

House Republicans pass big budget bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans stayed up all night to pass their multitrillion-dollar tax breaks package, with Speaker Mike Johnson defying the skeptics and unifying his ranks to muscle President Donald Trump's priority bill to approval Thursday.

With last-minute concessions and stark warnings from Trump, the Republican holdouts largely dropped their opposition to salvage the "One Big Beautiful Bill" that's central to the GOP agenda. The House launched debate before midnight and by dawn the vote was called, 215-214, with Democrats staunchly opposed. It next goes to the Senate, with long negotiations ahead.

"To put it simply, this bill gets Americans back to winning again," said Johnson, R-La.

The outcome caps an intense

time on Capitol Hill, with days of private negotiations and public committee hearings, many happening back-to-back, around-the-clock. Republicans insisted their sprawling 1,000-page-plus package was what voters sent them to Congress — and Trump to the White House — to accomplish. They believe it will be "rocket fuel," as one put it during debate, for the uneasy U.S. economy.

Trump himself demanded action, visiting House Republicans at Tuesday's conference meeting and hosting GOP leaders and the holdouts for a lengthy session Wednesday at the White House. Before the vote, the administration warned in a pointed statement that failure "would be the ultimate betrayal."

After the legislation's passage, Trump posted on social media: "Thank you to every Republican who voted YES on this

Historic Bill! Now, it's time for our friends in the United States Senate to get to work."

The Senate hopes to wrap up its version by the Fourth of July holiday.

Central to the package is the GOP's commitment to extending some \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks they engineered during Trump's first term in 2017, while temporarily adding new ones he campaigned on during his 2024 campaign, including no taxes on tips, overtime pay, car loan interest and others.

To make up for some of the lost tax revenue, the Republicans focused on changes to Medicaid and the food stamps program, largely by imposing work requirements on many of those receiving benefits. There's also a massive rollback of green energy tax breaks from the Biden-era Inflation Reduction Act.

Additionally, the package

tacks on \$350 billion in new spending, with about \$150 billion going to the Pentagon, including for the president's new "Golden Dome" defense shield, and the rest for Trump's mass deportation and border security agenda.

All told, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates 8.6 million fewer people would have health care coverage and 3 million less people a month would have SNAP food stamps benefits with the proposed changes.

The CBO said the tax provisions would increase federal deficits by \$3.8 trillion over the decade, while the changes to Medicaid, food stamps and other services would tally \$1 trillion in reduced spending. The lowest-income households in the U.S. would see their resources drop, while the highest ones would see a boost, it said.

Most pulled books return to Naval Academy library

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — All but a few of the nearly 400 books that the U.S. Naval Academy removed from its library because they dealt with anti-racism and gender issues are back on the shelves after the newest Pentagon-ordered review — the latest turn in a dizzying effort to rid the military of materials related to diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

Based on the new review, about 20 books from the academy's library are being pulled aside to be checked, but that number includes some that weren't identified or removed in last month's initial purge of 381 books, defense officials told The Associated Press.

A few dozen books at the Air Force libraries—including at the Air Force Academy—also have been pulled out for review, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the process is still ongoing.

The back-and-forth on book removals reflects a persistent problem in the early months of the second Trump administration, as initial orders and demands for an array of policy changes have been forced to be reworked, fine-tuned and reissued because they were vague, badly defined or problematic.

The reviews and changes at military libraries and to websites, social media accounts and more are part of the Trump administration's far-reaching ef-

forts to purge so-called DEI content from federal agencies.

The Pentagon earlier this month issued a detailed directive to all military leaders and commands to pull and review all library books addressing diversity, anti-racism or gender issues by Wednesday. The order contained more specific search words than earlier guidance and verbal orders from Defense Department leaders, and officials said it resulted in dramatically fewer banned books than initially thought.

The Navy said in a statement Wednesday that it reviewed the library collections at all of its educational institutions to ensure compliance with the directives, noting that materials have been

"identified and sequestered." The Army and Air Force also have reviewed their collections.

All of the services' libraries had to provide their new lists of books to Pentagon leaders. Now additional guidance will be given on how to cull those lists, if needed, and determine what should be permanently removed. The review also will "determine an appropriate ultimate disposition" for those materials, according to a Defense Department memo.

The May 9 memo — signed by Timothy Dill, who is performing the duties of the deputy defense undersecretary for personnel — did not say what will happen to the books or whether they will be stored away or destroyed.

Mothballing the USS Mount Whitney?

The one-of-a-kind 6th Fleet flagship has landed on the Navy's decommission list

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS MOUNT WHITNEY—The Navy wants to mothball the only ship in the fleet that allows a U.S. commander to simultaneously lead U.S. and NATO forces in Europe and Africa, a move critics say would weaken combat flexibility and American influence abroad.

USS Mount Whitney, flagship of the Naples, Italy-based 6th Fleet, provides capabilities that no other Navy facility or platform—including aircraft carriers, amphibious groups or even sister ship USS Blue Ridge—can match, sailors aboard the vessel said.

Simply put, “we are a floating Pentagon,” said Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan DeSimone, a communications information systems officer assigned to the ship.

The one-of-a-kind status lies in its dual, secure command centers for U.S. and NATO forces, allowing sailors to operate jointly without compromising sensitive information, DeSimone said.

