46t	71/52pc
Worcester, Mass.	60/40c	58/42w

WORLD CITIES

	TODAY	FRI
Beijing	76/49h	82/54h
Buenos Aires	68/48c	55/46r
Cancun, Mexico	92/78pc	91/78sh
Dubai, UAE	106/83s	101/82s
Frankfurt	61/43r	69/48pc
Hong Kong	85/77c	83/73t
Istanbul	71/58s	75/61h
Jerusalem	72/51s	77/57s
Johannesburg	57/37pc	61/38s
London	63/47pc	67/50pc
Mexico City	84/59c	82/59sh
Montreal	55/40c	56/42sh
Moscow	80/52t	57/43r
Mumbai, India	94/81s	96/82s
Paris	64/46pc	70/52s
Rio de Janeiro	84/73pc	87/74pc
Rome	71/58c	70/54sh
Seoul	67/49sh	72/45s
Singapore	89/79t	88/79t
Sydney	65/47w	69/52w
Toronto	52/38pc	57/44sh
Tokyo	78/65pc	78/63w

Bell

Continued from Page 1C

The floor is yours, Sir.

"We knew our son had some mental health challenges," said Haskins, whose family includes his wife, Tamara, and daughter Tamia. "As a family, we recognize that it's very hard for us to communicate that when a professional athlete is pursuing his dream, that he has mental health issues. There's a stigma with that.

"We started to recognize warning signs, that we knew something wasn't right with Dwayne. Now we've become an advocate to get people aware of that. There's mental health that manifests over a period of time, then all of a sudden something will trauma a person, where they won't be able to have effective decision-making. And it continually gets triggered and triggered."

It's a striking coincidence that Haskins is launching this campaign – he hopes to develop a comprehensive program and take it nationwide next year – at a time when the NFL is ramping up mental health support programs in the aftermath of tragedies in recent months where two active players, Marshawn Kneeland of the Dallas Cowboys and Rondale Moore of the Minnesota Vikings, died by suicide.

"I do think there is still a stigma, but I think the stigma is more around help-seeking behaviors as opposed to mental health in general," Dr. Nyaka NiiLampti, NFL vice president of wellness and clinical services, told USA TODAY Sports.

"The stigma is: Is it a sign of weakness to ask for help?"

At the last NFL owners meeting in late March, the league announced the expansion of its mental health services to mandate that all 32 teams must employ a full-time mental health clinician who operates at each team's headquarters. Previously, the league required teams to have a part-time clinician. Additionally, the NFL is now partnering with Cigna to form a network of specialists for players – and their families – to tap into beyond the team specialists.



Ohio State quarterback Dwayne Haskins Jr. walks off the field after beating Penn State in 2018. KYLE ROBERTSON/THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

"You would be surprised at how receptive players are at using these resources," said NiiLampti, who worked in a similar capacity for the NFL Players Association (NFLPA) before joining the NFL. "I've had players who say, 'Listen, we've got an athletic trainer, right? I've got a strength and conditioning coach. Why would I not have somebody who's going to work with me in terms of what's going on in my head?' "

NiiLampti hopes that by expanding the NFL program, challenges in getting support and resources immediately will be addressed. Undoubtedly, when crisis strikes, timing is critical.

"They don't have the time. I need to work with somebody now!" NiiLampti said. "We need to find a way to get them in, strike while the iron's hot."

Haskins was unaware that the NFL recently announced its added emphasis on mental health support programs yet applauds the effort. As he reflects on his son's journey, he suspects a barrier existed with an inability to acknowledge his challenges from a mental health perspective.

"I think that's what the problem was. He wasn't strong enough to say, 'Hey, I need help,' " Haskins said. "But we knew something was wrong. That's why the celebration (on May 16) is a platform for people to know about the warning signs."

Put yourself in the father's shoes. There is no playbook for losing a son or daughter. The grieving, Haskins realizes, will continue for the rest of his life. He pointed out that he and Tamara are still grieving the losses of their young mothers in 1988 yet have been forced to cope with losing their son in a different context. There was never a chance to say goodbye before Dwayne Jr. was struck by a dump truck while crossing a highway in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in the early morning of April 9, 2022.

And the circumstances surrounding the death – according to the toxicology report, Dwayne Jr. was legally drunk with ketamine and other drugs in his system, fueling allegations of foul play – left many unanswered questions. Dwayne Jr., who played his third and final NFL season as backup with the Pittsburgh Steelers in 2021, was in Florida for several weeks of offseason training.

While Haskins didn't address the controversies, including a dismissed lawsuit pertaining to image rights against Dwayne Jr.'s widow, Kalabrya, it seems clear that in processing the tragedy the focus on mental health is an anchor – in addition to his Christian faith.

At the upcoming event, they will use an acronym "NINO" to hammer home a theme of heeding warning signs. He's hoping it will ultimately be widely recognized as a distress signal.

"NINO – 'No, I'm not OK' – is going to be a code word for people who don't understand or don't know how to articulate their emotions," Haskins said. "We believe that if we can get this acronym in place, we'll be able to save more lives, or get people the attention or assistance from mental health organizations like NAMI to provide solutions."

Talk about addressing a stigma. Here is a suggestion, NFL: Enlist Haskins to visit teams to address their players by sharing his journey. Just imagine the real talk in those sessions.

Especially now, as so many NFL coaches and executives maintain that after the tragedies in recent months, they are more sensitive to mental health challenges. The awareness has resonated to the point that some say it was an increasing factor in evaluating prospects heading into the recent draft.

"This generation has a lot of stress, a lot of anxiety, maybe handle it a lot differently than our generation," Les Snead, the Los Angeles Rams GM, told USA TODAY Sports, alluding to societal patterns. "But I do know this, too: If you think about what they've gone through, this group's been getting driven.

"You're a professional athlete, you're a company. You make a bad play, and the next thing you know, you're a meme. I know there are other variables, but being a general manager and a father, you definitely understand what this generation's reality is."

Haskins knows. What happens on the field and on social media only scratches the surface. One of his key messages for the upcoming event addresses what he calls, "the perseverance of the dream," which encompasses myriad potential pitfalls.

If he sounds like a man with a spiritual calling, he will not disagree.

Haskins says matter-of-factly that his campaign is inspired by this message from God: "For you guys to cope, you need to share this."

He can also imagine a message from his son.

"Dwayne is looking down at us right now," Haskins said. "And it's, 'I'm proud of you mom and dad. You're bringing awareness on my behalf.' "

Which is quite the noble purpose.

If you or someone you know needs mental health resources and support, please call, text or chat with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline or visit 988lifeline.org for 24/7 access to free and confidential services.

Contact Bell at jbell@usatoday.com or follow on X: @JarrettBell

AFCA

Continued from Page 1C

TODAY Sports, first-year Kentucky coach Will Stein adamantly supported a move to a 24-team Playoff format. "For us, nine-game (SEC) league, hell yeah," he said. "If I'm a Kentucky Wildcat fan and we get to 24, that's what we want. That means eight people from this league are getting in. If you get a chance in a knockout round, I'm taking it all day. Get a home-field game here in Kroger Field? Are you kidding me? Love it."

