

Layoffs worsen federal workers' financial fears

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With every passing day of the government shutdown, hundreds of thousands of federal employees furloughed or working without pay face mounting financial strain. And now they are confronting new uncertainty with the Trump administration's promised layoffs.

Little progress has been made to end the shutdown as it enters its third week, with Republicans and Democrats digging in and convinced their messaging is resonating with voters. The fate of the federal workers is among several pressure points that could eventually push the sides to agree to resolve the stalemate.

"Luckily I was able to pay rent this month," said Peter Farrugia, a furloughed federal worker. "But for sure I am going to

have bills that are going to go unpaid this month, and I really don't have many options."

The shutdown has a familiar feel for many federal employees who endured past stalemates — including during President Donald Trump's first term — but this time, the stakes are higher. The Republican White House is leveraging federal workers' jobs to pressure Democrats to soften their demands.

The shutdown began Oct. 1 after Democrats rejected a short-term funding fix and demanded the bill include an extension of federal subsidies for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. Trump and other Republican leaders have said the government must reopen before they will negotiate with Democrats on the health subsidies.

Farrugia is the head of the

American Federation of Government Employees local representing employees at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an agency that faced a wave of layoffs over the weekend. Like 8,000 other CDC employees who have been furloughed from the agency, he was already living paycheck to paycheck, and the partial pay that arrived Friday was his last until the shutdown ends.

With the agency's leadership in turmoil and still rattled from a shooting, the shutdown and new firings mean "people are scared, nervous, anxious, but also really just exasperated," Farrugia said.

After Russ Vought, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, said last week on social media that the "RIFs have begun," referring to reduction-in-force plans aimed at reduc-

ing the size of the federal government, Vice President JD Vance doubled down on the threat Sunday, saying "the longer this goes on, the deeper the cuts are going to be."

The layoffs have begun across federal agencies. Labor unions have already filed a lawsuit to stop the move by Trump's budget office.

Jessica Sweet, an Albany, N.Y., Social Security claims specialist who is a union steward of AFGE Local 3343 in New York, said the Social Security Administration is already so short-staffed from layoffs earlier this year brought on by the Department of Government Efficiency, she doesn't fear a massive layoff during the shutdown.

"The one thing this administration has taught me is that nothing is ever for certain, even if it's codified into law," she said.

Advocate groups urge protections for troops in shutdown

BY LINDA F. HERSEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — More than a dozen advocacy groups for military members and veterans joined forces to urge Congress to pay troops on time and pass legislation that protects veterans, service members and their families from the impacts of the federal government shutdown.

Veterans of Foreign Wars, Blue Star Families and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America were among organizations that voiced concerns about disrupted paychecks and delayed services due to the shutdown — now in its third week — during a news conference in the nation's capital Tuesday.

The groups urged Congress to pass the Pay Our Troops Act, leg-

islation pending in the House that would ensure members of the armed forces continue to get their paychecks during a government funding lapse.

"This shutdown is a kitchen-table crisis for military families," said Joy Craig, the VFW's associate director for service member affairs. Craig and other advocates spoke during a 40-minute news conference at the Reserve Organization of America on Constitution Avenue.

President Donald Trump, meanwhile, assured troops in a Truth Social post Saturday that they would receive their paychecks absent action from Congress to adopt legislation. He followed through Tuesday night.

"Thanks to President Trump's leadership, service members re-

ceived their mid-month salary, and their Leave and Earnings Statements (LES) are now available in myPay," the Pentagon said in a statement Tuesday night.

The Pentagon said about \$8 billion set aside for research, development, testing and evaluation would be used to pay members of the military, Reuters reported Monday. The next regular payday is Wednesday.

Craig and other advocates demanded a permanent solution Tuesday through legislation that ensures troops will continue to be paid during a shutdown.

"Missing a payday means missing rent and missing meals for our military service members and their families. This is a direct assault on their financial stability," said Tom Porter, vice president for government affairs at Blue Star Families, a nonprofit organization that supports veterans and military families.

"We applaud the notion of found money, but we can't rely on a stopgap measure," said Kylan Hunter, chief executive officer of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, which organized the news conference.

The Pay Our Troops Act is pending review by appropriators after the legislation was introduced in the House in September.

Organizations at Tuesday's news conference pledged to keep advocating for military families and veterans during the shutdown, as many rely on benefits and services from federal agencies.

US kills six suspected drug smugglers just off Venezuela

The Washington Post

The U.S. military killed six alleged drug smugglers Tuesday off the coast of Venezuela, President Donald Trump said, the latest development in an ongoing military campaign that has raised questions about his legal authority to use lethal force against vessels suspected of transporting illicit narcotics.