Recent communication upgrades give Vice Adm. Jeffrey Anderson, who leads both 6th Fleet and Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, the flexibility to direct operations from sea without traveling ashore to command centers in Italy and Portugal.

“In a crisis or conflict, I have to be able to have the ability to simultaneously do it from one location,” Anderson said. That capability isn’t possible in Naples or Lisbon, he said.

Yet in its 2023 budget, the Navy said it wanted to decommission Mount Whitney next year to save some \$179 million annually. The ship’s functions could be handled ashore, the service said

at the time without specifying how.

That date was extended to 2027, a Navy spokesperson said Thursday.

However, sailors aboard Mount Whitney said they believe the ship actually will be in service for a decade or more in a series of incremental extensions.

In recent years, the Navy has submitted budgets calling for the retirement of a sizable number of older vessels to make way for a more advanced, lethal fleet, a divest-to-invest strategy that often draws the scrutiny of Congress.

In 2023, the Navy sought to retire 16 ships early, but Congress approved only six.

The plan to decommission Mount Whitney has raised alarm among advocates and analysts, who say it defies common sense. It limits options during crises, undercuts diplomacy and strains operational readiness, they say.

Sebastian Bruns, a maritime expert at the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University, said Mount Whitney can project naval power and diplomacy better in some instances than an armed destroyer or cruiser.

The window of opportunity to use the ship in that capacity appears to be closing “if one assumes that Mount Whitney will be decommissioned, will not be replaced, and if one assumes ... the moving away of the United States from Europe is going to continue,” Bruns said.

Despite its strategic use, Mount Whitney is ineligible for congressional funding for critical needs because it’s on the decommissioning list. The ship, which entered service in January 1971, needs upgrades to its

defensive systems to ensure it remains mission-ready, shipboard officials said.

In comparison, the Navy has extended the service life of Blue Ridge, its oldest operational warship, until 2039.

The ship “is not going to get the real services and help she needs to really stay modern and to be able to keep pace with the threats of the times,” said Lt. Cmdr. Kenyon Cowart, a combat systems maintenance officer.

Even before Mount Whitney’s communications overhaul, analysts and retired Navy officers argued that the ship’s maritime operations center and versatility couldn’t be matched.

A shore-based replacement facility would eliminate the ability to move into international waters if another country, potentially Italy, objected to military decisions within its borders.

The ship traveled about 12 miles offshore in 2011 to support multinational forces during Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya, the precursor to the fall of Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi. It deployed to the Black Sea during the 2008 Russia-Georgia war and was there again in 2021 amid tensions over Ukraine.

And in the fall of 2023, Mount Whitney was stationed in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea for about six weeks as the U.S. worked to keep conflict in the Middle East from spreading after Hamas’ attack on Israel.

“We can go to where the fight is or where we’re going to be used most effectively to provide (a commander) the most situational awareness,” said Capt. Colin Price, commanding officer of Mount Whitney.

The vessel’s crew of about 300 Navy sailors and civilian mariners can support at least 200

more personnel with workspace, accommodations and high-end technology.

That flexibility allows Mount Whitney to take on many different roles in the 6th Fleet area of responsibility, which stretches from the Arctic to Antarctica, Price said.

Blue Ridge, which functions as the maritime operations center for 7th Fleet both ashore and at sea, doesn’t have the same ability, officials said.

“There is no other ship in the world that can do that like we can,” Price said.

Little more than a day after hosting African military officials and dignitaries in Praia, Cape Verde, earlier this month, Mount Whitney was scheduled to make a port call in the West African country of Mauritania.

But the visit in Nouakchott didn’t go as planned.

There weren’t enough tugboats available to tow the 634-foot-long vessel into port, and sea conditions made it unsafe to ferry visitors to the ship. Anchoring wasn’t a possibility.

Instead, Price and a delegation flew ashore by helicopter for a visit. Mauritania’s chief of naval operations and other leaders later flew out to the ship.

On-the-fly adaptation is routine, officials said, as Mount Whitney sustains military relationships in countries with limited port infrastructure.

The ship can throw a party for dignitaries as well as offer space for high-level discussions around the world while staying focused on operations.

And that makes Mount Whitney indispensable, said Ensign Joshua Coatny, an electronics material officer.

“It just all comes together,” Coatny said.

Accident damages N. Korean warship

BY DAVID CHOI
AND YOOJIN LEE

Stars and Stripes

Extensive repairs are underway on a new North Korean destroyer after a “serious accident” damaged the warship during its ceremonial launch, state-run media reported Thursday.

As the 5,000-ton destroyer was being launched Wednesday, the flatcar carrying the warship failed to move, causing the stern to depart by itself and become stuck on the launch slide at the Chongjin Shipyard in North Korea’s eastern coast, the Korean Central News Agency reported the next day.

The destroyer’s hull was crushed and the vessel failed to leave the shipway, according to the report. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who oversaw the

ceremony, described it as “a serious accident and criminal act caused by absolute carelessness, irresponsibility and unscientific empiricism,” KCNA said.

Kim reportedly demanded the “immediate restoration” of the destroyer and an investigation into the incident.

KCNA did not identify the destroyer by name or class and included no photographs in the report.