First-year Memphis coach Charles Huff, reached May 5, also voiced unequivocal support for a CFP expansion. "Tell me how many teams you want in and spot the ball," said Huff, two years removed from a Sun Belt Conference title at Marshall and having guided his teams to five bowls in five seasons as a Football Bowl Subdivision head coach. "There's pros and cons to both, not sure there is a perfect number."

But support wasn't universal.

Second-year Central Michigan coach Matt Drinkall, who previously coached four NAIA playoff games and served for six seasons as an assistant coach in Jeff Monken's Army program, pushed back against the support of an expansion format that would entirely eliminate all conference championship games.

"The reality is, there are paramount issues the NCAA needs to prioritize before they can meaningfully address postseason play in football," said Drinkall, who guided CMU to a seven-win season and bowl berth as a first-time FBS head coach in 2025. "Until those issues are addressed, the football paradigm will continue to constantly change. With so much uncertainty, you just try to coach your best, play your best and fight like hell to win 'em all."

How would the AFCA's endorsed model potentially work? The coaches' association wants to "reduce bye weeks from two to one; preserve a dedicated window for the annual Army-Navy game; have no more than six days between" CFP contests.

"Structuring the season in this way will better support student-athletes by more closely matching the academic calendar and aligning with the single transfer portal window."

WNBA

Continued from Page 1C

WNBA Finals but ran out of steam as injuries took their toll with the season on the line. Clark is healthy now and, with help from Kelsey Mitchell and Aliyah Boston, Indiana is poised to make a deep run again and potentially win the franchise's second title.

● **Las Vegas Aces:** After winning three championships in four years, the Aces want to rewrite history this season. "Hunger is still prevalent with this group, just because we're chasing something that hasn't been done before. I don't think anybody's ever went back-to-back twice (on) two different occasions," Aces point guard Chelsea Gray said. Vegas likely has the best chance of any team to win another title after bringing back eight players from its 2025 championship roster and adding pieces like guard Chennedy Carter.

● **New York Liberty:** The Liberty didn't look like themselves last season largely because of injuries. New York was bounced from the first round of the playoffs, a shocking development for the 2024 champions. The Liberty's core – Sabrina Ionescu, Jonquel Jones and Breanna Stewart – are back, and they've added three-time WNBA All-Star Satou Sabally to the lineup. Sabally instantly elevates New York's profile on both ends of the floor, making New York an early candidate to win another title.



From left, Chelsea Gray, Jackie Young and A'Ja Wilson are back for the Aces after starring in their three titles in four seasons. STEPHEN R. SYLVANIE/IMAGN IMAGES

Tier 2: Playoff locks

● **Golden State Valkyries:** In 2025 the Valkyries became the first expansion franchise in WNBA history to make the playoffs, and with newcomer Gabby Williams in the fold, Golden State could make the postseason again. Williams is a lightning rod on both sides of the floor and could be a nightmare to defend beside stars Veronica Burton and Kayla Thornton. Furthermore, should Golden State deploy a similar version of its top-five ranked defense from last season, it will be in a position to surpass its 23 wins and potentially secure a top playoff seed.

● **Los Angeles Sparks:** The Sparks have so much experience and veteran leadership, it's hard not to pencil them in for a playoff run. Kelsey Plum, Dearica Hamby, Ariel Atkins and Nneka Ogwumike have collectively won five titles, and that goes a long way for a team looking to win more. The Sparks feel like a team that could play spoiler when the postseason arrives. The key for LA will be getting the most out of its bench, led by former No. 2 overall pick Cameron Brink and veteran guard Erica Wheeler.

● **Minnesota Lynx:** The Lynx won't see Napheesa Collier before June, leaving it up in the air how successful the team might be in the first half of the season. Minnesota also lost starters Bridget Carleton and Alanna Smith plus bench pieces Natisha Hiedeman and Jessica Shepard in free agency. The Lynx still have Kayla McBride and Courtney Williams and newcomer Natasha Howard to help keep them afloat, but the team's ceiling beyond making the playoffs is unknown.

● **Phoenix Mercury:** The Phoenix Mercury made it to the WNBA Finals last season behind the strength of their core – Kahleah Copper, Satou Sabally and Alyssa Thomas – and a productive bench. After one season, Sabally moved on to New York, leaving Phoenix to replace her production by committee. Phoenix will likely make the playoffs, but without Sabally, another WNBA Finals run is a tall task.

Tier 3: Playoff hopefuls

● **Chicago Sky:** For the third consecutive season, the Sky's roster doesn't look similar to the one in the year prior, making it hard to establish consistency. Still, Chicago has plenty of experienced players who can help it be competitive, including newcomers Skylar Diggins, Rickea Jackson and DiJonai Carrington, plus Courtney Vandersloot and Azurá Stevens, who were on the 2021 championship team.

● **Dallas Wings:** With a first-year WNBA head coach and multiple new faces in Dallas, the Wings hope to return to the playoffs for the first time since 2023. Dallas' ceiling is extremely high on paper, backed by its guard trio, which includes No. 1 draft pick Azzi Fudd, and an upgraded front court, featuring co-Defensive Player of the Year Alanna Smith.

Tier 4: Building or rebuilding

● **Connecticut Sun:** It's hard to gauge just how good the Sun will be with a move to Houston next season on the horizon and only four players on the roster with more than five years of experience. With veteran center Brittney Griner serving as a mentor, the Sun will learn and have fun even if reaching the playoffs is out of reach.

● **Portland Fire:** The Fire are chasing the Valkyries' expansion team standards set last year: 20 wins and a playoff spot. That's a gigantic goal for a new franchise, but players like Bridget Carleton (26 playoff games) and WNBA champion Megan Gustafson (16 playoff games) can help Portland's young roster understand it's possible.

● **Seattle Storm:** The Storm lost four of their five starters from last season and multiple bench players. However, Seattle can lean on All-Star Ezi Magbegor and WNBA champion Stefanie Dolson to help guide its young roster. With first-round picks Awa Fam, Flau'jae Johnson and Taina Mair also in the mix, the Storm can work toward forming their new identity.

● **Toronto Tempo:** The Tempo's offense promises to be exciting with head coach Sandy Brondello, who spent the last four seasons with the Liberty. Brondello helped the Liberty become a top-five offense in three of her four seasons and could bring that same successful formula to Toronto. The Tempo will need it as they assimilate into the league.

● **Washington Mystics:** With an average roster age of 23 years old, there's a full youth movement in Washington. Still, the Mystics have two All-Stars – Kiki Iriafen and Sonia Citron – leading the way. Center Shakira Austin is also an underrated piece who could help the team's continued rise.