Writing on social media, Trump said that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had ordered the strike “under my Standing Authorities as Commander-in-Chief.”

Trump claimed the six men killed were “narcoterrorists” affiliated with what he said was a designated terrorist organization, though he did not name it.

The strike hit a vessel in international waters “just off” Venezuela’s coast, Trump said. In a video taken from the air accompanying his social media post, a

boat can be seen idling before being hit and bursting into flames.

This is the fifth reported strike by U.S. forces since September against vessels the administration has alleged were carrying drugs. The operations have killed 27 people, the Trump administration has said. It has not disclosed evidence verifying that the vessels were carrying drugs, that the people aboard them were confirmed criminals or which country they came from.

Trump has argued that he has the legal authority to conduct these strikes because he has determined that the United States is in “armed conflict” with Latin American drug cartels.

Lawmakers from both parties have been frustrated with what they say is a lack of information from the administration about its objectives.

However, last week, Senate Republicans narrowly defeated an effort led by Democrats that would have blocked the U.S. military from continuing the strikes.

In a recent notice to Congress that was reviewed by *The Washington Post*, the White House indicated that Trump directed the attacks pursuant to the law of armed conflict after he “determined that the United States is in a non-international armed conflict with these designated terrorist organizations” and must conduct the strikes in self-defense.

Trump has repeatedly claimed that more than 300,000 U.S. citizens die of drug overdoses annually. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 87,000 overdose deaths for the year ending in September 2024, an almost 27% decline from the previous year.

Pyongyang is building ‘Korean Berlin Wall’

**BY YOON LEE
AND DAVID CHOI**

Stars and Stripes

Satellite images obtained by a South Korean lawmaker show that the North is constructing a roughly 6-mile-long anti-tank barrier resembling the Cold War-era Berlin Wall, a lawmaker in Seoul said this week.

Four concrete barriers, each about 1½ miles long, are being built along the border with South Korea, according to a Tuesday news release from Rep. Yu Yong-weon of the conservative, main opposition People Power Party.

The images were taken at an unspecified date by ICEYE, a Finland-based satellite company.

The barriers measure between 13 and 16 feet high and 6½ feet wide, with thick piles of soil behind them, according to Yu’s release.

If connected, the structures would span about 6 miles.

The formations resemble a “Korean Berlin Wall” crossing the Korean Peninsula” and are “creating a wasteland” around the area, the release said.

Yu urged the South Korean military to prepare a response plan.

“We need to perform an escape maneuver or destroy the barriers in an emergency, and we need to prepare immediate military action since it is considered a military obstacle,” he wrote.

South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said during a parliamentary session Tuesday that Seoul will continue to coexist with Pyongyang and will not pursue reunification through force.

Bids taken for Golden Dome system

BY BRADLEY LATHAM
Stars and Stripes

WIESBADEN, Germany — President Donald Trump’s vision for a missile defense system dubbed the Golden Dome may be coming closer to fruition, as the Pentagon is taking offers for fulfilling a contract pegged at \$151 billion.

An updated solicitation for the Scalable Homeland Innovative Enterprise Layered Defense, or SHIELD, program gives interested companies until 6 p.m. Eastern on Thursday to submit proposals.

The initial Defense Department contract announcement in September drew more than

1,500 inquiries during a five-day question period, according to documents attached to the updated announcement. SHIELD would include ground- and space-based systems, satellites and weapons capable of detecting and destroying missiles fired at the U.S.

In a January executive order, Trump called on the DOD to develop a missile defense shield. In May, Trump said the missile defense system would cost \$175 billion and be operational by the end of his term.

It’s unclear how much of the Golden Dome the SHIELD program would cover, but Trump’s proposal has received pushback

for various reasons.

“There are certainly technical challenges with the integration of all these capabilities into one,” Gen. Gregory Guillot, head of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, said told Congress in May. However, Guillot added that such a system is possible.

Some questions revolve around the cost estimates. An advanced system capable of defending an attack by peer or near-peer adversaries, such as Russia or China, could cost upward of \$542 billion over 20 years, the Congressional Budget Office said.

Trump honors Kirk with Presidential Medal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday posthumously awarded America's highest civilian honor to Charlie Kirk, the assassinated activist who inspired a generation of young conservatives and helped push the nation's politics further to the right.

Receiving the award on Kirk's behalf was his widow, Erika. Her voice cracking and often falling to a whisper as she wiped away tears, Erika Kirk talked about her late husband's life, political beliefs and legacy.

