

## Republicans get earful back at home

*The Washington Post*

ROSWELL, Ga. — The crowd packed into City Hall and filled an overflow room with one question, above all, for their Republican congressman: What did he think of Elon Musk's slash-and-burn mission to shrink the federal government?

Their Atlanta suburb in a solid-red district was hardly a hub of the liberal resistance, but hundreds had shown up to confront Rep. Richard McCormick in person. Now each argument from the lawmaker brought a new round of shouts, groans and boos.

"If you're going to just yell at me, that's not going to be an effective town hall," McCormick said, five minutes into defending Musk's U.S. DOGE Service.

"But we're pissed!" a woman shouted.

Recent town halls for congressional Republicans from Georgia to Wisconsin to Oregon grew testy as voters showed up to vent, outraged at the firing of workers and the Department of Government Efficiency's access to sensitive data. Protes-

ters showed up around the country at lawmakers' offices.

The backlash extends far beyond federal workers in the Beltway, reaching purple districts that will decide control of Congress in 2026 and swing states like Georgia that helped return Donald Trump to the White House. Layoffs just hit the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Funding freezes have halted clean-energy projects championed by former President Joe Biden.

The crowd at McCormick's town hall Thursday night was decidedly liberal. But new Washington Post-Ipsos polling suggests some of Trump and Musk's moves are unpopular beyond the Democratic base. About 6 in 10 Americans surveyed were opposed to shutting down the U.S. Agency for International Development, which Musk bragged about feeding "into the wood chipper."

Republicans have overwhelmingly backed DOGE's mission and even moved to replicate it at the state-level, including in Georgia. But they're

also struggling to justify the scope of some cuts and scrambling to get exceptions for their constituents — in some cases lobbying the Trump administration to restore federal funding to their states.

Anna Foy teared up as she waited with her mother to watch McCormick's town hall from overflow. The 33-year-old Army reservist said the Bureau of Land Management had abruptly rescinded a job offer wrangling wild horses; she spoke to someone in McCormick's office, she said, and was here to follow up.

"I've worked six years to develop my résumé around this job," Foy said. "I don't know what to do." When the town hall finished, she waited to speak with the congressman's staff.

Around the country, other GOP House members faced sharp questions after heading home for recess. Liberal groups encouraged their members to show up to town halls in deep-red territory.

In rural La Grande, Ore., attendees of Rep. Cliff Bentz's town hall erupted in boos and

shouted "Tax Elon!" according to local news outlet The Observer. In Ohio, Rep. Troy Balderson acknowledged some limits to Musk's authority at a luncheon, according to the Columbus Dispatch.

"Congress has to decide whether the Department of Education goes away," Balderson said. "Not the president, not Elon Musk. Congress decides."

But Republican lawmakers have mostly defended and declined to publicly criticize DOGE while endorsing its stated goals of rooting out waste in the federal government. And plenty of their base voters are eager for more cuts.

Democrats have increasingly focused their opposition to the Trump administration on Musk and DOGE, viewing the billionaire Trump donor as the perfect villain. They say an unelected businessman should not wield so much power over the federal government and accuse him and Trump of illegally usurping Congress' power of the purse by unilaterally canceling spending.

## White House moves ahead with USAID dismantling

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration moved its fast-paced dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development toward what appeared to be its final phases, telling all but a fraction of staffers worldwide that they were on leave as of Monday and notifying at least 1,600 of the U.S.-based staffers they were being fired.

The move was the latest and

one of the biggest steps in what President Donald Trump and cost-cutting ally Elon Musk say is their goal of gutting the 6-decade-old aid and development agency in a broader campaign to slash the size of the federal government.

The move comes after a federal judge on Friday allowed the administration to move forward with its plan to pull thousands of USAID staffers off the job in the United States and around the

world. U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols rejected pleas in a lawsuit from employees to keep temporarily blocking the government's plan.

"As of 11:59 p.m. EST on Sunday, February 23, 2025, all USAID direct hire personnel, with the exception of designated personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leadership and/or specially designated programs, will be placed on administrative leave

globally," according to the notices sent to USAID workers that were viewed by The Associated Press.

At the same time, the agency said in the notices to staffers that it was beginning a firing process called reduction in force that would eliminate 2,000 U.S.-based jobs.

A version of the notice posted later on USAID's website put the number of positions to be eliminated lower, at 1,600.

# South Korea tours extended for families

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The Pentagon has tacked a year on the length of a tour of duty for service members who bring their families with them to South Korea.

Troops on accompanied tours — those who bring their spouses or dependents with them to South Korea — are now expected to serve 36 months in the country, according to a Feb. 11 memo from Tim Dill, assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve affairs.

Service members on accom-

panied tours were previously expected to stay two years and may still be eligible for the shorter term with a waiver from their service branch, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff's office.

Not all service members are eligible for accompanied tours. U.S. Forces Korea, which oversees approximately 28,500 troops on the peninsula, approves accompanied tours based on its needs and resources. If approved, families are housed in apartment complexes in or close to U.S. military bases.

Unaccompanied troops serve

a year in South Korea and typically live in barracks.