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Hollywood stages a takeover of this year's Tony nominees

Yet some A-list stars were missing, including Keanu, Jean Smart and Lea Michele. **Page 2D**

Check where your favorite landed on our books list

"Project Hail Mary" floats back to the top, while "King of Gluttony" enters at No. 3. **Page 4D**

LIFELINE



JASON KEMPIN/GETTY IMAGES

THEY SAID WHAT?
THE STARS' BEST QUOTES

"Just think of me as like an old classic car that, once restored, can be better than ever." – Dolly Parton, sharing an update on her health. In a May 4 video message, the country music icon, 80, said she is "responding really well to meds and treatments" and "improving every day" after her immune and digestive systems "got all out of whack." She apologized for canceling her Las Vegas concerts, noting it will take "a little while before I'm up to stage performance level." But Parton assured fans that doctors say "everything I have is treatable, so I'm going with that."

IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY



Bryant

Actor **Robin Strasser** turns 81. Drummer **Bill Kreutzmann** (Grateful Dead), 80. Singer-actor **Thelma Houston**, 80. Director **Amy Heckerling**, 72. Singer **Eagle-Eye Cherry**, 58. Actor **Breckin Meyer**, 52. Drummer **Matt Helders** (Arctic Monkeys), 40. Actor-comedian **Aidy Bryant**, 39. Actor-musician **Alexander Ludwig**, 34. Actor **Dylan Gelula**, 32. Rapper **Rico Nasty**, 29. YouTube personality **James Donaldson, aka MrBeast**, 28. – *USA TODAY Network*

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY
More: www.sanctuaryworld.co

Aries (March 21-April 19). You're the best at what you do, and you know it. If only you could convince others to share your confidence!

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Moving in the shadows? As the moon and Mars clash, belief in your integrity is blinding you to danger.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). That was a little harsh. As the moon clashes with Mars, remember: hurt people hurt people.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Your goal is a good one, but how you accomplish it counts! Avoid making an ally into an enemy today.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Taking an interest or endeavor further? Self-improvement is your aim as the moon and Mars clash. Know your limits.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Check in with your intuition. Is this romantic infatuation healthy, or has it run its course?

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Why are they making this difficult? A loved one is disagreeable today...but so are you! Mind your temper.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Clashing with a coworker? As the moon squares off with Mars, they're deviating from the plan and ignoring your instructions.

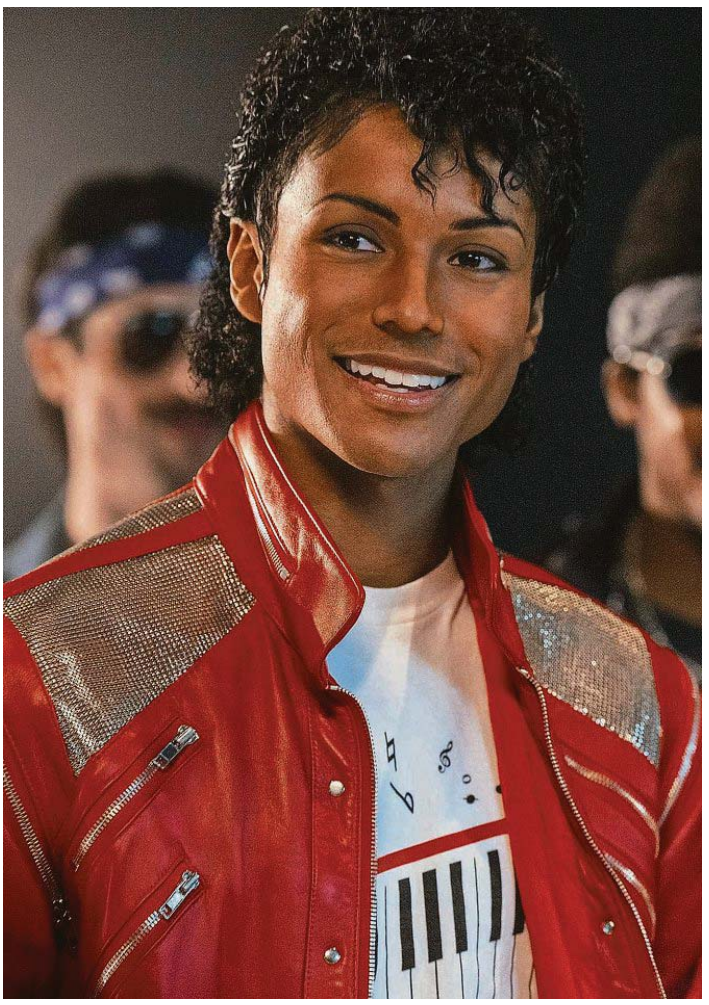
Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You want what you want, but do you need it? A little self-restraint goes a long way today.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Angry at a friend? Stressed over office drama? Funnel that energy into home improvements as the moon and Mars clash.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Putting up a strong front? As the moon and Mars square off, fear gets you into a fight.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Trying to resolve tensions on the team? Throwing money at a problem isn't the flex you think it is.

MOVIES



Jaafar Jackson portrays his uncle Michael Jackson in "Michael."

Jackson looks to share uncle's vulnerability

Melissa Ruggieri USA TODAY

A few hours before making his Met Gala debut, Jaafar Jackson radiates a calmness that belies the hoopla surrounding him lately. ● Jackson, 29, stars as his uncle Michael Jackson in "Michael," the box-office-shattering biopic of the singular performer. ● Professional reviews of the film have leaned abrasive, with many taking exception to the timeline that ends years before unsavory allegations emerged about (Michael) Jackson. But even "Michael" detractors have acknowledged the superb portrayal by Jackson the younger family member, who inhabits the role to uncanny perfection.

As the film rolls toward a half-billion-dollar worldwide gross, it's clear that critical dissection is irrelevant when it comes to an entertainment figure whose music and performances were, simply, unmatched.

Calling from his New York hotel room before dressing in Polo Ralph Lauren for the celebrity fashion extravaganza, a humble Jackson chatted about re-creating the life of an icon and plans for a "Michael" sequel.

Question: This movie has been such a record-shattering success. Did the response exceed your expectations?

Answer: You don't really think of the end result because I was so focused on what I was preparing to do and taking a day at a time. But then you have those moments when you think, "Oh, how's it going to really play once it's released?" And then just the first 24 hours seeing all the

See JACKSON, Page 2D



Jaafar Jackson channels Michael Jackson as the film re-creates Jackson's historic "Thriller" video. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY GLEN WILSON/LIONSGATE

MOVIES

Cerulean sweater gets a makeover in 'Prada 2'

Patrick Ryan
USA TODAY

Spoiler alert! We're discussing major details about the ending of "The Devil Wears Prada 2" (in theaters now). Stop reading if you haven't seen the movie yet and don't want to know what happens.

It's not turquoise, it's not lapis – it's actually cerulean.

Twenty years ago, Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway) and her lumpy blue sweater made cinematic history in "The Devil Wears Prada" as the fashion-illiterate assistant was mercilessly dressed down by fearsome style maven Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep).

The oft-quoted monologue became instantly memorable for Streep's tossed-off yet incisive delivery, as well as the expert way Miranda calls out Andy for her willful ignorance of fashion trends and craftsmanship.

