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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Trump Declares National Emergency Over Foreign Grid Equipment

Executive Order 14420 creates a federal review and prohibition process for foreign-produced bulk-power equipment judged to pose national-security risks.

BY POLLY TICKS

President Donald Trump declared a national emergency Wednesday over foreign-supplied equipment used in the United States bulk-power system. Executive Order 14420 says certain foreign actors could exploit components or software embedded in the high-voltage network that supports defense, emergency services and the economy. The order invokes the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the National Emergencies Act. It is a completed presidential action, not a congressional statute, and its legal and operational effects will depend on agency implementation. The order prohibits a future acquisition, import, transfer or installation only when the Energy secretary determines that a covered transaction involves foreign interests and creates an unacceptable sabotage, manipulation or catastrophic-effect risk. That distinction matters. The text does not declare every foreign-made transformer illegal, publish a list of prohibited manufacturers or order utilities to disconnect equipment overnight. It instead establishes a case-by-case review, mitigation and prohibition process...

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FRONTPAGE NEWS

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

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The order prohibits a future acquisition, import, transfer or installation only when the Energy secretary determines that a covered transaction involves foreign interests and creates an unacceptable sabotage, manipulation or catastrophic-effect risk. That distinction matters. The text does not declare every foreign-made transformer illegal, publish a list of prohibited manufacturers or order utilities to disconnect equipment overnight. It instead establishes a case-by-case review, mitigation and prohibition process coordinated with defense, commerce, homeland-security, intelligence and budget officials.

Energy must identify equipment that may present the specified risks and recommend responses to the White House national-security adviser. The government may require information from parties, impose mitigation terms and direct removal or replacement where authorized. The order also calls for procurement policies favoring domestic production and resilient supply chains. Utilities and contractors will now need to preserve vendor, ownership, software and component records so a federal review can trace where sensitive equipment came from and who can access it.

The administration describes the threat as urgent, while the order itself supplies no public inventory of compromised devices. Grid-security specialists have long warned that long replacement times and concentrated manufacturing make high-voltage equipment a strategic vulnerability. Still, a national-emergency declaration does not prove that a particular installed component has been sabotaged. Any enforcement action should identify the transaction, evidence, legal authority and remedy without disclosing information that would create a new security risk.

Polly's cracker check: confirmed are the signed order, emergency declaration and new review authorities. The administration alleges an unusual foreign threat; no named device or supplier is adjudicated in the public text. Disputed will be the scope, cost and statutory reach of implementation. Unknown are the first covered transactions, compliance deadlines and replacement funding. Expected next are Energy Department guidance, equipment-risk identification and procurement rules. The political headline is an emergency; the governing work begins with definitions, notices and enforceable decisions. Congress can also review emergency reports, appropriations and domestic-supply effects as the program moves from presidential text to agency action.

SOURCES: The White House; The White House

DEFENSE & SECURITY

Army Picks Five Teams for On-Base Nuclear Microreactors

The Janus Program agreements are worth up to \$2.2 billion combined and target resilient power at five installations, with milestone-based competition still ahead.

BY VICTOR TALON



The Army selected five private teams to develop, own and operate nuclear microreactors at installations from New York to Texas under its Janus Program. The agreements carry a combined ceiling of up to \$2.2 billion over five years. Antares Nuclear is paired with Fort Bragg, BWXT with Fort Campbell, General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems with Fort Hood, Radiant Industries with Fort Benning and Westinghouse Government Services with Fort Drum. Selection starts the work; it is not proof that five reactors are ready to generate power.

Army officials describe microreactors as a source of reliable baseload electricity for critical missions when the commercial grid fails. The systems are intended to run for years between refueling and to reduce dependence on vulnerable external lines. The Defense Innovation Unit is helping structure the effort around private ownership and milestone payments. Vendors must still complete design, licensing or authorization, site preparation, fuel, security, testing and operational steps before a reactor can serve a base.

The administration's target is an operating advanced reactor at a domestic military installation by Sept. 30, 2028. The Army says Janus could ultimately support more than 20 microreactors across the Department of War. That larger number is an expectation, not an awarded fleet. Officials deliberately selected multiple designs because some projects may miss cost, schedule or performance thresholds. Competition can protect the mission only if the milestones are measurable and unsuccessful work is stopped before sunk costs dictate the outcome.

Nuclear power brings a different resilience equation from diesel backup. Fuel endurance can be much longer, but security, emergency planning, spent material, construction quality and long-term decommissioning must be addressed. Army officials say they want designs capable of later civilian licensing without major redesign. Independent reporting notes that no microreactor currently supplies the U.S. commercial grid, making Janus both an installation-power project and a technology demonstration.