The change will not affect families already in South Korea and USFK will be working with units to waive the extension for new arrivals until October, according to a news release from the command.

"This policy adjustment aims to provide greater continuity within USFK while fostering stronger ties between service members, their families and the local community," the release said. "The extended tour length is expected to enhance operational efficiency by reducing

turnover and increasing mission effectiveness."

The Army in August doubled that tour for unaccompanied troops in seven career fields: air traffic control operators, UH-60 Black Hawk repairers, military dog handlers, counterintelligence agents, signal intelligence analysts and Criminal Investigation Division enlisted and warrant officer special agents.

Camp Humphreys, about 40 miles south of Seoul in Pyeongtaek city, has built new housing in anticipation of more residents.

## Former Army reservist sentenced for role in scam

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

A former reserve soldier who took part in a scheme that authorities say defrauded the Army out of more than \$100,000 will pay restitution and do community service, a federal judge in Louisiana decided.

Cody Francis, 34, of New Orleans, was one of seven defendants charged in 2021 with lying about performing military funeral honors at ceremonies that never took place.

Chief Judge Nannette Jolivet Brown of the U.S. District Court in New Orleans ordered Francis to repay nearly \$11,400, according to a Justice Department statement

Saturday. That was the amount he admitted accepting for nonexistent ceremonies.

Francis also was sentenced to 100 hours of community service, the statement said, adding that the sentence was handed down on Feb. 13.

He had pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit theft of government funds.

Between 2013 and 2016, Francis and six co-conspirators submitted fraudulent payment requests for fake funeral honors, according to court documents. At the time, he was a corporal stationed at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans.

Fellow Army reservist Christopher

O'Connor, a former staff sergeant and pay technician, submitted \$101,858.19 in false claims on behalf of himself, Francis and the others, the DOJ said in an October 2023 statement.

O'Connor had proposed submitting these false requests in the names of the others in exchange for a share of their proceeds. On top of receiving a portion of those payments, O'Connor also submitted and received nearly \$19,000 in fraudulent claims for himself, the Justice Department said.

O'Connor is scheduled to be sentenced April 10. Four other defendants in the case pleaded guilty in 2023.

## Ride on Okinawa aims to highlight motorcycle safety

By BRIAN McELHINEY  
AND KEISHI KOJA  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Tom Quinn and Matt Nevins laugh when they recall particularly close calls they've experienced while riding their motorcycles on Okinawa.

The two veterans expect a near miss every time they mount their Harley-Davidsons, they told Stars and Stripes on Feb. 6 at Naval Hospital Okina-

wa. They were gathered for a safety brief for a 100-mile ride they took Thursday with a group of vets and active-duty sailors and Marines.

Three U.S. service members died last year in motorcycle accidents on Okinawa, an unusually high number, said Navy Lt. Keegan Marcantel, a physical therapist who organized the ride to bring more attention to motorcycle safety.

"Everybody's got a million

close-call stories," he said. "The skilled riders have trained it enough to negotiate those incidents much more quickly, sometimes without really thinking about it too much."

Quinn and Nevins were among the 12 Legion bikers serving as mentors to the eight Marines and sailors who participated in the ride.

"I really think there should be more mentorship; I didn't

have a lot of it when I was learning how to ride a motorcycle as a young Marine," Quinn said after the Feb. 6 brief.

The ride from the hospital to Kouri Island north of Motobu Peninsula and back covered about 100 miles on Okinawa's heavily trafficked Route 58 and the Okinawa Expressway.

Along the way, the group stopped twice for safety presentations from the Legionnaires.

# Workers sue over Musk email threat

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk violated the law with his weekend demand that federal employees explain their accomplishments or risk being fired, attorneys for the workers said Monday in a lawsuit.

The updated lawsuit, which was filed in federal court in California and was provided to The Associated Press, is trying to block mass layoffs pursued by Musk and President Donald Trump, including any connected to the email distributed by the Office of Personnel Management on Saturday.

Musk, who's leading the Republican president's efforts to overhaul and downsize the federal government, continued to threaten federal workers Monday even as confusion spread through the administration and some top officials told employees not to comply.

"Those who do not take this email seriously will soon be furthering their career elsewhere," Musk posted on X, his social media platform.

He also escalated Trump's demand for employees to stop working remotely, saying those who fail to return to the office will be placed on administrative

leave.

The latest round of turmoil began over the weekend, when Trump posted on his social media website: "ELON IS DOING A GREAT JOB, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIM GET MORE AGGRESSIVE."

Musk followed by saying "all federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week." He claimed "failure to respond will be taken as a resignation." The directive echoed how the entrepreneur has managed his own companies.

The Office of Personnel Man-

agement sent out its own request afterward.

"Please reply to this email with approx. 5 bullets of what you accomplished last week and cc your manager," the message said. However, it said nothing about the potential for employees being fired for noncompliance. The deadline was listed as 11:59 p.m. EST Monday.

There was swift resistance from several key U.S. agencies led by the president's loyalists — including the FBI, the State Department, Homeland Security and the Pentagon — which instructed their employees over the weekend not to respond.