For costume designer Molly Rogers, it was imperative to pay subtle homage to the scene in "The Devil Wears Prada 2." And so, in the final moments of the sequel, you may recognize that Andy is wearing a slightly updated version of the cerulean sweater as she works at the Runway magazine office late one night.

"The first phone call I made was to find out if it still exists," Rogers says of the original garment. "It needed to be seen again, and I love that it's the last thing you see. It's full circle."



Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway) walks through the office with Nigel (Stanley Tucci) in her now-famous cerulean sweater in the original "The Devil Wears Prada." PROVIDED BY ©20THCENTFOX/EVERETT COLLECTION

As fans will notice, it's actually more of a sweater vest in the sequel, which is thanks to Hathaway. The sweater now has a deep V-neck with stylishly tattered edges, which Andy pairs with a button-down shirt and jeans.

"Annie scared us to death in the fitting room," Rogers recalls. "She just took a pair of scissors and *whack, whack, whack* – she just chopped the sleeves off of it."

Rogers always had planned to customize the sweater somewhat for the new movie "to make it feel like it had been cherished all these years and seen some rough times," the designer says. But Hathaway's drastic rework made even more sense for the character of Andy.

"Her thread through the movie is feminine menswear, so this was a good place for a vest," Rogers says. "It kind of put an exclamation point on that."

The revamp of Andy's sweater isn't the only style Easter egg from the first movie. In the opening sequence of "Prada 2," Andy walks by a street vendor in the park who is holding up two similarly shaded blue belts – a direct reference to the first movie's cerulean scene, in which Runway editor Jocelyn (Rebecca Mader) puzzles over two analogous belts. ("They're so different," she frets.)

Rogers also makes a less-obvious reference to the cerulean scene with a Dries van Noten tassel jacket that Miranda wears to the office cafeteria in the sequel.

"If you're familiar with the first movie, when she does the cerulean soliloquy, Miranda is wearing this gold-coin bolero that is really ornate," Rogers says. "This new tassel jacket was

See SWEATER, Page 2D

79TH TONY AWARDS



Alex Winter, left, and Keanu Reeves were overlooked for their pairing in "Waiting for Godot." PROVIDED BY ANDY HENDERSON/DKC/O&M

This crop of nominees boasts a Hollywood flair

Patrick Ryan
USA TODAY

NEW YORK – Hollywood stole the show on Broadway's biggest morning.

On May 5, the Tony Awards announced their nominations for the 2025-26 season, with a slew of film and TV adaptations in the mix: "The Lost Boys," based on the 1987 vampire cult classic starring Kiefer Sutherland and Corey Haim, earned a nod for best musical.

"Titanique," a parody of James Cameron's "Titanic" using Celine Dion's iconic hits, also nabbed a best musical nomination, as did "Schmigadoon!," adapted from the Apple TV comedy series about a couple who get trapped in a town where denizens only sing and dance.

In fact, the only wholly original musical nominated in the Tonys' top category was "Two Strangers (Carry a Cake Across New York)," which follows a bright-eyed British man (Sam Tutty) and cynical Brooklyn woman (Christiani Pitts) who form an unlikely bond before a wedding.

Many Tinseltown stars were recognized across the acting categories: John Lithgow ("Giant") and Nathan Lane ("Death of a Salesman") will go head-to-head in best leading actor in a play, where they're joined by boy wizard Daniel Radcliffe ("Every Brilliant Thing").

Oscar nominees Lesley Manville ("Oedipus") and Rose Byrne ("Fallen Angels") also are vying for best leading actress in a play, where big names including Jean Smart ("Call Me Izzy") and Ayo Edebiri ("Proof") were notably passed over.

Two-time Oscar winner Adrien Brody and Marvel star Tessa Thompson both were snubbed for "The Fear of 13," a true-life prison drama adapted from the 2015 documentary and produced by Kim Kardashian.

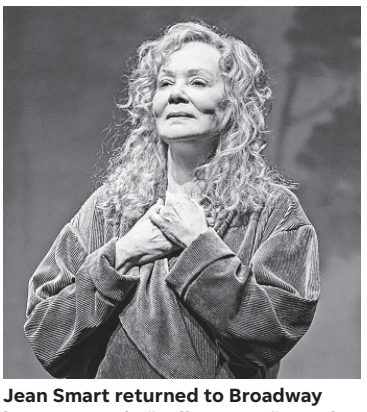
A handful of A-listers whose plays closed months ago were long forgotten by Tony nominators. "Waiting for Godot" favorites Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter, reuniting after the "Bill & Ted" series, both were skipped over for nods, as was "Art" trio Neil Patrick Harris, Bobby Cannavale and James Corden.

"The Bear" actors Jon Bernthal and Ebon Moss-Bachrach, whose "Dog Day Afternoon" stage adaptation earned dismal notices, similarly were ignored.

On the musical front, Lea Michele of "Glee" fame shockingly was left out of the leading actress category for the musical revival "Chess." The Emmy nominee had been campaigning heavily in recent months, citing her lifelong commitment to theater in Broadway productions such as "Ragtime," "Les Misérables," "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Funny Girl."

"The Queen of Versailles," a controversial riches-to-rags show about real-life President Donald Trump supporter Jackie Siegel, was shut out of all categories, including best musical, as was "Beaches," which is based on the Rainer Dart novel that inspired the 1988 movie starring Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey.

Oscar nominee Stephanie Hsu ("Everything Everywhere All at Once") was a welcome surprise in the leading actress in a musical category for her standout comedic turn as Janet in "The Rocky Horror Show." It also was a relief to see Kelli O'Hara and Carrie Coon recognized for leading actress in a play category, both of whom gave two of the season's more memorable performances in "Fallen Angels" and "Bug," respectively.



Jean Smart returned to Broadway last summer in "Call Me Izzy." But the star of "Hacks" didn't make the cut of Tony nominees. PROVIDED BY MARC J. FRANKLIN



June Squibb, 96, made history as the oldest Tony nominee for "Marjorie Prime." PROVIDED BY JOAN MARCUS

June Squibb, 96, made history as the oldest Tony nominee ever for "Marjorie Prime." The beloved actress bested a record previously held by Lois Smith, who was nominated for "The Inheritance" at age 89 in 2020. Squibb's costar, Danny Burstein, also was nominated, although their castmate Cynthia Nixon was sadly missing from the lineup.

Elsewhere in the nominations, Oscar nominees Taraji P. Henson ("Joe Turner's Come and Gone") and Don Cheadle ("Proof") both were overlooked for their Broadway debuts, as was Henson's costar, Cedric the Entertainer.

Of the musicals, "The Lost Boys" and "Schmigadoon!" led this year's Tony nominations with 12 apiece, followed closely by the critically acclaimed revival of "Ragtime" with 11.

"Cats: The Jellicle Ball," an audacious reimagining of Andrew Lloyd Webber's feline phenomenon, purred with nine nods, including best musical revival, although "Tempress" Chasity Moore was egregiously snubbed in the featured actress category for her achingly emotional work as Grizabella.