North Korea often embellishes its military and technological capabilities and rarely admits to mistakes, according to Koh Yuhwan, emeritus professor of North Korean Studies at Dongguk University and the former president of the Korea Institute for National Unification.

The latest incident, however, was difficult to conceal from the

public eye, Koh said by phone Thursday.

“In this case, [Kim] participated in the warship launching ceremony and many people would have seen the accident,” he said. “It was a big event with the military and civilians present. They would have agreed that they could not hide the accident and decided to make it public.”

Kim could have also publicized the failure to instill discipline throughout the ranks, Koh said.

The communist regime’s leader may have “wanted to imprint upon the officers and citizens that punishment may follow mistakes” in other industries, Koh said.

On April 25, Kim oversaw the launch of another 5,000-ton destroyer at the Nampho Dockyard in the country’s western coast.

The Choe Hyon-class destroyer — named after a North Korean anti-Japanese revolutionary fighter — boasted new technology that modernized the North’s fleet, KCNA said at the time.

“The new generation multipurpose attack destroyer ... serves as an important starting point on the road toward advanced maritime power,” the report said.

The second destroyer’s unveiling was tracked by U.S. and South Korean intelligence agencies, which confirmed its ceremonial launch had failed, South Korean army Col. Lee Sung-jun, a spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters Thursday in Seoul.

Lee said the damaged destroyer is similar in size and scale to the one unveiled last month and “is currently laying down in the sea.”

Philippines condemns Chinese use of water cannon on research boat

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine officials on Thursday condemned the Chinese coast guard, which it said used a powerful water cannon to target one of two Philippine fishing boats conducting marine research in the disputed South China Sea.

The Bureau of Fisheries in Manila said the incident, which took place Wednesday near one of three sandbars called Sandy Cay, damaged one of the fishing vessels and endangered its crew.

The Chinese coast guard’s “aggressive interference” happened as the two Philippine vessels were conducting “routine marine scientific research” in the barren sandbars that lie between the Philippine-occupied Thitu island and a Chinese-built island base called Subi Reef, according to the Department of

Agriculture and the Bureau of Fisheries in Manila.

Officials said a Filipino scientific team were in Sandy Cay to collect sand samples from the sandbars.

A larger Chinese coast guard ship “water cannoned and sideswiped” one of the vessels twice, “resulting in some damage to the latter’s port bow and smokestack and putting at risk lives of its civilian personnel on-board,” the Philippine officials said.

They said the incident “occurred within the territorial sea of the Philippines” off Thitu island, which Filipinos call Pagasa, Tagalog for hope.

China’s coast guard blamed the Philippines for the collision, saying the vessels entered the waters illegally without China’s permission and landed personnel on Sandy Cay, it said.

Private jet crashes in San Diego military housing

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A private jet crashed into military housing in San Diego during foggy weather early Thursday, igniting cars parked along a suburban neighborhood block and killing multiple people on board the plane, authorities said.

Authorities will be investigating whether the plane hit a power line, he said.

The aircraft crashed just before 4 a.m. into the U.S. military’s largest housing neighborhood. It appeared to strike at least one home that had a charred and collapsed roof and smash through half a dozen vehicles. About 10 homes suffered damage.

Authorities initially said no one was transported by emergency crews from the military housing. But after a morning news conference, San Diego police officer Anthony Carrasco said five people from a single

family were hospitalized for smoke inhalation. Another person was treated at a hospital for injuries sustained while climbing out of a window trying to flee. Two others were treated for minor injuries at the scene, Carrasco said.

In the San Diego neighborhood, smell of jet fuel lingered in the air hours after the crash while authorities worked to put out one stubborn car fire. They described a frightening scene in the aftermath of the crash. Half a dozen fully charred cars sat on the street and tree limbs, glass and pieces of white and blue metal were scattered on the road. At the end of the street black smoke billowed as the site continued to burn.

More than 50 police officers were on the scene within minutes and began evacuating homes. At least 100 residents were displaced to an evacuation center at a nearby school.

Judge orders rehire of Education workers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Thursday blocked President Donald Trump's executive order to dismantle the Education Department and ordered the agency to reinstate employees who were fired in mass layoffs.

U.S. District Judge Myong Joun in Boston granted a preliminary injunction stopping the Trump administration from carrying out two plans announced in March that sought to work toward Trump's goal to shut down the department. It marks a setback to one of the Republican president's campaign promises.

The ruling came in two consolidated lawsuits that said Trump's plan amounted to an illegal closure of the Education Department.

One suit was filed by the Somerville and Easthampton school districts in Massachusetts along with the American Federation of Teachers and other education groups. The other suit was filed by a coalition of 21 Democratic attorneys general.

The suits argued that layoffs left the department unable to carry out responsibilities required by Congress, including duties to support special education, distribute financial aid and enforce civil rights laws.

In his order, Joun said the plaintiffs painted a "stark picture of the irreparable harm that will result from financial uncertainty and delay, impeding access to vital knowledge on which students and educators rely, and loss of essential services for America's most vulnerable student populations."

Layoffs of that scale, he added, "will likely cripple the Department. The idea that Defendants' actions are merely a 'reorganization' is plainly not true."