## Experienced workers swept up in firings

*Associated Press*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Warren Hill spent more than two decades working at the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, which spans 4 million acres of coastline, forests, lakes and glaciers in Alaska.

Last summer, he was promoted to serve as maintenance supervisor. Because Hill was starting a new role, he was on probationary status when President Donald Trump's administration began firing thousands and thousands of federal workers who had less civil service protection.

Probationary employees are generally younger, with less than a year or two on the job. However, the classification can also apply to workers with much more experience who were placed on probation when they transferred between agencies or moved into a different position. Now many have been swept up in layoffs championed by Elon Musk, the billionaire entrepreneur who is advising Trump.

A lot of them, including Hill, were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. They were often terminated in cursory letters that described their services as no longer needed or accused them of poor performance even in cases where they had received positive reviews for their work.

The total number and experience level of probationary employees who have been fired isn't clear.

The layoffs have taken place across many agencies, including Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs, Education, Energy, the Food and Drug Administration and the National Park Service. Roughly 2,000 employees were cut from the U.S. Forest Service, and another 7,000 people are expected to be let go at the Internal Revenue Service.

The Trump administration has defended its handling of probationary employees, which is part of a sweeping effort to downsize the federal government.

## IRS moves to cut employees by mail following tech glitch

*Bloomberg News*

Thousands of IRS employees around the country reported to work Thursday prepared for an email announcement that they were being placed on leave.

For many, the email never arrived. Not because they weren't being terminated — they were — but because of a technical glitch that prevented officials from notifying them via email, according to an agency employee and messages reviewed by Bloomberg News.

The agency has resorted to paper: "All terminated employees, whether they received the email or not, will be receiving a paper copy of the letter via UPS overnight tracked mail," an internal message said.

The agency is planning to terminate about 6,700 probationary workers, a category that includes new hires as well as people recently promoted or reassigned, as billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency project enacts sweeping job cuts across the federal workforce.

Cutting thousands of federal

workers all at once has proved harder than anticipated for DOGE and the Trump administration. Last week, officials at the Small Business Administration sent termination notices to probationary staff, then told them the messages had been sent by mistake. The next day, SBA told the workers they had been fired after all.

The Department of Energy laid off nuclear bomb specialists, only to reverse course and call them back to work. The Department of Agriculture accidentally cut workers who are charged with containing a massive bird flu outbreak, NBC News and other outlets have reported.

There was no indication the IRS was having second thoughts about the cuts, only having trouble with last-minute paperwork.

A copy of the IRS termination notice reviewed by Bloomberg said the agency was abiding by an executive order to "terminate probationary employees who were not deemed as critical to filing season."



# German conservatives win; far-right is 2nd

Associated Press

BERLIN — Germany's mainstream conservatives led by Friedrich Merz won Germany's national election, ensuring that Ukraine has an even stronger supporter in the European Union's largest country and creating hopes for renewal in an economic powerhouse that has been badly battered in recent years.

The far-right, anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany surged to become the nation's second-largest political force, gaining from a backlash against the high numbers of migrants and refugees the nation has absorbed over the past decade and a string of extremist attacks that has shaken its sense of security.

Merz, who is promising to unite Europe in the face of challenges from both Russia and the United States, is expected to become the country's next leader.

His first comments Monday after his party became the highest vote-getter in national elections were words of support for Ukraine, which is marking the third anniversary of Russia's invasion.

"Europe stands unwaveringly by Ukraine's side," Merz posted on X. "Now more than ever, it holds true: We must put Ukraine in a position of strength."

"For a just peace, the attacked country must be part of peace negotiations," Merz added, in an apparent rebuke of the Trump administration, which has begun talks with Russia on ending the war that have so far cut out Ukraine and Europe.

Merz will likely partner with the center-left Social Democrats, who suffered a stinging defeat after their coalition collapsed. But the results were seen as a rebuke for mainstream parties as AfD notched its best results ever —

and the strongest for a far-right party since World War II.

The campaign was dominated by worries about large-scale migration, with Merz also vowing a tough approach, as well as the yearslong stagnation of Europe's biggest economy. The markets welcomed the victory of the fiscally conservative party, with stocks in major German companies rising Monday morning on hopes for a stable coalition government that could tackle the country's economic problems.

The election also took place against a background of growing uncertainty over the future of Ukraine and Europe's alliance with the United States.

The results released by the electoral authority showed Merz's Christian Democrats and the center-left Social Democrats winning a combined majority of seats in the national legislature af-

ter small parties failed to make the electoral threshold. Outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz has also supported Ukraine with arms and other aid, but some Western partners have said he could have done more and faster.

Merz said on election night that he hopes to form a government by Easter at the latest. He has ruled out a coalition with the AfD. For the time being, Scholz, whose Social Democratic party suffered a major blow, will stay on as head of a caretaker government.

Merz's conservatives won 208 seats in the 630-seat Bundestag, while AfD won 152. The three parties in the former governing coalition lost seats, with SPD falling to 120 seats and the Greens to 85. The pro-business Free Democrats, which triggered early elections by pulling out of the coalition, failed to reach the 5% of the vote required to win seats.