Pulitzer Prize winner "Liberation" was honored with five nominations, including best play, while Joe Mantello's astonishing revival of "Death of a Salesman" picked up nine nods, including best featured actress (Laurie Metcalf) and best featured actor (Christopher Abbott).

Jackson

Continued from Page 1D

social media posts and videos that were shared of people dancing in the theater, coming out in their outfits – I couldn't have been happier to see the joy and love that the film brought to a lot of people. It definitely exceeded my expectations.

Whose reaction to the film mattered most to you?

My grandmother (Katherine Jackson).

I thought you might say that.

That was the one I was most nervous to hear or to just have her see the film. But then when I had that moment where she just hugged me and said how proud she was and how excellent I did in the film, that really kind of washed everything away. That's all that mattered. Still, the highest compliment I can get is from her.

Does being Michael's nephew feel like an advantage or a responsibility or both?

It's a culmination of both. Having those close family ties definitely gives you a bigger responsibility going into it but also allows me to trust my instincts even more, knowing we share the same blood. But at the same time, how do I carry that and not look at it as I'm just a family member playing a family member and look at it as really breaking down the character of who Michael was as a human being?

Was there anything about Michael that you knew from being part of the family dynamic that helped you portray him?

The stories I've heard of his work ethic and how disciplined he was with being a perfectionist. It could be one single move he'd work on for five or six hours. I always remember hearing the story where he would rehearse until he wasn't able to walk up a flight of stairs. I would take that and apply it in my own way of how disciplined I would be with my moves or working on the script. ... Always staying curious and wanting to learn more, that's something that I was able to learn from stories from my father (Jermaine Jackson) and uncles who were around him during those pivotal years.

How long did you train?

It started with the acting first. I was brought into it around 2021.

Wow, so it's been five years.

I know! I was working with an acting coach, Angela Gibbs, and we started working on different scenes just to see where my instrument was, where I was in my body, and how comfortable I was in front of a camera or having people look at me. I didn't get into the dancing side of it until a year after just focusing on the acting. So I had about 3½ years of being able to live in that mindset of preparing.

What was the hardest to master, whether Michael's voice or a move or gesture?

I feel like I didn't master anything. I just got as close as I possibly could to where it felt believable. Every performance had its own difficulty of wanting to capture a certain energy. "Billie Jean" was very specific because it was staying true to that performance frame-by-frame and wanting to capture every detail as close as I possibly could without losing the feeling of it.

What performance was the most challenging to re-create?

"Thriller," because there were only about four or five days to really go over that choreography. I felt very self-conscious with that one because I had so much time focusing on the "Billie Jean" and "Bad" performances but "Thriller" felt a little different. But I was happy being on that set and seeing the zombies. It was incredible.

And you re-created the "Thriller" video on the same street as the original?

Yeah, we shot at the exact same location and shot all through the night for two nights in a row. Those were probably the most incredible shooting days out of (everything), just to be in that space where Michael truly created a video that would stand the test of time.

What's your favorite Michael video, just as a fan?

Always "Smooth Criminal."

Because of "the lean"?

Even before the lean; it's just the whole world of it. The way it's shot, the colors and the wardrobe. And then the song comes in and fully immerses you into that world. But I also love the "Moonwalker" short film.

What do you hope that audiences understand about Michael that maybe they hadn't before?

I really hope they see the vulnerability that he carried and also the passion and drive to strive for the independence he longed for. He had all that experience with the Jackson 5, but then got to a point where he wanted to create his own ideas. He had a vision for himself. Of course, (his father) Joseph was that person in the way of Michael getting to that independence. But Michael had the courage to take that next step.

From the "Michael" footage that was cut, do you think there's enough to do a sequel?

His story's not finished being told. So it's in the early process of figuring that out. I can't wait to see what comes next.

How long would it take you to get into training mode to step back into that role?

Definitely not as long as it took me the first time. It would probably take a few months.

You and your fiancée (Maddie Simpson) have been together almost 10 years, and she's been so supportive of you. What are you most grateful for, having her in your life right now?

Always being able to come home and feel that support. To have that presence and feel the love and feel that peace. If you're surrounded by a bunch of noise and being pulled in many directions, you want to be able to come home and be grounded and have someone you know, you truly love, who has a real deep understanding of what it is that I'm going through. I really appreciate that I have her in my life.

What is next for you now that you've played someone so iconic?

I definitely won't be doing another role that has any dancing or singing. Something that really allows me to transform into someone else where it's unexpected. Just the complete opposite of what "Michael" is. ... I don't know what that is in particular, but I'm really excited about being able to change and transform into different people.



Miranda's Dries van Noten tassel jacket – pictured on the runway in 2025 – is a sly nod to Meryl Streep's Bill Blass bolero in the original "The Devil Wears Prada." FRANCOIS DURAND/GETTY IMAGES; ©20THCENTFOX/EVERETT COLLECTION

Sweater

Continued from Page 1D

kind of the sister, or the bookend, to that jacket in the [original]. It felt like a good bridge – I went deep on that one!"

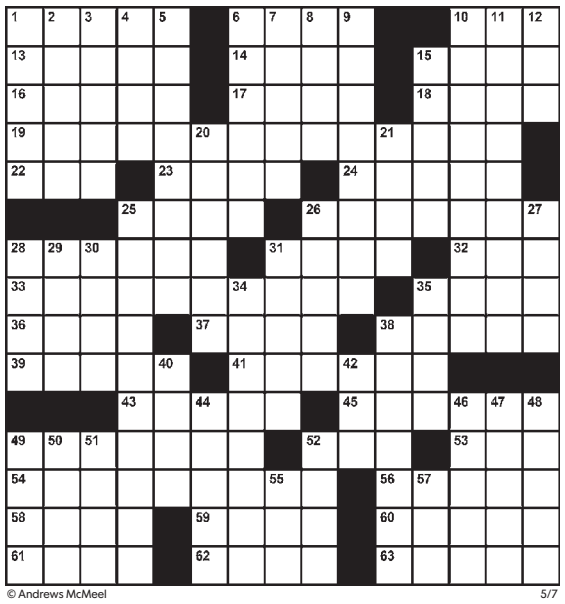
The first film's most-memed accessory is undoubtedly the designer footwear Andy wears to the office after her fashion makeover. ("Are you wearing ..." "The Chanel boots? Yeah, I am.") Miranda's new assistant, Amari (Simone Ashley), asks if she still has her Chanel wardrobe, but you won't actually see the boots make an appearance in "Prada 2."

"Some things are better left untouched," Rogers says. "People were asking me, 'Are you going to bring the Chanel thigh-high boots back for the second movie?' But I felt like that should live alone in its time frame. That is so sacred to me in the first movie as a moment – I wouldn't think you could do that justice by bringing it back for '2.' I really did not want to touch that."

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amanda Rafkin
BY Will Nediger

AM I MISSING SOMETHING?