Joun ordered the Education Department to reinstate federal workers who were terminated as part of the March 11 layoff announcement.

That announcement led to the firing of about 1,300 people.

Some Education Department employees have left through buyout offers and the termination of probationary employees, which combined with the layoffs have reduced the staff to roughly half the 4,100 the department had when Trump took office.

The Trump administration has said the layoffs are aimed at efficiency, not a department shutdown. Trump has called for the closure of the agency but recognizes it must be carried out by Congress, the government said.

Senate votes to end California gas-car ban

Bloomberg

The U.S. Senate voted to block a California program banning gasoline-powered cars and other vehicles by 2035, sending the measure to President Donald Trump for his signature.

The 51-44 vote Thursday rolls back an Environmental Protection Agency waiver issued under former President Joe Biden allowing California to enact emissions standards even stricter than the U.S. government's requirements to increase sales of electric and other zero-emission vehicles.

The decision to repeal waivers for the state automobile programs overturns a decades-old practice — enshrined in the Clean Air Act of 1970 — of allowing the state to set stringent pollution standards that go beyond federal government requirements.

That authority, first envisioned as a way to help California combat smog, has helped put Sacramento in the driver's seat, designing pollution curbs that apply widely across the na-

tion in other states that have opted to follow along. The California requirements were also set to be applied in New York, Washington and other states that agreed to follow suit.

Opponents of California's rules — which include automaker Toyota, the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers trade group and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce — have said they are unachievable.

The move to repeal the California requirements drew fire from groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"This vote is an unprecedented and reckless attack on states' legal authority to address the pollution causing asthma, lung disease and heart conditions," said Manish Bapna, the environmental group's president. "After a multi-million dollar lobbying campaign from Big Oil, Republicans readily jettisoned their long-held view that states can best enact measures that reflect the values and interests of their residents."

2 Israeli Embassy staff killed in shooting in DC

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two staff members of the Israeli Embassy in Washington were shot and killed while leaving an event at a Jewish museum, and the suspect yelled, "Free, free Palestine" after he was arrested, police said.

The stunning attack on Wednesday evening prompted Israeli missions to beef up their security and lower their flags to half-staff. It came as Israel has launched another major offensive in the Gaza Strip in a war with Hamas that has heightened tensions across the Middle East and internationally and as antisemitic acts are on the rise.

The two people killed, Yaron Lischinsky, an Israeli citizen, and Sarah Milgrim, an American, were a young couple about to be engaged, according to Yechiel Leiter, the Israeli ambassador to the U.S.

The couple were leaving an event at the Capital Jewish Museum when the suspect, seen pacing outside the museum, approached a group of four people and opened fire, Metropolitan

Police Chief Pamela Smith said at a news conference.

The gunman, identified by police as Elias Rodriguez, 31, of Chicago, then walked into the museum, was detained and began chanting, "Free, free Palestine," Smith said.

"These horrible D.C. killings, based obviously on antisemitism, must end, NOW!" President Donald Trump posted on social media early Thursday. "Hatred and Radicalism have no place in the USA."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Thursday he was shocked. "We are witnessing the terrible price of antisemitism and wild incitement against Israel," he said.

The shooting followed the AJC's annual Young Diplomats reception at the museum.

Yoni Kalin and Katie Kalisher were inside the museum when they heard gunshots, and a man came inside looking distressed. Kalin said people came to his aid and brought him water, thinking he needed help, without realizing he was the suspect.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Flight evacuated following reports of bomb threat

CA SAN DIEGO — One person was arrested following reports of a possible bomb threat on a Hawaiian Airlines flight set to take off from San Diego International Airport, leading to the evacuation of the plane, officials said.

The Airbus A330 bound for Honolulu had just pushed back from the gate around 8:45 a.m. Tuesday when “a flight attendant informed the flight’s captain that a passenger reported a possible bomb onboard,” according to a statement from Port of San Diego Harbor police.

The captain called police and SWAT officers, and the FBI responded to search the aircraft. Nothing suspicious was found, and there was no threat to travelers, the police statement said.

A 35-year-old man was arrested on charges of making a false bomb threat and false report of a security threat, according to a news release from the Port of San Diego. The man allegedly told a flight attendant that the passenger next to him had a bomb.

All 293 people aboard Hawaiian Airlines Flight 15 were evacuated. The plane was cleared by law enforcement and the passengers were able to reboard. It departed for Honolulu around 2:15 p.m., the airline later said.

Man charged with giving alcohol to fan who fell

PA PITTSBURGH — A man has been charged with providing alcohol to the 20-year-old who fell from the outfield stands at a Pittsburgh Pirates game on April 30.

Ethan Kirkwood, 21, of McKeesport, Pa., was arrested Tuesday on misdemeanor charges of furnishing alcohol to a minor and has a preliminary hearing scheduled for June 23, according to court documents.

Kavan Markwood suffered serious injuries after falling from the top of a 21-foot-high wall onto the warning track at PNC Park during a game against the Chicago Cubs. Markwood was admitted to the trauma center at Allegheny General Hospital in critical condition but has made substantial progress since the fall.

Kirkwood said he bought alcohol for Markwood at the ballpark, according to a criminal complaint obtained by WTAE-TV in Pittsburgh.