"Thank you, Mr. President, for honoring my husband, in such a profound and meaningful way. And thank you for making this event a priority,"

she said. "Your support of our family and the work that Charlie devoted his life to will be something I cherish forever."

The ceremony coincided with what would have been Kirk's 32nd birthday. It came about a month after the Turning Point USA founder was fatally shot while speaking at Utah Valley University.

In a sign of Kirk's close ties to the administration, he was the first recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom in Trump's second term.

The president also spoke at Kirk's funeral in September, calling him a "great American hero" and "martyr" for freedom, while Vice President JD Vance accompanied his body

home to Arizona on Air Force Two along with Erika Kirk.

"We're here to honor and remember a fearless warrior for liberty, beloved leader who galvanized the next generation like nobody I've ever seen before, and an American patriot of the deepest conviction, the finest quality and the highest caliber," Trump said during the medal ceremony.

Of Kirk's killing, the president said, "He was assassinated in the prime of his life for boldly speaking the truth, for living his faith and relentless fighting for a better and stronger America."

The Presidential Medal of Freedom was established by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 for people making excep-

tional contributions "to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."

Kirk founded Turning Point USA in 2012 and Trump praised him as one of the key reasons he was reelected last year.

But Kirk's politics were also often divisive. He sharply criticized gay and transgender rights while inflaming racial tensions. Kirk also repeated Trump's false claims that former Vice President Kamala Harris was responsible for policies that encouraged immigrants to come to the U.S. illegally and called George Floyd a "scumbag."

Supreme Court takes up Voting Rights Act case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Wednesday appeared inclined to limit the use of the Voting Rights Act to force states to draw electoral districts favorable to minority voters.

The court's six conservative justices, to one degree or another, seemed like they would vote to effectively strike down a Black majority House district in Louisiana because it relied too heavily on race.

Such an outcome could mark a fundamental change in the voting rights law, the centerpiece legislation of the Civil Rights Movement, that succeeded in opening the ballot box to Black Americans and reducing discrimination in voting.

A ruling for Louisiana could open the door for legislatures to redraw congressional maps across the South, potentially boosting Republican electoral prospects by eliminating major-

ity Black and Latino districts that tend to favor Democrats.

Just two years ago, the court, by a 5-4 vote, affirmed a ruling that found a likely violation of the Voting Rights Act in a similar case over Alabama's political boundaries. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Brett Kavanaugh joined their three more liberal colleagues in the outcome.

But Roberts and Kavanaugh struck a different tone Wednes-

day, especially in their questions to civil rights lawyer Janai Nelson.

Roberts suggested that the Alabama decision was highly focused on its facts and should not be read to require a similar outcome in Louisiana. Kavanaugh pressed Nelson on whether the time has come to end the use of race-based districts under the Voting Rights Act, rather than "allowing it to extend forever."

Trump threatens to pull support for Argentina if it moves left

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to pull assistance for Argentina — led by a political kindred spirit whose philosophy is similar to that of the Republican administration — if the nation's internal politics don't align with his interests in upcoming elections.

The comments came during a meeting with Argentine President Javier Milei, whose country is set to hold midterm elec-

tions for its legislative body later this month. U.S. presidents typically do not weigh in on the candidates in other countries' democratic elections.

Referring to an opponent who was "extremely far-left" and encompassed a "philosophy that got Argentina into this problem in the first place," Trump warned that the United States wouldn't "waste our time" with largesse toward Buenos Aires if Milei does not prevail. In addition to the mid-

terms that will be a referendum on his policies, Milei himself is up for reelection in 2027.

"We're not going to let somebody get into office and squander the taxpayer money from this country. I'm not gonna let it happen," Trump said from the Cabinet Room. "If he loses, we are not going to be generous with Argentina."

Even so, Trump insisted that the \$20 billion assistance to Argentina, which administration officials strenuously deny is a

bailout, was about helping "our neighbors" rather than any ties to the upcoming midterms.

"It's just helping a great philosophy take over a great country," the U.S. president said. "Argentina is one of the most beautiful countries that I've ever seen, and we want to see it succeed. It's very simple."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent added that the administration believed Milei's coalition would "do quite well and continue his reform agenda."

Germany pledges military aid to Ukraine

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Germany on Wednesday pledged more than \$2 billion in military aid for Ukraine, as the government in Kyiv signaled that it would need \$120 billion in 2026 to stave off Russia's military.

Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said that Germany would buy \$500 million worth of U.S. weapons for Ukraine under a new program to fast-track military equipment.