ACROSS
1 "New look, same ___ taste"
6 Places to apply gloss
10 Toronto Pearson, for Air Canada
13 Key ___, Florida
14 Soprano's solo
15 Yawn-inducing person
16 Devoured
17 Privacy feature on car windows
18 Red gem
19 "Make yourself at home," in Spanish
22 Money up for grabs in poker
23 "Quiet!"
24 "That's So ___" (2000s show)
25 Good, better, ___
26 Shows like "What's Wrong With Secretary Kim"
28 House in the Swiss Alps
31 Italian automaker
32 "There ___ dozens of us!"
33 Ability to critically evaluate technologies like ChatGPT
35 Slow-cooked dish
36 Magnetic metal
37 Body part that might hurt if you sleep on it funny
38 Heartfelt requests
39 Like a cat that must be in your lap
41 Deeply want
43 Round roofs
45 Trees with fragrant wood
49 Illusions in the desert
52 "Barbie" role
53 Open ___ night
54 Talk radio source
56 It's visible when you say "ahh"
58 Click the floppy disk icon
59 Burly God of War monster
60 Wannabe
61 Rock concert sound boosters
62 Only a single time
63 Person from Stockholm

DOWN
1 Enjoy the outdoors in style
2 Numerical comparison
3 Upright
4 Water, in Spanish
5 Layer under a duvet
6 Most recent
7 Like ceilidhs and shillelaghs
8 Bowling targets
9 Part of "SNL"
10 Person to split rent with
11 Region that's not rural
12 "Texas Hold 'Em" singer, for short
15 "Go, diva!"
20 "Pride and Prejudice" novelist Jane
21 Online shopping icon
25 Romantic setups with strangers
26 Some karate moves
27 Works on a garment
28 Abel's brother
29 Add to the workforce
30 ___ vera
31 Doesn't turn one's back on
34 Create a new look for
35 Skeleton or luge, e.g.
38 Sweetheart deals?
40 Discipline with asanas
42 Figure skating surface
44 "Same here"
46 Entertain
47 ___ up (ticked off)
48 Jump out at?
49 Dough for corn tortillas
50 Islamic prayer leader
51 Say "I'll be there with bells on," perhaps
52 Pants part that might be patched
55 "Lord of the Rings" bad guy
57 Solemn promise

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Wednesday's Answer

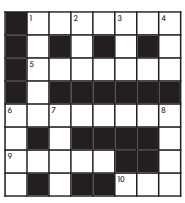
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B	A	I	T		N	O	V		S	A	M			
T	V	S		G	E	T	O	N		N	E			
S	O	C	C	E	R		R	O	C	K		D	A	M
	C	O	H	O	S	T		T	E	E	T	I	M	E
D	A	V	I	D		W	U	N	D	E	R	B	A	R
A	D	E	L	E		O	B	O	E		E	L	S	E
B	O	R	E	S		S	E	W	S		Y	E	S	

5/6

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TXTPERT



5/7

Across
1. 9455464
5. 2694389
6. 24337385
9. 54843
10. 963

Down
1. 97284
2. 529
3. 473
4. 429
6. 2256
7. 3689
8. 5453

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Today's theme
Feelings



Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST



5/6
Yesterday's solution

Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
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SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

1				5		3	7	
				2				8
			8	6		4		
5				9	2	6		
		3	1	8	6	5		
		2	4	7				1
		9		1	8			
7				3				
	2	1		4				6

5/7 DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

		6	5	4	
					3
1			4		
		2			5
6					
	3	1	2		

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★☆

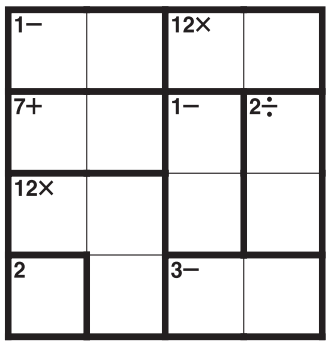
Wednesday's Answers

5	4	9	7	3	1	6	2	8
3	7	2	5	8	6	4	1	9
1	8	6	2	9	4	5	3	7
7	2	8	3	6	9	1	5	4
4	1	3	8	2	5	9	7	6
9	6	5	4	1	7	2	8	3
8	5	4	6	7	2	3	9	1
2	3	1	9	4	8	7	6	5
6	9	7	1	5	3	8	4	2

2	5	3	1	6	4
1	4	6	3	5	2
3	1	5	4	2	6
6	2	4	5	1	3
4	6	1	2	3	5
5	3	2	6	4	1

5/6

KENKEN



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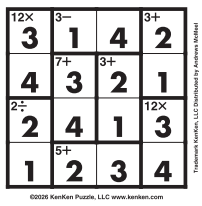
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1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

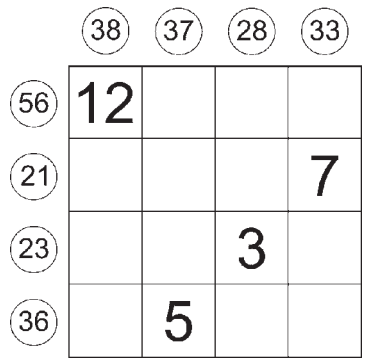


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KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo
Difficulty: **EXPERT**



Solution to Wednesday's puzzle

14	16	6	12
7	10	5	13
3	9	15	1
11	8	2	4

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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5/7/26

Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 5/7

Find and Circle:
Four units of volume ☑☐☐☐
Four U.S. states ☐☐☐☐
Three crustaceans ☐☐☐
Three gases ☐☐☐
Two Japanese car companies ☐☐

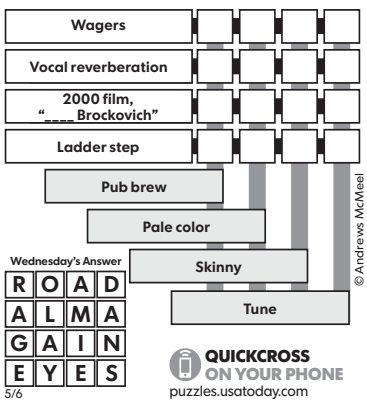
P	O	N	J	C	S	H	R	I	M	P	L			
U	I	O	G	W	V	A	R	G	O	N	I			
R	H	N	C	E	B	E	J	V	O	C	T			
A	O	E	T	N	O	L	R	L	R	R	E			
B	N	X	O	I	H	R	L	M	A	A	R			
U	D	D	D	A	Q	A	G	U	O	B	V			
S	A	H	J	M	G	W	Q	I	W	N	R			
R	L	O	B	S	T	E	R	Z	A	T	T			

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Wednesday's answer: MERCURY VENUS EARTH MARS / QUARTER NICKEL PENNY DIME / KNUCKLE WRIST ELBOW ANKLE / CELLO HARP LUTE / SNAKE

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 5/7



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Wednesday's Answer

R	O	A	D
A	L	M	A
G	A	I	N
E	Y	E	S

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
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5/6

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 5/7

1. **TOO**
2. ___
3. ___
4. ___
5. ___
6. ___
7. ___ **SINGER**

Clues:
1. "Such a pity"
2. Unpleasant forecast
3. Storm-tracking orbiter
4. TV signal receiver
5. Grease-cutting liquid
6. Daytime TV drama
7. Performer in "Fidelio," say

Wednesday's Answer
BURIED TREASURE
TREASURE CHEST
CHEST COLD
COLD CALL
CALL FOR
FOR KEEPS
KEEPS SECRET

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DON'T QUOTE ME

New Zealand actress Lucy Lawless offers this advice.