## UN rejects US proposal, backs Europe resolution on Ukraine

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — In a win for Ukraine on the third anniversary of Russia's invasion, the United States on Monday failed to get the U.N. General Assembly to approve its resolution urging an end to the war without mentioning Moscow's aggression. And the assembly approved a dueling European-backed Ukrainian resolution demanding Russia immediately withdraw from Ukraine.

It marks a setback for the Trump administration in the 193-member world body, whose resolutions are not legally binding but are seen as a barometer of world opinion. But it also shows some diminished support for Ukraine, whose resolution passed 93-18, with 65 abstentions. That's lower than previous votes, which saw over 140 nations condemn Russia's aggression.

The United States had tried to pressure the Ukrainians to

withdraw their resolution in favor of its proposal, according to a U.S. official and a European diplomat who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the talks were private. They refused, and then the assembly added language to the U.S. proposal making clear that Russia invaded its smaller neighbor in violation of the U.N. Charter.

The vote on the amended U.S. resolution was 93-8 with 73 abstentions, with Ukraine voting "yes," the U.S. abstaining and Russia voting "no."

Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Mariana Betsa said her country is exercising its "inherent right to self-defense" following Russia's invasion.

U.S. deputy ambassador Dorothy Shea, meanwhile, said multiple previous U.N. resolutions condemning Russia and demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops "have failed to stop the war."

## Western leaders visit Kyiv, pledge more military support

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — More than a dozen Western leaders attended events in Ukraine on Monday marking the third anniversary of the country's war with Russia, many pledging more military aid in a conspicuous show of support for Kyiv as uncertainty deepened over the commitment of President Donald Trump's administration to helping it fend off Russia's invasion.

The fourth year of fighting could be pivotal, as Trump uses his return to office last month to press for a peace deal. But Ukrainian and European officials have been rattled by his cordial approach to Russian President Vladimir Putin and his tough words for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

World security is at stake in talks over how the war ends, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen warned.

"The autocrats around the world are watching very carefully whether there's any impunity if you violate international borders or invade your neighbor, or if there is true deterrence," she told a conference in Kyiv.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau echoed that sentiment. Canadians, he said, "believe deeply that it's not just about Ukraine. It's about the rules and the values and the principles of sovereignty, of independence, territorial integrity that protects every country in the world. All of us rely on those rules to be able to build peace and security."

Some observers say Russian success in Ukraine could embolden China's own ambitions. Just as Moscow claims that Ukraine is rightfully Russian territory, China claims the self-governing island of Taiwan as its own.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Killer who ate body parts gets supervised release**

**CT** MIDDLETOWN — A Connecticut man who was found not guilty by reason of insanity of killing a victim with a hatchet and eating body parts has been granted conditional release from the state's only maximum-security psychiatric hospital, despite concerns expressed by the victim's family and state lawmakers.

Tyree Smith was ordered confined to Whiting Forensic Hospital for 60 years in 2013 in connection with the killing of Angel Gonzalez, whose mutilated body was found in a vacant apartment in Bridgeport in January 2012 a month after he was hacked to death. Smith's cousin had testified that Smith told her he ate part of Gonzalez's brain and an eyeball while drinking sake.

The state's Psychiatric Security Review Board granted Smith conditional release from the hospital after hearing from a psychiatrist, who said Smith's schizophrenia and alcohol and drug disorders were in full remission as a result of medication and other treatment.

**Blast at beachside resort injures 7, scatters debris**

**HI** HONOLULU — A suspected gas explosion in the grill area of a Hawaii beachside resort injured seven people, including three in critical condition, according to hotel management and police on Maui.

The explosion left a pile of debris at The Whaler on Kaanapali Beach, a popular tourist area where a string of hotels, timeshares and rental properties line

white sands.

People in the surrounding area did not have to evacuate, the Maui Police Department said, and preliminary investigations suggested liquefied petroleum gas, which supplies barbecue grills in the resort's common area, was involved in the explosion.

The seven injured people range in age from 18 to 74, police said. Two of the critically injured people were transported to the island of Oahu for treatment, police spokesperson Alana Pico said.

**3 shot and killed outside driver's license office**

**KY** LOUISVILLE — Witnesses described a chaotic scene in which three people were shot and killed outside of a Kentucky driver's license office, including one man shot multiple times by masked assailants.

The Jefferson County Coroner's Office issued a statement late Friday identifying the victims as ranging in age from 18 to 33 years old. Officers who responded found one man dead at the scene and two wounded women, who later died after being taken to a hospital, according to Louisville Metro Police Department.

Authorities have not said whether the victims knew each other or knew whoever was responsible for the shooting.

**USDA scholarship at Black colleges halted**

**DC** WASHINGTON — A federal scholarship aimed at boosting students from underserved and rural areas attending historically Black col-

leges and universities has been put on hold.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture suspended the 1890 Scholars Program, which provided recipients with full tuition and fees for students studying agriculture, food or natural resource sciences at one of 19 universities, known as the 1890 land grant institutions.