Talon assessment: confirmed are the five teams, five bases, \$2.2 billion ceiling and 2028 objective. Claims that the bases already have operating reactors are false. Disputed are cost effectiveness, regulatory pathways and the proper role of military sites in commercial nuclear development. Unknown are which designs clear milestones, final costs and actual start dates. Expected next are site-specific design reviews, safety work and milestone awards. Mission first means counting delivered kilowatts, not announced concepts. Public oversight should track award amounts, missed gates, security approvals and decommissioning obligations at each installation rather than blending five different projects into one success statistic.

SOURCES: U.S. Army; Associated Press

INVESTIGATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Lawrence Mayor Indicted in Alleged \$1.5 Million Pandemic-Loan Scheme

A federal grand jury returned eleven counts alleging Brian DePena diverted EIDL money to mortgages, taxes and his 2021 mayoral campaign; he is presumed innocent.

BY GIDEON MARSH



A federal grand jury indicted Lawrence, Massachusetts, Mayor Brian DePena on eleven counts tied to a \$1.5 million Economic Injury Disaster Loan obtained for his tire business. Prosecutors allege DePena promised the Small Business Administration that the money would be used as working capital, then diverted substantial amounts to personal and political expenses. An indictment is a formal accusation supported by probable cause. It is not a conviction, and DePena is presumed innocent unless the government proves each charge beyond a reasonable doubt.

The charging document alleges more than \$880,000 went toward high-interest mortgages on properties connected to DePena, about \$90,000 entered his mayoral campaign account and additional funds paid personal federal tax debt. Prosecutors say the conduct ran from at least August 2020 through January 2022. The indictment includes wire-fraud and money-laundering allegations and identifies particular transfers. Those transaction descriptions will have to be authenticated and connected to criminal intent in court.

DePena was arrested earlier in August on a criminal complaint containing fewer counts. The grand-jury action replaces that preliminary stage with a formal charging instrument. It does not mean jurors heard a defense presentation or resolved competing explanations. The government must establish the loan representations, restrictions on use, movement of funds and DePena's knowledge. Defense lawyers can challenge evidence, intent, statutory interpretation and the admissibility of records.

The public-accountability question extends beyond the courthouse because the alleged use included a campaign for mayor. Campaign-finance reports, bank records, property records and SBA documents can be compared, but an apparent timing match alone does not prove unlawful purpose. Lawrence residents also need clear information about continuity of city government while the criminal case proceeds. Officeholding consequences depend on state and local law, not on speculation triggered by the indictment.

Gideon's lantern: confirmed are the eleven-count indictment, loan amount, listed transactions and pending federal case. Alleged are fraudulent representations, diversion and laundering. Disputed are criminal intent and liability. Unknown are DePena's full defense, trial schedule, plea posture and city-office consequences. Expected next are arraignment, discovery and motions. Follow the money, but keep every dollar inside the evidentiary lane: charged is not convicted, and a government press release cannot substitute for the docket. Future reporting should compare the indictment with filed defense motions and trial exhibits, not recycle accusations after the evidence changes. Any public statement from city officials should also distinguish administrative continuity from the separate question of criminal guilt.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Justice; Associated Press

INVESTIGATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Education Department Reissues Parental-Rights Compliance Warning

A Dear Colleague Letter reminds federally funded schools about FERPA record access and PPRA survey protections as a new school year begins.

BY LIBERTY BELLE



The Education Department's Student Privacy Policy Office issued a Dear Colleague Letter reminding schools and state education agencies of obligations under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment. FERPA generally gives parents rights to inspect and seek amendment of education records. PPRA governs certain student surveys, evaluations and activities involving sensitive information. The Aug. 26 letter arrives as schools reopen, but it does not create a new statute or automatically find any named school in violation.

The department says schools may not hide maintained education records from parents by storing them separately or relabeling them. It also reminds districts that parents must receive required notices and, in covered circumstances, consent or an opportunity to opt a student out of specified surveys and activities. Whether a particular note, counseling document or support plan is an education record can depend on who maintains it, how it is used and exceptions in the law. Those facts cannot be resolved by a slogan.

The letter warns that noncompliance can lead to investigation and, after required procedures, a loss of federal funding. That is a potential remedy, not an instant penalty. Agencies normally gather records, notify recipients, allow responses and seek voluntary correction before the most severe funding action. Schools should preserve complaint files, annual notices, access logs, survey materials and staff training records so compliance can be demonstrated rather than merely asserted.