©WIGGLES 3D GAMES

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
CHOICE CHOOSE FEET GRIEVE HAPPINESS PICK UP

"_____ IS A _____. YOU _____, YOU STOMP YOUR ___, YOU ___ YOURSELF ___ AND _____ TO BE HAPPY." 5/7

Wednesday's Answer: "Seize the moment. Remember all those women on the Titanic who waved off the dessert cart." - Erma Bombeck

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES **SOLUTIONS**
1 not entirely (6) _____
2 annoying roommate (6) _____
3 bite at the bit, perhaps (5) _____
4 English singer FKA (5) _____
5 vexed (9) _____
6 ring toss game (6) _____
7 examining by feel (9) _____

PAT	PA	LY	NT	AMP
IGS	QU	CH	PAL	SN
TS	OR	ED	RT	FRO
ER	ING	AF	TW	OI

Wednesday's Answers: 1. WEDDINGS 2. ROCKET 3. MILKS 4. SNOWMEN 5. DISPARAGE 6. UNDULANCE 7. DENT 5/7

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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LWRDO
MGOEA
ITRELP
OMTBTO



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: FORTY TWINE DUGOUT HANDLE
Answer: The submarine was brand-new, and the captain was anxious to — GET UNDERWAY

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BONUS CROSSWORD

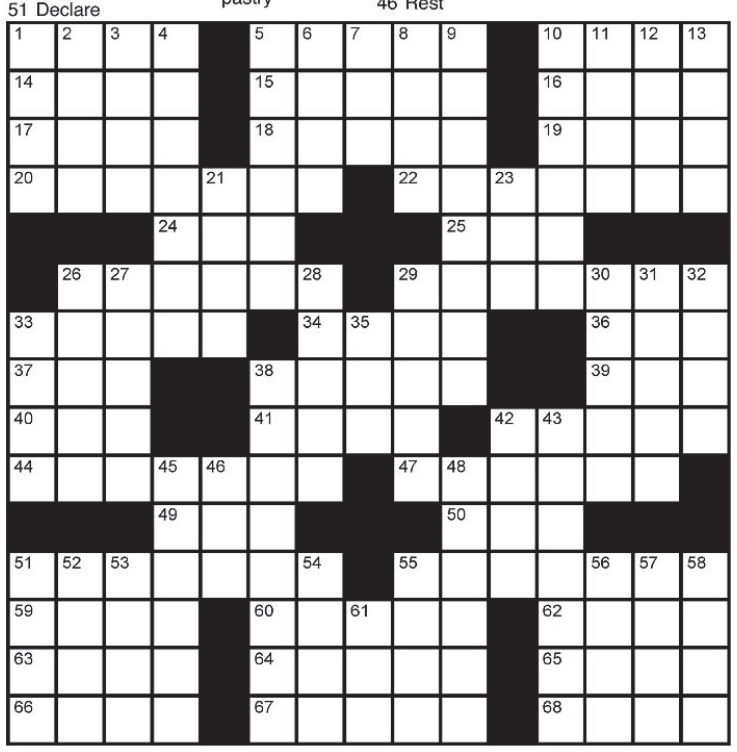
ACROSS
1 Strike
5 Accommodate
10 High-maintenance star
14 Sugar lump
15 Actress — Michelle Gellar
16 Paradise
17 Name in Genesis
18 "Sir" or "Madam"
19 Tidy
20 Wearisome
22 Tasty bits
24 Garfield, for one
25 Fish eggs
26 Goes after
29 Take away from
33 Bias
34 Sci. branch
36 Letter after pi
37 Fuel container
38 Baffles
39 "America's — Talent"
40 Paved way (Abbr.)
41 Part of MIT (Abbr.)
42 Cut a groove in
44 Determination
47 Be abundant
49 Old exclamation
50 Timetable abbr.
51 Declare
55 Bureau
59 Rant and —
60 Sound system component
62 — podrida
63 "So be it!"
64 Soap plant
65 Reddish brown color
66 — over matter
67 "The Thinker" sculptor
68 Some votes

DOWN
1 "Begone!"
2 Garage service, for short
3 Not up
4 Large water bird
5 Crafty
6 Speaker's platform
7 Skill
8 Tropical tree
9 Propositions in math
10 More crowded
11 — fixe
12 Stew meat
13 Picnic problem
21 Kiln
23 Decompose
26 Piece of garlic
27 Underworld god
28 Coffee shop pastry
29 Atlanta-based airline
30 Noble gas
31 Three notes at once
32 Carry
33 Box
35 That fellow's
38 Describing some hotels (2 wds.)
42 Achy
43 Superficial
45 Insult
46 Rest
48 Like a wasteland
51 Baby buggy
52 Actor — Malek
53 Kitchen appliance
54 Japanese sport
55 Lunchtime destination
56 Pivot
57 Actress — Lanchester
58 "Darn it!"
61 Show assent

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

V	O	I	D	■	A	S	A	P	■	■	S	P	E	D
A	N	D	A	■	R	I	V	A	L	■	K	A	N	E
S	E	E	N	■	E	R	A	S	E	■	E	V	I	L
T	R	A	C	E	■	■	S	T	A	M	P	E	D	E
■	■	■	E	L	F	■	T	E	N	E	T	■	■	■
D	E	C	R	E	E	D	■	■	E	X	I	L	E	D
A	D	O	■	M	E	A	G	E	R	■	C	O	L	A
M	I	L	K	■	■	■	L	A	M	■	■	S	T	I	R
E	T	O	N	■	V	I	S	I	O	N	■	T	H	E
S	H	R	I	N	E	■	■	R	U	I	N	O	U	S
■	■	■	T	O	N	I	C	■	■	T	K	O	■	■
C	L	O	W	N	I	S	H	■	■	■	E	R	R	I	S
H	U	G	E	■	C	L	A	P	S	■	■	D	I	V	A
A	R	E	A	■	E	E	R	I	E	■	■	I	T	E	M
P	E	E	R	■	■	S	T	E	W	■	■	C	A	S	E