It's not clear exactly when the program was suspended, but some members of Congress first issued statements criticizing the suspension of the program on Thursday.

"The 1890 Scholars Program has been suspended pending further review," the Department of Agriculture said in a post on the program's website.

The suspension coincides with a funding freeze President Donald Trump's administration instituted. Administration officials had said the pause was necessary to review whether spending aligned with Trump's executive orders on issues like climate change and diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

**2 convicted for death of boy, 11, outside stadium**

**NM** ALBUQUERQUE — Two men were convicted Friday of first-degree murder and related charges in a shooting outside an Albuquerque baseball stadium in 2023 that killed an 11-year-old boy and prompted the New Mexico governor to issue a controversial gun ban.

The jury found Jose Romero and Nathen Garley, both in their early 20s, guilty of murder, tampering with evidence, shooting at or from a vehicle and other charges, a statement from pros-

ecutors said.

Investigators allege that a truck carrying a mother and three young children was mistaken for another vehicle in the shooting as vehicles were leaving the stadium. Gunfire killed 11-year-old Froylan Villegas and paralyzed cousin Tatiana Villegas.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham declared a public health emergency over gun violence, temporarily suspending the right to carry guns in some parks and playgrounds in the greater Albuquerque area.

**Woman accused of theft in deadly romance scam**

**NV** LAS VEGAS — A woman used online dating apps to lure at least four older men to meet her in person, then drugged them with sedatives and stole hundreds of thousands of dollars in a "sinister" romance scheme, FBI officials in Las Vegas said.

Three of the men died, authorities said, and she has been charged in one of their deaths.

Aurora Phelps, 43, who is in custody in Mexico, faces 21 counts including wire fraud, identity theft and one count of kidnapping resulting in death, Sue Fahami, the acting U.S. attorney for the District of Nevada, said at a news conference.

After incapacitating her victims, said Spencer Evans, the special agent in charge of the FBI's Las Vegas division, Phelps stole their cars, withdrew money from their bank accounts, used their credit cards to purchase luxury items and gold and even tried to access Social Security and retirement accounts.

— From wire reports

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# Ovechkin hat trick puts him 13 goals from Gretzky mark

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alex Ovechkin fired a perfect wrist shot past Calvin Pickard for his first goal of the game, scored from his office on the power play for his second and sailed a shot into an empty net from his own zone to complete the hat trick.

"I have pretty good chances to score more," Ovechkin said, "but I'll take three."

Scoring three goals in the Washington Capitals' 7-3 rout of the Edmonton Oilers on Sunday put Ovechkin 13 away from breaking Wayne Gretzky's NHL career record of 894 that long seemed unapproachable. Even after missing 16 games earlier this season because of a broken leg, the 39-year-old is on pace to pass Gretzky this spring.

"He amazes me night in, night out," Capitals goaltender Charlie Lindgren said. "He truly is the best."

Linemate Dylan Strome, who has assisted on 16 of Ovechkin's 29 goals this season, acknowledged "it's going to be tough still" to set the record in March or April. Asked if scoring 13 in Washington's final 25 games was doable, Ovechkin said he's taking it "game by game."

If there are more games like the one against the Oilers, it's a matter of when, not if, Ovechkin reaches 895 and beyond.

"I've never seen a guy so hungry," longtime teammate Tom Wilson said. "Some guys score and they (think), 'OK, I had a good night.' He comes back to the bench, he's asking if he can go out again like right away. It's pretty fun, and it's been an amazing journey watching him do what he can do."

Watching from the other side, grizzled veteran Corey Perry lamented the Oilers letting Ovechkin get open enough to do damage.

"You give the best goal scorer in the world that kind of time, he's going to put it in the back of the net," Perry said.

After scoring 10 minutes apart in the second period, Ovechkin almost beat Pickard a third time in the third but was denied. He got eight shots on Edmonton's goaltender and had four more attempts.

It took an empty net for the hats to fly from the juiced-up crowd of 18,573 fans who chanted "Ovi! Ovi!" throughout. Ovechkin conceded he was a little surprised Oilers coach Kris Knoblauch pulled Pickard for an extra attacker while trailing by three, but it turned out to be good for the Capitals when Ovechkin scored from 139 feet out.

"They got an elite team with elite offensive players and 17,000 people in the stands were hoping they pull the goalie," Strome said. "We'll take it. Obviously he'll take it, and it was a lucky, fortunate bounce. But I guess when you have 882 goals, you get those bounces."

Ovechkin tied Jaromir Jagr's record with 135 game-winning goals, and the 32nd hat trick of his 20-year NHL career moved him into a tie for fifth on that list with Hall of Famer Phil Esposito. His next will be No. 30, reaching that mark for an 18th season.

"You cannot write a story and a book of what he's doing right now at 39," Capitals coach Spencer Carbery said. "The goals he's scoring, he could've had six."

# Robertson brothers score 5 goals as Stars, Leafs win

Associated Press

It was quite a Sunday for the Robertson brothers. Especially in the second period.

Jason Robertson scored three times to help the Dallas Stars to a 4-3 victory at the New York Islanders. Nicholas Robertson had two goals in Toronto's 5-2 win at Chicago.