Student privacy and parental access can collide in difficult cases. FERPA contains exceptions and definitions; PPRA has its own coverage rules. The guidance emphasizes parental rights, while districts and advocates may contest how those provisions apply to gender-support records, counseling or safety concerns. Any enforcement case should identify the record, custodian, request, response and statutory subsection. A broad political claim cannot answer those elements for every student.

Liberty's bell: confirmed are the guidance, underlying statutes and announced enforcement pathway. The department cites reports and investigations as reasons for renewed emphasis; those examples must be evaluated case by case. Disputed are the scope of some records and the balance between access and privacy. Unknown are which new complaints will be opened and what corrective actions will follow. Expected next are annual notices, district policy reviews and possible investigations. Rights are strongest when the process is specific, reviewable and written down. Families and schools should retain dated requests and responses so any later complaint can be tested against the actual record rather than conflicting recollections.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education; U.S. Department of Education

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Supreme Court Lets Mail-Vote Order Proceed While Legal Fight Continues

The justices lifted a lower-court block on procedural grounds, allowing federal implementation for now without deciding the executive order's ultimate legality.

BY CONSTITUTIONOWL



The Supreme Court allowed the Trump administration to proceed, for now, with parts of an executive order directing states to reject mail ballots received after Election Day. The unsigned order stayed lower-court relief while the case continues. Its central reasoning focused on whether the plaintiffs had shown the concrete injury needed for standing. The Court did not issue a final merits judgment declaring every provision lawful, nor did it rewrite state election codes in a full opinion after trial.

The executive order directs federal agencies to condition certain election funds and take other steps against states that count timely postmarked ballots arriving later under state law. Lower courts had blocked key provisions after states and voting groups challenged presidential authority. By lifting that block, the Supreme Court changes what the federal government may attempt during the litigation. Actual implementation still depends on agency instructions, state responses, deadlines and any new case with a plaintiff able to establish standing.

Twenty-five states then filed a separate challenge involving Postal Service policies and the same election-order dispute, according to Associated Press reporting. That filing illustrates why the legal story is not finished. Different plaintiffs can present different injuries and statutory theories. Courts may also distinguish between directing federal agencies, changing state vote-counting rules and attaching conditions to money Congress appropriated. Each mechanism raises its own separation-of-powers and federalism questions.

Voters should not infer that every mailed ballot is now invalid unless received by Election Day. State rules, federal implementation and case-specific orders remain important, and election officials must publish the operative deadline for each jurisdiction. A stay is temporary relief based on a preliminary posture. It can remain in place through appeals, but it does not carry the same legal meaning as a final judgment after the merits are fully litigated.

Owl's bench note: confirmed are the Supreme Court order, lifted injunction and continuing lawsuits. The administration claims authority to enforce an Election Day receipt rule; challengers allege statutory and constitutional violations. Disputed are standing, presidential power, funding conditions and state control of ballot deadlines. Unknown are the final merits outcome and precise agency rollout. Expected next are appellate proceedings, new preliminary-relief motions and state guidance. Read the order's posture before reading politics into its result: permission to proceed temporarily is not final constitutional approval. Voters should rely on dated instructions from their own election office while courts sort out who may enforce which deadline.

SOURCES: Supreme Court of the United States; Associated Press

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

White House Opens Three Temporary Beef-Import Quota Tranches

A proclamation adds 300,000 metric tons of lean trimmings to the 2026 tariff-rate quota, administered in three 30-day windows starting Sept. 1.

BY RUBY REDTAPE



President Trump signed a proclamation temporarily increasing the 2026 tariff-rate quota for specified lean beef trimmings by 300,000 metric tons. The additional quantity will be administered first come, first served in three 100,000-ton tranches. The first opens Sept. 1, the second Oct. 1 and the third Oct. 31, with the final window ending when filled or Nov. 30. The measure changes customs treatment for eligible imports; it does not order retailers to cut a package price on a particular date.

A tariff-rate quota applies one tariff rate within a set quantity and a higher rate above it. The proclamation modifies the Harmonized Tariff Schedule for four statistical reporting numbers used for lean trimmings that can be blended with domestic beef for ground beef. The extra quantity is allocated to 'other countries or areas,' separate from the earlier Argentina-specific increase. Customs and Border Protection must administer entry while the trade representative handles technical schedule changes and notices.