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USA TODAY BEST-SELLING BOOKS BOOKLIST.USATODAY.COM

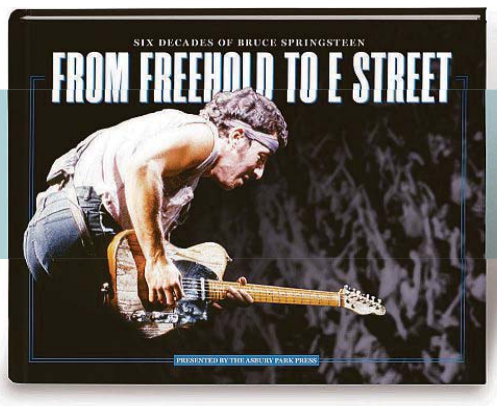
☐ Rank this week ☐ Rank last week

		TITLE/AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	C
1	2	**Project Hail Mary**/Weir, Andy	Ballantine Books	Thrillers - Suspense	F
2	1	**Theo of Golden**/Levi, Allen	Atria Books	Literary	F
3	n/a	**King of Gluttony**/Huang, Ana	Bloom Books	Romance - New Adult	F
4	3	**Yesteryear**/Burke, Caro Claire	Knopf Publishing Group	Feminist	F
5	n/a	**One Scan Saved My Life: How One Woman's Story Will Change the Way We Detect Lung Cancer**/Kupperman Boehler, Shira	Skyhorse Publishing	Personal Memoirs	NF
6	7	**Game On: An Into Darkness Novel**/Allen, Navessa	Slowburn	Romance - Suspense	F
7	n/a	**Bulletproof (Deluxe Edition)**/Moronova, K. M.	Bloom Books	Romance - Suspense	F
8	10	**The Correspondent**/Evans, Virginia	Crown Publishing Group (NY)	Women	F
9	n/a	**The Throne of Broken Gods: Deluxe Special Edition**/Nicole, Amber V.	Kensington Publishing Corp	Fantasy - Romantic	F
10	16	**Strangers: A Memoir of Marriage**/Burden, Belle	Dial Press	Personal Memoirs	NF
11	60	**Captain Underpants: The First Epic Manga (from the Creator of Dog Man)**/Pilkey, Dav	Graphix	Comics & Graphic Novels - Superheroes	F
12	9	**Dungeon Crawler Carl**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
13	n/a	**We Burned So Bright**/Klune, TJ	Tor Books	LGBT - Gay	F
14	n/a	**The Codebreaker Mindset: The Unwritten Rules for Success**/Nawbatt, Chitra	Matt Holt Books	Personal Success	NF
15	n/a	**Losers: Part One: Deluxe Limited Edition**/Laroux, Harley	Kensington Publishing Corp	Romance - Polyamory	F
16	n/a	**Blood Bound (Deluxe Edition)**/Hunter, Ellis	Atria Books	Fantasy - Epic	F
17	98	**We Are as Gods: A Survival Guide for the Age of Abundance**/Diamandis, Peter H.	Simon & Schuster	Development	NF
18	19	**When We See You Again**/Goldberg-Polin, Rachel	Random House	Personal Memoirs	NF
19	25	**For the Fans! (Kpop Demon Hunters): Official Storybook**/Golden Books	Golden Books	Action & Adventure - General	F
20	17	**Heated Rivalry (First Time Trade)**/Reid, Rachel	Carina Press	Romance - Romantic Comedy	F
21	11	**Summer Island**/Hannah, Kristin	Ballantine Books	Women	F
22	n/a	**Odder: The Novel**/Applegate, Katherine	Square Fish	Social Themes - New Experience	F
23	40	**The Let Them Theory: A Life-Changing Tool That Millions of People Can't Stop Talking About**/Robbins, Mel	Hay House LLC	Personal Success	NF
24	n/a	**26 Beauties: A Women's Murder Club Thriller**/Patterson, James	Little Brown and Company	Thrillers - Suspense	F
25	24	**Famesick: A Memoir**/Dunham, Lena	Random House	Entertainment & Performing Arts	NF
26	n/a	**How to Get Rich in American History: 300 Years of Financial Advice That Worked (& Didn't)**/Moore Ph.D, Joseph S.	Harper Business	Personal Finance - General	NF
27	33	**Remarkably Bright Creatures: A Read With Jenna Pick**/Van Pelt, Shelby	Ecco Press	Humorous - General	F
28	8	**Purple State**/Perino, Dana	Harper	Political	F
29	42	**Carl's Doomsday Scenario**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Epic	F
30	n/a	**A Deadly Episode**/Horowitz, Anthony	Harper	Thrillers - Crime	F
31	20	**Rites of the Starling: A Slow-Burn Epic Romantasy**/Perry, Devney	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Fantasy - Romantic	F
32	21	**Hope Rises**/Baldacci, David	Grand Central Publishing	Thrillers - Suspense	F
33	35	**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?: 50th Anniversary Edition (Anniversary)**/Martin, Bill	Henry Holt & Company	Classics	F
34	45	**London Falling: A Mysterious Death in a Gilded City and a Family's Search for Truth**/Keefe, Patrick Radden	Doubleday Books	Murder - General	NF
35	53	**I Who Have Never Known Men**/Harpman, Jacqueline	Transit Books	Literary	F
36	46	**Dear Debbie**/McFadden, Freida	Poisoned Pen Press	Women	F
37	n/a	**Unreasonable Hospitality: The Field Guide**/Guidara, Will	Optimism Press	Leadership	NF
38	44	**Lights Out: An Into Darkness Novel**/Allen, Navessa	Zando - Slowburn	Romance - New Adult	F
39	6	**Dawn on the Coast: A Graphic Novel (the Baby-Sitters Club #19)**/Martin, Ann M.	Graphix	Social Themes - Friendship	F
40	22	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**/Carle, Eric	Philomel Books	Classics	F
41	62	**The Dungeon Anarchist's Cookbook**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
42	49	**Want to Know a Secret?**/McFadden, Freida	Poisoned Pen Press	Thrillers - Suspense	F
43	38	**Mad Mabel**/Hepworth, Sally	St. Martin's Press	Women	F
44	37	**Between Two Fires**/Buehlman, Christopher	Tor Nightfire	Thrillers - Suspense	F
45	32	**A Woman's Place**/Steel, Danielle	Delacorte Press	Women	F
46	12	**The Caretaker**/Kliewer, Marcus	Atria/Emily Bestler Books/12:01 Books	Thrillers - Suspense	F
47	130	**Why a Son Needs a Mom**/Hill, Susanna Leonard	Sourcebooks Wonderland	Family - Parents	F
48	n/a	**Knowing: The Journey to Certainty in an Uncertain World**/Roberts, Touré	Zondervan	Mental Health	NF
49	47	**The Mother-Daughter Book Club**/Patterson, James	Little Brown and Company	Women	F
50	n/a	**Mom, I Want to Hear Your Story (Expanded Edition): A Mother's Guided Journal to Share Her Life & Her Love (Revised)**/Mason, Jeffrey	Hear Your Story	Parenting - Motherhood	NF

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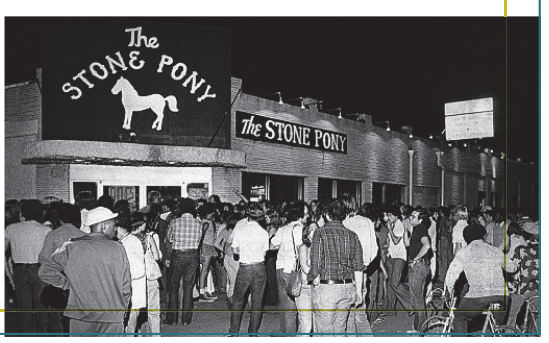
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