The Robertsons scored each of their goals in the middle period. They became the first brothers to score multiple goals on the same day in the NHL since Pavel Bure and Valeri Bure on March 1, 2000.

"Yeah, it's exciting, and I think it's exciting for our parents," Nicholas Robertson said. "They got (two TVs) so they're jumping off the couch five times tonight. So it's good to see him do well, and it's nice to have a good game, too."

Nicholas Robertson, 23, ended a nine-game scoring drought. He nearly had another goal with 7:23 left in the second, but his shot was swept off the goal line by Blackhawks defenseman T.J. Brodie.

Nicholas Robertson has never recorded an NHL hat trick.

"I was thinking about it, but another time hopefully," he said.

Jason Robertson's first goal lifted Dallas to a 2-1 lead 8:48 into the second. After Kyle Palmieri responded for New York, Robertson added two power-play goals for his third career hat trick.

Jason Robertson, 25, who has 13 goals and seven assists in his past 16 games, said he was excited for his brother.

"I think he needs the goals more than I do," Robertson said with a chuckle. "I think he works so hard. ... We were training last week together, so it's great to see him getting rewarded."

"I think as a family it's a great night for us."

**Stars 4, Islanders 3:** Jake Oettinger finished with 35 saves

and Sam Steel also scored for Dallas, which held on after a late charge by New York for its third straight victory.

**Maple Leafs 5, Blackhawks 2:** Jake McCabe and Chris Tanev each had a goal and an assist as Toronto won for the second straight night in its return from the 4 Nations Face-Off break. Max Domi had two assists and Joseph Woll made 25 saves.

**Rangers 5, Penguins 3:** Adam Fox scored the go-ahead goal at 11:26 of the third period, J.T. Miller had two goals and New York rallied to win at Pittsburgh.

**Flames 3, Sharks 2:** Joel Hanley scored his first goal of the season at 13:26 of the third period to lead host Calgary to a victory over San Jose.

Nazem Kadri and Kevin Rooney also had goals for the Flames, who snapped a three-game winless skid and moved to within one point of Vancouver for the second wild-card playoff berth in the Western Conference.

**Devils 5, Predators 0:** Nico Daws made 29 saves to record his first NHL shutout as visiting New Jersey defeated Nashville.

**Lightning 4, Kraken 1:** Andrei Vasilevskiy made 36 saves and host Tampa Bay extended its winning streak to five games with a victory against Seattle.

**Blues 3, Avalanche 1:** Colton Parayko had the go-ahead score in host St. Louis' three-goal second period, Jordan Binnington made 27 saves and the Blues topped Colorado.

**Red Wings 5, Ducks 4 (OT):** Patrick Kane scored his second goal of the game on a breakaway with a minute left in overtime and Detroit beat visiting Anaheim to end its four-game winning streak.

**Utah 2, Canucks 1:** Dylan Guenther scored a tiebreaking power-play goal with just under six minutes remaining in the third period and Utah beat visiting Vancouver.



# Cavaliers top Grizzlies for 7th straight win

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Donovan Mitchell scored 33 points, fellow All-Star Evan Mobley had 25 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists and the NBA-leading Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Memphis Grizzlies 129-123 on Sunday night.

Ty Jerome had 15 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter for Cleveland, which extended the longest active winning streak in the league to seven and improved to 27-4 at Rocket Arena. All-Star guard Darius Garland did not play after bruising his left hip Friday against New York.

Memphis, which is first in the Southwest Division and tied for second in the Western Conference overall, lost for the third time in four games. Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 22 points, Ja Morant had 21 points and 10 assists, and Luke Kennard added 19 points off the bench.

The matchup featured the two highest-scoring teams in the NBA with the Cavaliers averaging 122.9 points and the Grizzlies at 122.8. Cleveland has scored eight more points than Memphis in the same number of games.

Mitchell and Desmond Bane became entangled while fighting for a loose ball on the floor with 7:28 left in the third, receiving technical fouls. Morant and the Cavs' Tristan Thompson were also given technicals for interjecting themselves into the dust-up.

**Thunder 130, Timberwolves 123:** Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 37 points, eight rebounds, eight assists and three steals to help West-leading Oklahoma City beat host Minnesota to open a home-and-home set.

Chet Holmgren added 19 points for the Thunder, who shot a season-best 54% (19 for 35) from 3-point range.

Gilgeous-Alexander re-entered the game with eight minutes left and sparked an 18-4 spurt over the next 5:16 after his

cousin, Nickeil Alexander-Walker, hit a 3-pointer that put the Timberwolves up 110-105.

Anthony Edwards had 29 points and 10 rebounds for short-handed Minnesota (31-27), which wiped out a 19-point deficit in the second quarter before losing for the fourth time in five games.

The T-wolves had their rotation thinned further when guard Jaylen Clark left because of neck pain from an awkward fall on the court in the third quarter and was ruled out for the remainder of the game.

**Warriors 126, Mavericks 102:** Stephen Curry scored 30 points and host Golden State beat Dallas.

The Warriors have won five of six and improved to 5-1 since trading for Jimmy Butler, who made his home debut and finished with 18 points.