Capitol rioter charged with recent burglary

VA RICHMOND — A Virginia man has been charged with felony burglary after being pardoned for his role in the U.S. Capitol riot, which included smashing the door panel that rioter Ashli Babbitt tried to breach before police shot her.

Zachary Jordan Alam, 33, of Centreville, was arrested May 9 in a neighborhood outside of Richmond, Henrico County police said in a statement.

Officers had responded to a call of breaking and entering, where the homeowner said an unknown man came in through a back door, police said.

“The man took several items before he was observed by people in the home and was asked to leave,” police said. “Officers located the man in a nearby neighborhood and arrested him.”

On his first day back in office in January, President Donald Trump pardoned, commuted the sentences or vowed to dismiss the cases of all of the 1,500-plus people charged with crimes in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot. They included Alam, who was sentenced to eight years in prison in November.

Hot dog: Wienermobiles to race each other at Indy

IN INDIANAPOLIS — Indianapolis 500 fans can spend Friday afternoon “hot dogging” it as Oscar Mayer’s six iconic Wienermobiles come to town for the inaugural “Wienie 500” race.

It marks the first time in a decade all six vehicles in the company fleet will be at the same location, and it’s the first time they’ve ever raced.

Each Wienermobile will represent a regional favorite — the New York Dog for the East, Slaw Dog for the Southeast, Chilli Dog for the South, Chi Dog for the Midwest, Seattle Dog for the Northwest and Sonoran Dog for the Southwest.

Farmer guilty of crop fraud, must pay \$9.9M

KY DANVILLE — A Kentucky farmer agreed to pay at least \$9.9 million to the federal government over fraudulent crop insurance claims.

Larry Walden pleaded guilty to one charge of conspiracy to commit money laundering. The restitution agreement is part of his plea. Walden also faces up to 20 years in prison under the charge, though his sentence will likely be less under sentencing guidelines used in the federal court system.

According to court documents, Walden, of Barren County, owned and rented farmland in the county and grew crops that included burley tobacco.

Walden admitted he wrote checks to Farmers Tobacco Warehouse in Danville to show he had bought tobacco from the warehouse, even though he hadn’t.

That was part of a scam to make it appear he hadn’t raised enough tobacco to fulfill the amount he had contracted to provide to tobacco companies, according to the court record.

In reality, the warehouse paid Walden back for the checks, minus a fee, and Walden used the checks to support insurance claims that his tobacco crops had been short, his plea agreement said. That happened in crop years 2014 through 2019, according to his plea.

First utility seeks permit for small nuclear reactor

TN OAK RIDGE — For the first time in the United States, a utility is asking federal regulators for a permit to build a small nuclear reactor.

The nation’s largest public power company, the Tennessee Valley Authority, announced Tuesday it submitted a construction permit application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a small, modular nuclear reactor. It wants to develop next-generation nuclear power in Oak Ridge, Tenn., at its Clinch River site.

The federally owned utility provides electricity to seven states and operates three traditional, large nuclear power plants, which provide 40% of the Tennessee Valley’s power.

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Gilgeous-Alexander wins NBA MVP over Jokic

Associated Press

The case for Shai Gilgeous-Alexander was simple. He's the best player on an Oklahoma City Thunder team that had the best record this season and set a league mark for margin of victory. If that wasn't enough, he also won the scoring title.

That's an MVP year.

Gilgeous-Alexander was announced Wednesday as the NBA's Most Valuable Player, his first time winning the award. It's now seven straight years that a player born outside the United States won MVP, extending the longest such streak in league history.

And when it happened, Gilgeous-Alexander said a life of moments—getting cut, traded, overlooked, celebrating, the wins, the good times—all flooded into his mind.

"I don't think there's enough

emphasis on how much off the court influences on the court," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "And once I became better off the court, my career started to skyrocket. It's no coincidence."

It ultimately was a two-person race. Gilgeous-Alexander got 71 first-place votes and 29 second-place votes; Denver's Nikola Jokic got the other 29 first-place votes and the other 71 second-place votes.

Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo was third, getting 88 of the 100 possible third-place votes.

Gilgeous-Alexander—the No. 11 pick in the 2018 draft—averaged 32.7 points, 6.4 assists and five rebounds per game this season, leading Oklahoma City to a 68-14 record. The Thunder outscored teams by 12.9 points per game, the biggest margin in league history.

He becomes the second Cana-

dian to win MVP; Steve Nash won it twice.

"He set the foundation," Gilgeous-Alexander said of Nash. "He was the first Canadian basketball player I knew of. And without seeing guys go to the NBA from Canada, it wouldn't have been as much of a dream as it was for us as kids growing up. So to be in a conversation with a guy like that and what he has meant to not only basketball but to the country of Canada, it's special."

And Gilgeous-Alexander is the first guard to win MVP since James Harden in 2018.

"His value is his confidence," OKC's Kenrich Williams said of Gilgeous-Alexander, his Thunder teammate for the last five seasons. "His confidence that he has in himself and the confidence that he instills in every one of his teammates, including the coaches."

Jokic—a winner of three of the

last four MVP awards—was second, despite a season for the ages. He averaged 29.6 points, 12.7 rebounds and 10.2 assists per game, the first center to average a triple-double and the first player since all those stats were tracked to finish in the NBA's top three in all three of those categories.