The administration says U.S. cattle supply is tight because of herd contraction, drought, wildfire and restrictions intended to prevent New World screwworm from entering through live cattle imports from Mexico. It expects added trimmings to expand ground-beef supply. Those explanations are policy findings in the proclamation. Market prices will also reflect cattle costs, processing, freight, contracts, retail margins and consumer demand, so a quota increase cannot guarantee the claimed relief by itself.

The Agriculture Department and trade representative are directed to monitor whether the covered imports are sold at 25 percent below the market price for lean trimmings. If not, they must notify the president, who may end the remaining increase. That is a monitoring trigger and possible presidential decision, not an automatic rebate or retail-price cap. Importers must still satisfy food-safety, origin, classification and entry requirements.

Ruby's red-tape map: confirmed are the 300,000-ton increase, three windows, covered classifications and monitoring instruction. The administration expects lower prices; the size and timing of consumer savings are not yet proven. Disputed are effects on ranchers, processors and foreign suppliers. Unknown are fill rates, participating countries and pass-through to stores. Expected next are customs guidance, tranche entries and USDA/USTR monitoring. Follow the entry documents and market data - the proclamation opens a quota, while the checkout receipt will show whether savings traveled through the chain. Monthly customs volumes and wholesale ground-beef spreads will provide better evidence than an isolated advertised sale. Those records will separate announced capacity from imports that actually clear customs.

SOURCES: The White House; The White House

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

FDA Seeks Rules for Medical Devices That Generate New Content

The agency is requesting public input on testing, monitoring and change controls for generative-AI-enabled devices as it develops a regulatory approach.

BY UNCLE SIBURSAM



The Food and Drug Administration is asking patients, clinicians, developers, researchers and manufacturers how it should regulate medical devices enabled by generative artificial intelligence. Unlike conventional predictive models that classify or estimate from inputs, generative systems can produce new text, images, audio or other content. The agency's request for information is a fact-gathering step. It does not approve a specific device, authorize autonomous diagnosis or establish a binding final rule.

FDA wants evidence about premarket testing, human factors, transparency, cybersecurity and postmarket monitoring. A central question is how to evaluate outputs that may vary even when users provide similar inputs. Traditional performance averages may not capture rare but serious hallucinations, biased recommendations or confident language unsupported by clinical evidence. Developers may need scenario testing, traceable source information and clearly defined conditions under which a clinician must review or reject an output.

Change control is another hard problem. Generative models can be updated frequently, while medical-device law expects regulators and manufacturers to understand the version that was reviewed. FDA has previously developed predetermined change-control plans for some AI-enabled devices. The new request asks whether those tools can handle foundation-model updates, new training data, prompt changes and third-party dependencies without allowing a product to drift beyond its authorized use.

Privacy and security run through the entire lifecycle. Clinical prompts may contain protected health information, and model providers can introduce data-retention or remote-service risks. A device company cannot outsource responsibility simply because an external model produced the answer. Contracts, logs, access controls, validation records and incident reporting should reveal which model version ran, what data entered it and how a harmful output was handled.

Uncle Sibursam's circuit check: confirmed are FDA's public request and the issues it asks stakeholders to address. Claims that generative AI devices are now broadly approved are false. Disputed are how much explanation, reproducibility and human oversight regulators should require. Unknown are the final framework, comment synthesis and product-specific consequences. Expected next are public submissions, workshops or draft guidance. Innovation needs a socket, but medicine also needs a circuit breaker: the output must be testable, attributable and stoppable when it leaves the evidence. Commenters should distinguish consumer chatbots from regulated devices and support proposed safeguards with clinical data, failure examples and measurable acceptance criteria. Hospitals considering pilots should document supervision, escalation and downtime procedures before any output reaches a treatment decision. Patients should also be told when generated content materially contributes to care.

SOURCES: U.S. Food and Drug Administration; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

ELECTIONS & VOTING

Maryland Judge Blocks Redistricting Question, Then Pauses the Order

A circuit judge found procedural and wording defects in Question 3 but stayed the injunction so Maryland's highest court can consider an appeal.

BY TABITHA TALLY



An Anne Arundel County Circuit Court judge ruled that Maryland's proposed congressional-redistricting amendment should not appear as Question 3 on the November ballot, then paused his own injunction to allow an appeal. Judge Robert Thompson cited missed procedural timing, misleading wording and a constitutional single-subject problem. The stay means the order does not immediately force election officials to remove or reprint the measure while the Supreme Court of Maryland considers the dispute.

Question 3 would replace the state's current congressional map with boundaries produced through a redistricting process backed by Governor Wes Moore and Democratic legislative leaders. Opponents challenged both how the measure reached the ballot and how it is described to voters. A court finding that wording is misleading is a legal judgment at the trial level, but it can be affirmed, narrowed or reversed on appeal. Reporting should preserve both the ruling and the stay.