PJ Washington and Kyrie Irving scored 17 points apiece for the Mavericks.

Golden State retired Andre Iguodala's jersey after the game. The forward helped the Warriors win four championships and was the NBA Finals MVP in 2015.

**Celtics 118, Knicks 105:** Jayson Tatum scored 25 points with 10 rebounds and nine assists to lead host Boston to a victory over New York.

Tatum just missed getting a triple-double for the second straight game after earning one in a victory at Philadelphia on Thursday.

Jaylen Brown had 24 points and eight rebounds, and Derrick White finished with 19 points for the Celtics, who won their fifth straight and improved to 3-0 against the Knicks this season.

Karl-Anthony Towns led the Knicks with 24 points and Jalen Brunson had 22.

**Pacers 129, Clippers 111:** Tyrese Haliburton had 29 points and 12 assists for his 16th double-double of the season, Aaron Nesmith scored a season-

high 19 and host Indiana defeated Los Angeles.

Haliburton scored 17 points in the third quarter, when the Pacers (32-23) took a 101-83 lead. The All-Star point guard shot 9 of 14 overall with four 3-pointers.

Indiana, which is an NBA-best 16-5 in 2025, had seven players score in double digits. Pacers center Myles Turner returned from a three-game injury absence with 17 first-half points.

The short-handed Clippers (31-25) were without leading scorer Norman Powell (left knee soreness) and No. 3 scorer Kawhi Leonard (left foot soreness). Powell averages 24.2 points per game, and Leonard 16.9.

**Raptors 127, Suns 109:** Immanuel Quickley, Chris Boucher, and RJ Barrett each scored 23 points and host Toronto made 20 3-pointers in a victory over Phoenix.

Quickley made 5 of 7 3-pointers and the Raptors were 20 of 35 overall from long range in sending the Suns — coming off a victory Saturday in Chicago — to their fifth loss in six games.

Boucher also had 10 rebounds, and Scottie Barnes added 20 points for Toronto. The Raptors shot 8 for 8 from 3-point range in the fourth quarter to win for the second time in eight games.

**Pistons 148, Hawks 143:** Cade Cunningham had 38 points, 12 assists and seven rebounds, and visiting Detroit extended its winning streak to a season-high six games with a win over Atlanta.

Malik Beasley scored 24 points, shooting 6 of 10 from 3-point range.

The Pistons shot a season-best 59.1% from the field en route to a season high in points. They were 20 for 40 from 3-point range. Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 18 points and Dennis Schroder added 16 off the bench.

**Bucks 120, Heat 113:** Damian Lillard scored 28 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo had 23 points and 16 rebounds as host Milwaukee used a strong fourth quarter to rally past Miami for its fourth consecutive victory.

Lillard, who sat out Friday night's win over Washington with a hamstring strain, also had eight assists. Brook Lopez added 17 points, Kyle Kuzma and Gary Trent Jr. each scored 16, and Kevin Porter Jr. finished with 11.

Tyler Herro had 40 points, matching a season high, and 11 assists for the Heat. Bam Adebayo scored 24, Andrewiggins had 20 and Kel'el Ware provided 12 points and 12 rebounds.

**Magic 110, Wizards 90:** Franz Wagner and Anthony Black each scored 23 points, Paolo Banchero added 19 and host Orlando pulled away in the second half to beat Washington.

Black scored 18 of his career-high 23 points in the second half.

Jordan Poole scored 16 points for the Wizards, and Richaun Holmes added 11 points and 10 rebounds. Washington has lost six straight to fall to 9-47.

**Pelicans 114, Spurs 96:** Zion Williamson had 22 points and nine rebounds and host New Orleans overcame a 17-point deficit to beat San Antonio to open a two-game set.

Kelly Olynyk had 14 points and 15 rebounds — his first double-double since the Toronto Raptors sent him to the Pelicans as part of a trade for Brandon Ingram.

Rookie center Yves Missi grabbed career-high 15 rebounds, fellow rookie center Karlo Matkovic scored a career-high 19 points, wing Trey Murphy III scored 15 points and reserve guard Jose Alvarado added 12 points for New Orleans. The Pelicans have won two of their past three games since snapping a 10-game skid just before the NBA All-Star break.

# Bell wins in thrilling Cup Series finish

Associated Press

HAMPTON, Ga. — Christopher Bell celebrated a drought-ending victory for himself and Joe Gibbs Racing after a dramatic comeback in Atlanta.

Bell edged Carson Hocevar and Kyle Larson in overtime Sunday in another close NASCAR Cup Series finish at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Bell led only the final lap in his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota and had a slight edge on the outside when the caution light came on in overtime following a wreck by Josh Berry.

"That last lap of the race we were at our best," Bell said.

It was the first victory for Joe Gibbs Racing since Bell's win at New Hampshire Motor Speedway on June 23, 2024.

"I am glad that we don't have to hear about that," Bell said. "'Joe Gibbs Racing hasn't won since June.' That's all I've heard. So I'm very happy to end that narrative."