It was the sixth instance of a player finishing a season averaging a triple-double—at least 10 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds per game. Russell Westbrook did it four times and Oscar Robertson once, but only one of those triple-double seasons led to an MVP win.

"He's a special player," Jokic said of Gilgeous-Alexander earlier this week when Oklahoma City eliminated the Nuggets in the Western Conference semifinals. "His shot selection, his shot capability ... he's always there. He's a special player."

Haliburton, Pacers rally fast to beat Knicks in OT

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Tyrese Haliburton was sure his jumper as regulation ended was going in, then wasn't certain it had after it bounced high off the rim and hung in the air for what felt like an eternity.

He thought it was a 3-pointer to win the game, then quickly realized it was a 2 to tie. A lot to process, followed by just one thought with overtime looming.

"Then my focus just became winning it," Haliburton said.

Indiana did, finishing off its stunning rally by beating New York 138-135 in overtime Wednesday night in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals.

The Knicks led by 14 points with under three minutes remaining in regulation, but Aaron Nesmith brought the Pacers back with a flurry of 3-pointers.

Haliburton then hoped he had won it with another. With Indiana down two and time running down, he started to lose control of his dribble, regained it and dribbled back out toward the 3-point line. He fired up his jumper and when it finally fell in, he raced toward the sideline and made a choke signal to the crowd, like Pacers Hall of Famer Reggie Miller did to Spike Lee

while leading an Indiana comeback in a playoff game in 1994.

Replay confirmed that Haliburton's toe was on the line and it was a 2-pointer that tied it at 125. Andrew Nembhard eventually made the go-ahead basket with 26 seconds remaining in OT.

Game 2 is Friday night.

Haliburton had 31 points and 11 assists. Nesmith finished with 30 points, going 8-for-9 from 3-point range.

The Pacers won a game against the Bucks in the first round when they trailed by seven points with 40 seconds left in overtime, then stole one from the top-seeded Cavaliers when they were behind by seven with 46 seconds remaining in regulation.

Another round, another comeback.

"It's always special. It's always fun," Nesmith said. "This is what we live for."

It was a thrilling start to the ninth playoff matchup between these fierce rivals from the 1990s—but a deflating finish for New York in its first Eastern Conference finals game since 2000.

Jalen Brunson scored 43 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 35 points and 12 rebounds. But the Knicks couldn't protect

the big lead they built while Brunson was on the bench in foul trouble in the fourth quarter and had a collapse unlike any other in the postseason.

Teams leading by at least 14 points in the final 2:45 of the fourth quarter had been 994-0 since detailed play-by-play began being kept in 1997-98.

"Give them a lot of credit. They closed the game out like they've been doing all playoffs," Brunson said. "Just not really good on our part."

Indiana beat New York in Game 7 of the East semifinals at Madison Square Garden last year, routing a team that had been decimated by injuries.

This was an entirely different way to win, with the Pacers looking all but out of the game after the Knicks' 14-0 run with Brunson on the bench pushed New York's two-point lead to 108-92.

Even after Nesmith started to get hot, the Knicks seemed safe when Brunson's 3-pointer made it 119-105 with 2:51 to go. But Nesmith would later hit consecutive 3s and both free throws when New York fouled him intentionally so he couldn't try to tie it with another, giving Indiana the chance to tie on Haliburton's shot.

Power-play goals lift Stars over Oilers

Associated Press

DALLAS — The Dallas Stars powered their way to a series-opening victory in their Western Conference final rematch with the Edmonton Oilers.

And it was quick turnaround. Miro Heiskanen, Mikael Granlund and Matt Duchene scored power-play goals in a 5:26 span early in the third period, when the Stars overcame a two-goal deficit in a 6-3 victory Wednesday night.

“It started with a power play,” Duchene said. “You get one right way, and it’s like, ‘Hey, we’re back in it now with momentum.’ Get another one right away.”

Dallas opened the third period with a man advantage from a penalty that carried over from the second. Heiskanen scored 32 seconds in on a shot from near the blue line, Granlund tied it at 3 and Duchene put the Stars ahead to stay with a sec-

ond-effort score.

“I didn’t feel through 40 minutes that we had made (the Oilers) earn the position they were in. So, guys responded. We got fortunate. We got some power-play goals,” Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. “Happy for our power play. It took a lot of heat last year at this point of the year. It was the difference tonight for us, so it’s great.”

Tyler Seguin had two goals and an assist for the Stars. Esa Lindell added an empty-netter that went almost the entire length of the ice for their first five-goal third period in a playoff game. Jake Oettinger stopped 24 shots.

The Stars went 0-for-14 on power plays in losing the West final last year in six games, and gave up two short-handed goals in the process. Dallas also failed to convert with a man advantage only 7½ minutes into this opener, but quickly turned that

around in the third period.

Leon Draisaitl had a goal and two assists for the rested Oilers, who played for the first time since wrapping up their second-round series a week earlier in Game 5 at Vegas. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins had a power-play goal and an assist, defenseman Evan Bouchard had his fifth goal and Connor McDavid two assists.