The timing matters because ballots, voter guides, translation files, accessibility materials and voting equipment require advance preparation. Election administrators may continue contingency work while lawyers seek expedited review. A late decision can create operational costs without implying misconduct. Officials should document which files are provisional, what deadlines control printing and how voters will be notified if the question remains, changes or is removed.

The dispute is not a vote on the map itself. A court reviewing ballot eligibility examines constitutional and statutory requirements; voters decide the measure only if it lawfully reaches them. Supporters argue the amendment offers a new map and political response to national redistricting fights. Opponents argue the process and description fail Maryland law. Those competing policy views do not replace the text of the order or the appellate standard.

Tabitha's tally: confirmed are the circuit ruling, reasons stated, injunction and stay for appeal. Allegations about partisan motive remain political claims. Disputed are the amendment's compliance, ballot wording and remedy. Unknown are the appellate schedule, final ballot status and any printing changes. Expected next are expedited briefs and a decision from Maryland's highest court. Keep the status line current: 'blocked but stayed pending appeal' is more accurate than either 'off the ballot' or 'approved for voters.' The election board's next dated notice should control public instructions, while older sample ballots must be labeled provisional if appellate review changes the question. Local officials should archive every version and explain revisions so voters can distinguish a legal update from an administrative error. That change log will matter if deadlines compress the notice period.

SOURCES: Associated Press; Maryland State Board of Elections

SPORTS SCOREBOARD

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26 RESULTS - THURSDAY, AUGUST 27 SCHEDULE

MLB - FINAL SCORES

TB 3 DET 0	CHC 0 AZ 2	CIN 10 SF 9
CLE 4 LAA 3	PHI 6 SEA 0	PIT 0 SD 3
BOS 0 MIA 4	COL 13 WSH 1	HOU 3 NYY 9
KC 0 TOR 3	MIL 8 NYM 1	LAD 5 ATL 6
TEX 4 CWS 10	BAL 8 STL 7	MIN 4 ATH 7

TODAY'S MLB SCHEDULE

Rockies at Nationals 1:05 ET	Orioles at Cardinals 2:15 ET	Astros at Yankees 7:05 ET
Royals at Blue Jays 7:07 ET	Brewers at Mets 7:10 ET	Dodgers at Braves 7:15 ET
Diamondbacks at Giants 9:45 ET		

NFL: final preseason roster deadline coverage appears in today's Parker Fields report.

FRONTPAGE NEWS

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Booker Unveils Bill to Expand Naloxone Access and Training

The Rory Ahern Act would support overdose-response equipment and training, but the announced Senate proposal has not passed either chamber.

BY SILAS SPIRE



Senator Cory Booker announced the Rory Ahern Act at a Brick Township, New Jersey, EMS station Wednesday. The proposal is named for a New Jersey resident who died from an opioid overdose at age 29 and is intended to expand access to naloxone, overdose-response training and related equipment. Naloxone can rapidly reverse an opioid overdose when administered in time. The announcement begins a legislative effort; it does not mean Congress enacted a new nationwide program or appropriated money.

Booker's office says the measure would help first responders and community organizations place the medication and training where bystanders can act. The senator cited federal data indicating a potential bystander was present at nearly 43 percent of overdose deaths in 2023. Presence is not the same as readiness. A person needs to recognize an overdose, reach naloxone, administer it and call emergency services while the medication takes effect.

The congressional path now controls. A bill must receive a number, be referred to committee and secure action in both chambers before it can reach the president. Committees can alter eligibility, grant formulas, reporting duties, authorization levels and offsets. A sponsor's press release describes intent, but final statutory language determines who qualifies, which agency administers funds and whether Congress actually provides an appropriation.

Policy questions remain even where lawmakers agree on naloxone's value. Programs must decide whether supplies go to schools, libraries, transit sites, families, police, fire departments or treatment providers; how expiration and replenishment are tracked; and whether training is optional or tied to funding. Evaluation should count successful reversals, response times, geographic access and repeat supply - not simply boxes purchased. States also have different standing orders and liability protections.

Silas's stone count: confirmed are the bill announcement, namesake, stated goals and roundtable. Claims that nationwide access has already expanded under this proposal are false. Disputed will be cost, program design, agency responsibility and congressional priority. Unknown are the final bill number, cosponsors, committee schedule and funding. Expected next are formal introduction, text publication and referral. On Capitol Hill, a microphone announces an idea; the bill text, committee markup, floor votes and appropriation build the staircase to law. When text appears, readers should check whether the measure authorizes spending, appropriates it, or merely directs an existing program. Those verbs determine whether naloxone kits can actually be purchased. Any House companion and committee score will clarify the route, scale and oversight structure for implementation.