The 30-year-old Oklahoma driver has 10 career Cup victories, and he acknowledged Atlanta wasn't the spot his team had circled to end the drought.

Bell's strength in his career has not been superspeedway

style racing, but he pulled off the comeback after qualifying only 32nd and struggling most of the day to look like a serious contender. Even Bell's crew chief, Adam Stevens, wasn't expecting the late comeback.

"I think I fell off the edge of my seat a couple of times, especially there what was it, maybe 10, 15 to go when we were up in the top three or four and then fell back outside the top 10," Stevens said. "I thought we were toast. But Bell just kept his head down and really dug deep all day."

Austin Cindric led in his Team Penske Ford before he and William Byron, the Daytona 500 winner last week, wrecked with three laps remaining, setting up the overtime.

Hocevar faced criticism from Ryan Blaney and other drivers after the race for his aggressive style on the track.

"Yeah, I mean, there's some stuff I got to learn and clean up a little bit, but I feel like we put ourselves in the perfect opportunity to try and win a race," Hocevar said after falling short in a bid for his first victory. "I've never had that opportunity really before, especially on a superspeedway."

Kyle Busch finished seventh, ending his hopes of snapping a winless streak on the Cup Series. Busch won the Atlanta Truck Series race Saturday but is still looking for his first Cup win since 2023 after having his NASCAR-record 19-year streak with at least one win end last year.

Larson failed to finish the last four and five of the last six Atlanta races and was involved in accidents in each of the six.

Larson's Hendrick Motorsports teammates claimed the spotlight in NASCAR's first two weeks. Chase Elliott won The Clash on Feb. 2 before Byron avoided late wrecks to win the Daytona 500.

Larson's string of bad luck ended Sunday after he qualified only 17th. Larson, the 2021 Cup champion, surged late to win the second stage.

"Came up a little bit short, but proud of the effort today by everybody on our Hendrick-Cars.com Chevy," Larson said.

## Wrecks for Elliott, Suarez

Elliott was in the top 10 when his Hendricks Motorsports Chevrolet hit the wall late in the

second stage and then hit Brad Keselowski's RFK Racing's Ford, ending Keselowski's race. Elliott finished 18th.

Daniel Suarez, who edged Blaney Kyle Busch in a thrilling three-wide finish in Atlanta's 2024 February race, saw his hopes for a repeat win end when he was involved in a seven-car crash early in the third stage. Cole Custer, Ty Gibbs, Cody Ware, Noah Gragson and JJ Yuley were also involved.

Blaney was in contention before his late one-car spin caused a caution, but he rallied to finish fourth.

## New deal for Heim

The 23XI Racing team announced a multi-year deal with Corey Heim as a development driver. Heim will drive a limited number of Cup Series races in the No. 67 Toyota and will also compete on Xfinity races, including next week at Circuit of the Americas. His first Cup race on the new deal will be at Kansas Speedway on May 11.

Heim made three Cup starts for 23XI last year and has a Truck Series win at Daytona this year. He finished 23rd in Saturday's Truck Series race in Atlanta.

# Indiana's defense dominates in upsetting No. 13 Purdue

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Malik Reneau and Trey Galloway each scored 15 points, and Indiana allowed just 21 in the second half to overcome a 12-point halftime deficit and beat No. 13 Purdue 73-58 on Sunday.

Reneau also had six rebounds and was 7 of 7 from the field as he joined the 1,000-point club. Galloway added nine assists as the Hoosiers (16-11, 7-9 Big Ten) won for the second time eight games and earned a split in the season series with their biggest rival.

Fletcher Loyer scored 20

points to lead the Boilermakers (19-9, 11-6), who have lost four straight.

It was quite a reversal for Indiana.

Purdue appeared to take control by closing the first half on a 21-4 run to make it 37-25. But the Hoosiers opened the second half on a 14-2 spurt, tying the score at 39, and then scored 14 straight to take a 53-40 lead with 11:56 to go.

**No. 10 St. John's 89, UConn 75:** Kadary Richmond and Zubby Ejiofor scored 18 points apiece as the host Red Storm routed the Huskies to complete

its first regular-season sweep of UConn in 25 years.

Leading scorer RJ Luis Jr. added 14 points for St. John's (24-4, 15-2 Big East) after sitting out Wednesday's win at DePaul with a groin injury. The first-place Red Storm need one more victory or a Creighton loss to clinch a share of their first regular-season conference championship since 1992.

Aaron Scott had 13 points and eight rebounds, and Deivon Smith finished with 12 points and eight assists.

Alex Karaban led the Huskies (18-9, 10-6) with 17 points.

UConn, the two-time defending NCAA champion, had won nine straight games against top-10 opponents and eight in a row at The Garden.

**No. 22 Memphis 84, Florida Atlantic 65:** Dain Dainja had 22 points and 11 rebounds, PJ Haggerty also scored 22 and the host Tigers sprinted past the Owls.

Colby Rogers added 15 points for first-place Memphis (22-5, 12-2 American Athletic Conference), which has won nine of 10.

Tre Carroll led FAU (15-12, 8-6) with 20 points and seven rebounds.