Stuart Skinner, who had lost his starting job in these playoffs before Calvin Pickard got hurt in the last series, stopped 22 of 27 shots. Skinner had closed out the Golden Knights with consecutive shutouts.

“Goals have been going in a little differently, in different ways. Again, it’s a different series so they show us different things,” Skinner said. “The PK, it’s been a little bit up and down. It was bad at the start of the first round then got better. It was great all series against Vegas and (now) a struggle for one

game. I mean, again, it’s one game.”

Heiskanen and Duchene both scored for the first time this postseason.

It was only the fourth game for Heiskanen since missing the last 32 regular-season games and first 10 playoff games because of left knee surgery. He scored a wrister from near the boards just inside the blue line.

Duchene got his goal after his initial shot went off teammate Roope Hintz, who was laid out on the ice after getting knocked down. The puck went right back to Duchene, who then flicked it into the net.

“The first one that hit him, I’m like, this is kind of par for the course this postseason for me. If there’s something that could go wrong, it did, and then it comes back and goes in,” Duchene said. “I couldn’t believe I still had room. Kind of a funny one. But it feels good.”

Colts owner Irsay, who guided team revival, dies at 65

Associated Press

Jim Irsay started his football career as a ball boy. He finished it as a team owner.

The NFL’s music man created his own, unique brand.

Irsay worked his way up through the organization, learning how to run a football team, restoring the Indianapolis Colts’ once-proud tradition to glory and created what some have dubbed the greatest guitar collection on Earth — all while battling health issues and addictions to alcohol and painkillers.

On Wednesday, Irsay’s remarkable journey ended at age 65. Pete Ward, Irsay’s longtime right-hand man, made the announcement in a statement, saying he died peacefully in his sleep.

“Jim’s dedication and passion for the Indianapolis Colts in addition to his generosity, commit-

ment to the community and, most importantly, his love for his family were unsurpassed,” Ward said. “Our deepest sympathies go to his daughters, Carlie Irsay-Gordon, Casey Foyt, Kalen Jackson and his entire family as we grieve with them.”

With the help of Hall of Fame general manager Bill Polian, Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy and Hall of Fame quarterback Peyton Manning, Irsay turned the Colts from a longtime laughingstock into a perennial title contender, even winning a Super Bowl title. He then used that success — and Manning’s aura — to help convince city leaders to build a retractable roof dome stadium that opened in 2008 and eventually allowed Indianapolis to host a Super Bowl.

“I am heartbroken to hear about Jim Irsay’s passing,” Manning said on social media.

“He was an incredibly generous and passionate owner and I will always be indebted to him for giving me my start in the NFL. His love for the Colts and the city of Indy was unmatched. His impact on the players who played for him will not be forgotten.”

More recently, Irsay battled health issues and became far less visible following a fall at his home Dec. 8, 2023.

Police officers from Carmel, Ind., a northern suburb of Indianapolis, responded to a 911 call from Irsay’s home. According to the police report, the officers found him breathing but unresponsive and with a bluish skin tone. A month later, he was diagnosed with a respiratory illness.

During his annual training camp news conference last summer, Irsay told reporters he

was continuing to rehab from two subsequent surgeries.

“It’s great to see you guys, the fans and to be out here,” Irsay said at the time. “I’m feeling great, you know, just trying to get this left leg stronger, which it will be.”

Irsay presided over the greatest quarter-century of Colts football thanks to Manning and quarterback Andrew Luck. Irsay handled everything from ticket sales to public relations as he rose through the organization even watching No. 1 overall pick John Elway force a trade to Denver in 1983.

When Irsay took over as owner following his father’s death in 1997, things were different. The arrival of Manning helped Irsay — and Indianapolis — create a passionate local following that hadn’t previously existed but still remains strong today.

Orioles top Brewers in 11, end 8-game skid

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Adley Rutschman hit a three-run homer to highlight Baltimore's four-run outburst in the 11th inning as the Orioles snapped an eight-game skid by beating the Milwaukee Brewers 8-4 on Wednesday.

Baltimore ended its longest losing streak since August 2021, when it dropped 19 straight games. Orioles interim manager Tony Mansolino earned his first win in his fifth game since taking over for Brandon Hyde, who was fired Saturday.

Milwaukee had tied the game on Caleb Durbin's two-out RBI single in the ninth against Félix Bautista, who was pitching on back-to-back days for the first time this year after missing the 2024 season due to Tommy John surgery.

After Baltimore's Ryan O'Hearn and the Brewers' Jackson Chourio hit RBI singles in the 10th, the Orioles broke through against Tyler Alexander (2-4) in the 11th.

Automatic runner Heston Kjerstad advanced to third on Ramón Urías' infield single and scored on Jackson Holliday's single to center. Rutschman followed with a drive over the left-field wall.

Twins 6-1, Guardians 5-5: Gavin Williams pitched six strong innings and José Ramírez had three more hits to extend his hitting streak to 14 games as visiting Cleveland won the second game to split a doubleheader with Minnesota.

Steven Kwan was 3 for 5 with two doubles and Carlos Santana added his second home run of the day in the eighth inning as the Guardians snapped a five-game losing streak. Earlier in the day, the Twins won the completion of a suspended game on Kody Clemens' walk-off double.

Williams (4-2) finished with six strikeouts against two walks and two hits in six innings. He's 2-0 with a 1.80 ERA in four May starts.