SOURCES: Office of Senator Cory Booker; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

SPORTS

NFL's Final Preseason Weekend Opens Before 53-Man Roster Cut

Teams play their last exhibitions Aug. 27-29 and must reduce active rosters to 53 players by 6 p.m. Eastern on Aug. 30.

BY PARKER FIELDS



The NFL's third and final preseason weekend begins Thursday, opening the last live-game evaluation window before every club must reduce its active roster to 53 players. League dates place the games on Aug. 27-29 and the cut deadline at 6 p.m. Eastern on Sunday, Aug. 30. Teams must also decide how to handle players on active physically-unable-to-perform or non-football injury lists. The calendar is fixed; individual roster decisions remain fluid until clubs file transactions.

For coaches, the final exhibition is less about a single depth-chart race than about building a complete game-day roster. Backup offensive linemen may need to cover several positions. Reserve defenders can earn jobs through kickoff, punt and return units. Quarterback decisions affect practice repetitions and emergency planning. A player who produces one spectacular play can still lose ground through missed assignments, protection errors or limited special-teams value that does not fit a viral clip.

Health complicates every evaluation. Starters may sit to reduce injury exposure, which gives younger players more snaps but changes the quality of competition. Medical information also shapes whether a player is carried on the initial 53, placed on an eligible reserve designation or released with an injury settlement. Public injury descriptions are often broad, so outside observers should not infer a diagnosis or return date from limited practice footage.

Cuts do not end movement. Players with fewer vested seasons may be subject to waivers, giving other teams a chance to claim their contracts. Clubs then assemble practice squads under league rules and continue trades or free-agent signings. That means the first 53-player list is a required snapshot, not a promise that the same group will dress for Week 1. Position balance can change within hours as claims are awarded.

Parker's board: confirmed are the final-preseason dates and Sunday cut deadline. Claims that a bubble player has secured or lost a job remain unofficial until a club announces the transaction. Disputed are the value of exhibition statistics and how much risk starters should take. Unknown are final rosters, waiver claims and Week 1 availability. Expected next are three days of games, Sunday transactions and practice-squad construction. Watch alignment, assignment and special teams - not just the ball - because the last roster spots are built from snaps that highlight reels usually omit. Official transaction wires, not anonymous roster predictions, will settle each decision. Snap counts and special-teams deployment can still reveal which players received the final meaningful auditions.

SOURCES: National Football League; National Football League

ELECTIONS & VOTING

Everton Blair Wins Georgia's 13th District Special Runoff

Unofficial returns show Blair defeating Marcy Scott to serve the final months of the late Representative David Scott's term; certification still follows.

BY BALLOT BEAST



Former Gwinnett County school board chair Everton Blair won Georgia's 13th Congressional District special-election runoff Tuesday, defeating Marcy Scott, daughter of the late Representative David Scott. Unofficial results reported by the Georgia secretary of state showed Blair with about 52.46 percent and Scott with 47.54 percent, a margin of fewer than 800 votes. Media organizations projected Blair the winner, but county canvassing and state certification still convert election-night reporting into the official result.

The special election was called after David Scott died in April. Neither candidate won a majority in the July 28 all-party election, sending the top two to an Aug. 25 runoff. Blair will serve only the remaining months of the current term once sworn in. The November general election for the next full term is a separate contest with different nominees. Treating the runoff as the 2026 regular election would confuse two ballots and two periods of service.

The district includes parts of Clayton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, Henry, Newton and Rockdale counties in metro Atlanta. County reporting can change slightly as election officials reconcile precinct files, provisional ballots and any eligible late-counted categories. A small administrative adjustment does not itself signal wrongdoing. The useful audit trail is the dated county canvass, correction notice and final state certificate - not a screenshot detached from its timestamp.

Blair becomes the first openly gay man elected to Congress from Georgia, according to Roll Call. That is a historical consequence of the result, not a substitute for vote totals. Campaign endorsements, fundraising and turnout patterns may help analysts explain the outcome, but they cannot establish how each voter decided. Post-election reporting should separate observed returns from theories about persuasion.

Beast ballot check: confirmed are Blair's projected victory, the unofficial percentages, temporary term and separate November election. Campaign claims about motives or decisive endorsements remain unproven. Disputed are interpretations of turnout and strategy. Unknown are certified totals, the exact final margin and swearing-in date. Expected next are county canvasses, state certification and House administration. Count the box that was actually on Tuesday's ballot: Blair won the special runoff to finish a term, not the next full two-year term. A final results table should retain county totals, provisional-ballot treatment and the certification date so later readers can distinguish routine corrections from unsupported fraud narratives. The House clerk's official notice will establish when the district again has a voting representative inside the chamber officially.

SOURCES: Georgia Secretary of State; Roll Call; WSB-TV

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Revised Data Put Second-Quarter U.S. Growth at 1.5 Percent

BEA's second estimate lowered annualized GDP growth while consumer spending rose 3.4 percent and imports weighed heavily on the headline.

BY WARREN BULLION



The U.S. economy expanded at a 1.5 percent annual rate in the second quarter, according to the Commerce Department's revised estimate. That was lower than the initial estimate and down from 2.1 percent growth in the first quarter. Gross domestic product measures the value of goods and services produced domestically. The annualized rate shows how one quarter's pace would look if sustained for a year; it does not mean the economy grew 1.5 percent from April through June in simple quarter-over-quarter terms.

Consumer spending was the strongest major component, rising at a 3.4 percent annual rate. That suggests households continued buying services and goods despite price and interest-rate pressures. Imports increased at a 12.5 percent annual rate and subtracted about 1.64 percentage points from GDP because imports are produced abroad. The subtraction is an accounting treatment, not proof that importing itself makes Americans poorer; imported products can support consumption and business investment.

The personal consumption expenditures price index excluding food and energy rose at a 3.7 percent annual rate in the quarter. That measure informs Federal Reserve analysis, although monthly data and labor-market conditions also matter. A single GDP release cannot establish the next interest-rate decision. Policymakers will compare growth, inflation, employment, revisions and financial conditions rather than treat one headline as a command.

Second estimates incorporate more complete source data than advance estimates, and a third estimate can revise the picture again. Business inventories, trade flows and government spending often move enough to alter the headline without changing every household's experience. Real wages, employment, debt costs and local prices determine whether growth feels strong or weak at the kitchen table. Investors should distinguish backward-looking national accounts from current corporate guidance and market forecasts.

Warren's ledger: confirmed are 1.5 percent annualized growth, 3.4 percent consumer spending, the import drag and 3.7 percent core PCE pace. Claims that the number proves a recession or guarantees a policy move are unsupported. Disputed are the economy's underlying momentum and appropriate policy response. Unknown are the third estimate and third-quarter trajectory. Expected next are additional GDP revisions, monthly income and inflation data, and the next Federal Reserve meeting. Read the components before trading the headline. Corporate earnings and payroll data will test whether household demand is broad enough to sustain the next quarter. Real final sales and inventory revisions will help separate durable demand from accounting volatility.

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; Associated Press

INVESTIGATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Fact Check: 'No Tax on Tips' Is a Deduction, Not a Total Tax Exemption

Eligible workers can deduct up to \$25,000 in qualified tips from federal taxable income, while payroll taxes and statutory limits still apply.

BY BRUTUS PROOF



Claim: The federal 'no tax on tips' provision means eligible workers pay no federal taxes on tipped income or receive a \$25,000 tax cut. **Verdict:** misleading. The law created a temporary federal income-tax deduction of up to \$25,000 for qualified tips received in eligible occupations. A deduction reduces income subject to tax; it is not a dollar-for-dollar credit and not a refund equal to the deduction. Social Security and Medicare payroll taxes can still apply to tipped wages.

The deduction is available for tax years 2025 through 2028 and can be claimed whether a taxpayer itemizes or uses the standard deduction. Qualified tips must be voluntary cash or charged tips, including qualifying shared tips, and must be properly reported. Self-employed workers cannot deduct more than net income from the trade or business in which the tips were earned. Married taxpayers must file jointly, and a valid Social Security number is required.

Income limits further narrow the benefit. The deduction begins to phase out when modified adjusted gross income exceeds \$150,000 for single filers or \$300,000 for joint filers. The maximum tax savings depends on the amount of qualified tips and the taxpayer's marginal income-tax rate. FactCheck.org notes that even a worker eligible for the full deduction would not save \$25,000; the deductible amount is multiplied by the applicable tax rate when estimating federal income-tax reduction.

The policy can still produce real savings. A worker with documented qualified tips may reduce taxable income and owe less federal income tax than under prior law. But a slogan compresses eligibility, reporting, occupation, income and filing-status rules. Taxpayers should use IRS Schedule 1-A instructions and current guidance rather than subtracting tips from wages on their own or assuming payroll withholding no longer matters.