Pirates 3, Reds 1: Andrew Heaney and four relievers combined on a four-hitter as host Pittsburgh edged Cincinnati.

Heaney (3-3) allowed a run on three hits with two walks and four strikeouts in five innings of work to win for the first time in nearly a month. Dennis Santana worked a perfect ninth for his fifth save as the Pirates took two of three from the Reds.

Henry Davis had two hits for Pittsburgh, including an RBI-single in the fourth off Brady Singer (5-3). The top pick in the 2021 draft also turned in a pair of big defensive plays, slapping a tag on Spencer Steer at home plate to end the sixth and throwing out Will Benson at second base in the seventh when Benson represented the tying run.

Cubs 2, Marlins 1: Kyle Tucker had a homer among his three hits and knocked in the tiebreaking run with a single and fielding error by Miami in the eighth inning as visiting Chicago beat the Marlins.

The NL Central-leading Cubs took two games of the three-game set against Miami after a walk-off loss Monday and have won seven of their last nine games.

Chicago rookie Matt Shaw drew a leadoff walk against Marlins reliever Anthony Bender (1-3) in the eighth and stole second. Tucker's second single advanced Shaw, who then sprinted home with the eventual game-winning run when Miami left fielder Kyle Stowers overran the ball.

Rays 8, Astros 4: Yandy Díaz hit a three-run homer, among host Tampa Bay's four home runs in the game, and the Rays beat Houston to win their three-game series.

Díaz's shot in the bottom of the eighth followed Josh Lowe and Brandon Lowe homering back-to-back in the fifth and Curtis Mead's first of the season in the fourth.

Mariners 6, White Sox 5: Leody Taveras hit a two-run homer

in the eighth inning to put visiting Seattle ahead and the Mariners topped Chicago for their fifth win in six games.

With Seattle trailing 5-4, Rowdy Tellez greeted reliever Mike Vasil (2-2) with a single. Taveras drove Vasil's next pitch to the right-center bleachers for his second hit of the game.

Tigers 5, Cardinals 1: Spencer Torkelson had a pair of hits, walked twice and drove in a run to help visiting Detroit beat St. Louis for its 15th win in its past 20 games.

Brant Hurter allowed one hit in three scoreless innings in his second career start, and Chase Lee (1-0) followed with two scoreless innings to earn his first major league win as the Tigers used six pitchers in a bullpen game.

Royals 8, Giants 4: Salvador Perez had three hits including a two-run homer, Bobby Witt Jr. and Maikel Garcia each had two hits and two RBIs, and visiting Kansas City got its offense going in a victory over San Francisco.

The Royals had scored three runs or fewer in their previous seven games and were held to four runs or fewer in 42 of their first 50 games.

Dodgers 3, Diamondbacks 1: Teoscar Hernández hit a three-run homer off Corbin Burnes in the sixth inning, and host Los Angeles beat Arizona.

Hernández drove a two-strike pitch 413 feet into dead center field, snapping Burnes' streak of 21 consecutive scoreless innings and giving the NL West-leading Dodgers their 18th come-from-behind win of the season.

Angels 10, Athletics 5: Logan O'Hoppe hit two home runs and drove in three runs, Jo Adell and Zach Neto also homered and visiting Los Angeles beat the Athletics for its season-high sixth straight victory.

O'Hoppe led off the fourth with his second homer of the game, third in two nights and 13th of the season, just before Adell hit his sixth. Neto's two-run homer in

the third, his eighth, gave the Angels the lead for good at 4-3.

Yankees 4, Rangers 3: Jasson Domínguez hit a walk-off solo home run in the bottom of the ninth inning to rally host New York over Texas. With the Rangers up 3-1 in the seventh, the Yankees' Cody Bellinger homered off Jacob deGrom leading off the bottom of the inning and Aaron Judge added a game-tying RBI single against Texas closer Luke Jackson in the eighth.

The Yankees' rally cost deGrom a victory in his return to New York. The 36-year-old right-hander played the first eight-plus seasons of his career with the Mets before signing a five-year deal worth \$185 million with the Rangers in December 2022.

Mets 5, Red Sox 1: Brett Baty drove in three runs on two hits, including a two-run single to break a seventh-inning tie and help visiting New York avert a three-game sweep by beating Boston.

Baty also singled home Mark Vientos in the first to give the Mets a 1-0 lead. Francisco Lindor had a pair of hits, including a solo homer in the ninth, as New York won for just the second time in seven games.

Phillies 9, Rockies 5: J.T. Realmuto, Trea Turner and Bryce Harper hit home runs and visiting Philadelphia beat Colorado for its sixth straight victory.

The NL East-leading Phillies (31-18) have outscored the Rockies 25-12 through the first three games of the four-game series. Colorado is 8-41 after losing its fourth in a row and 16th in its last 18.

Blue Jays 14, Padres 0: Daulton Varsho hit a grand slam in a seven-run eighth inning and host Toronto routed San Diego.

Nathan Lukes' two-run homer gave Toronto the lead in the fifth before the Blue Jays racked up 12 runs in the seventh and eighth. Bo Bichette drove in a run with a fielder's choice in the seventh and added an RBI single in the eighth.