Brutus verdict: confirmed are the \$25,000 maximum deduction, phaseout thresholds, 2025-2028 window and continuing payroll-tax treatment. Unsupported are claims of a universal \$25,000 refund or complete exemption from every federal tax. Disputed estimates concern how many households benefit and by how much. Unknown for any individual is the result without reported tips, income, occupation and filing status. Expected next are tax-year filings and updated IRS guidance. The accurate shorthand is 'qualified-tip income-tax deduction,' not 'all taxes erased.' Employers must still report wages and tips correctly, while taxpayers need records that separate qualified voluntary tips from service charges or reclassified compensation. The IRS worksheet, not campaign shorthand, should drive the return.

SOURCES: Internal Revenue Service; FactCheck.org

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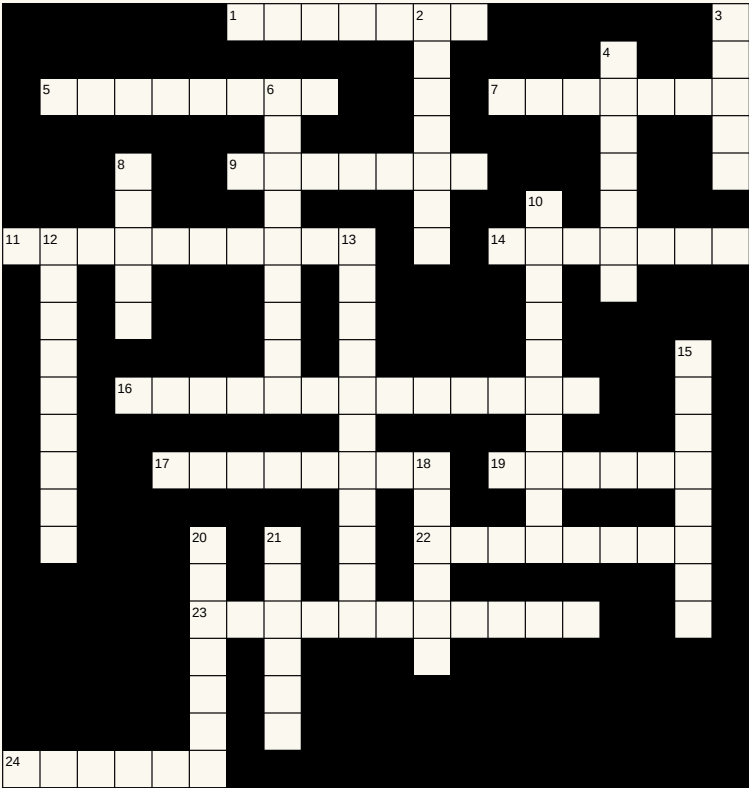
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DAILY LEDGER CROSSWORD

24 CLUES - FRESH CONNECTED GRID - ACROSS THEN DOWN



ACROSS

- 1. Jury decision (7)
- 5. Federal legislature (8)
- 7. Recovered missed shot (7)
- 9. Unfinished maintenance load (7)
- 11. Unwelcome conduct (10)
- 14. Return through atmosphere (7)
- 16. Insider reporting misconduct (13)
- 17. Technical professional (8)
- 19. Official documentation (6)
- 22. Defense headquarters (8)
- 23. Imitation sold as genuine (11)
- 24. Voter selection form (6)

DOWN

- 2. Border import authority (7)
- 3. Formal records review (5)
- 4. Residential shelter (7)
- 6. Launch facility (9)
- 8. Deception for gain (5)
- 10. Civil resolution (10)
- 12. Stepwise computing method (9)
- 13. Protected business know-how (11)
- 15. Proof in the record (8)
- 18. News account (6)
- 20. Lottery top prize (7)
- 21. Rocket departure (6)

TODAY'S ANSWERS

1 A: VERDICT 2 D: CUSTOMS 3 D: AUDIT 4 D: HOUSING 5 A: CONGRESS 6 D: SPACEPORT 7 A: REBOUND 8
D: FRAUD 9 A: BACKLOG 10 D: SETTLEMENT 11 A: HARASSMENT 12 D: ALGORITHM 13 D: TRADESECRET 14
A: REENTRY 15 D: EVIDENCE 16 A: WHISTLEBLOWER 17 A: ENGINEER 18 D: REPORT 19 A: RECORD 20 D:
JACKPOT 21 D: LAUNCH 22 A: PENTAGON 23 A: COUNTERFEIT 24 A: BALLOT