Estonia, Finland, Lithuania and Sweden said that they would also participate in the funding initiative.

Pistorius said that Germany's "package addresses a number of urgent requirements of Ukraine. It provides air defense systems, Patriot (missile) interceptors, radar systems and precision guided artillery, rockets

and ammunition."

He said that Germany would separately provide "another two Iris-T air defense systems, including a large number of guided missiles, as well as shoulder-fired air defense missiles." Anti-tank weapons, communication devices and handheld weapons would also be delivered.

Over the summer, the trans-Atlantic alliance started to coordinate regular deliveries of large weapons packages to Ukraine to help fend off Russia's war. The aim was to send at least one load a month of targeted and predictable military support, each worth around \$500 million.

Spare weapons stocks in European arsenals have all but dried up, and only the United States has a sufficient store of

ready weapons that Ukraine most needs.

Under the financial arrangement — known as the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List — European allies and Canada are buying American weapons to help Kyiv keep Russian forces at bay. About \$2 billion worth had previously been allocated since August.

Finland's defense minister, Antti Häkkinen, said that his country has "decided to join the PURL, because we see that it's crucial that Ukraine gets the critical U.S. weapons." Finland will also provide a separate package of its own military equipment.

Swedish Defense Minister Pål Jonson said that "Sweden stands ready to do more." He welcomed discussions among other Nordic countries and the

Baltic nations — Estonia and Lithuania — on helping to make up another load too.

Germany's pledge came after a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels, as Ukraine's Western backers gathered to drum up more military support for their beleaguered partner.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Denys Shmyhal put his country's defense needs next year at \$120 billion.

"Ukraine will cover half, 60 billion, from our national resources. We are asking partners to join us in covering the other half," he said. He said that "the most efficient, effective, fast" way for Kyiv's backers to do that would be "to dedicate no less than 0.25% of their GDP (gross domestic product) to military support."

Israel military says 1 body is not that of a hostage

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military said Wednesday that one of the bodies handed over by Hamas the previous day as part of the ceasefire deal is not that of a hostage who was held in Gaza, adding to tensions over the fragile truce in the two-year war.

Four bodies were handed over by Hamas on Tuesday to ease pressure on the ceasefire, following an earlier four on Monday — hours after the last 20 living hostages were released. In all, Israel has been awaiting the return of the bodies of 28 deceased hostages.

Israel, which released around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees on Monday, is also handing over bodies of Palestinians under the deal, a step awaited by many families in Gaza whose relatives went missing during the war.

The military said that after

the "examinations at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, the fourth body handed over to Israel by Hamas does not match any of the hostages." There was no immediate word on whose body it was.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded earlier Wednesday that Hamas fulfill the requirements laid out in the ceasefire deal — introduced by President Donald Trump — about the return of the hostages' bodies.

"We will not compromise on this and will not stop our efforts until we return the last deceased hostage, until the last one," Netanyahu said.

Hamas and the Red Cross have said that recovering the remains of dead hostages was a challenge because of Gaza's vast destruction, and Hamas has told mediators of the truce that some are in areas controlled by Israeli troops.

2 Alaska villages ruined by storm driving out over 1,500

Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska — More rain and wind were forecast Wednesday along the Alaskan coast where two tiny villages were decimated by the remnants of Typhoon Halong and officials were scrambling to find shelter for more than 1,500 people driven from their homes.

The weekend storm brought high winds and surf that battered the low-lying Alaska Native communities along the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in the southwestern part of the state. At least one person was killed and two were missing.

The Coast Guard plucked two dozen people from their homes after the structures floated out to sea.

Hundreds were staying in school shelters, including one with no working toilets, officials said. The weather system followed a storm that struck parts of western Alaska days earlier.

Across the region, more than 1,500 people were displaced. Dozens were flown to a shelter set up in the National Guard armory in the regional hub city of Bethel, a community of 6,000 people, and officials were considering flying evacuees to longer-term shelter or emergency housing in Fairbanks and Anchorage.

The hardest-hit communities included Kipnuk, population 715, and Kwigillingok, population 380. They are off the state's main road system and reachable this time of year only by water or by air.

"It's catastrophic in Kipnuk. Let's not paint any other picture," Mark Roberts, incident commander with the state emergency management division, told a news conference Tuesday. "We are doing everything we can to continue to support that community, but it is as bad as you can think."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man guilty in arson at governor's mansion

PA HARRISBURG — A man who scaled an iron security fence in the middle of the night, eluded police and used beer bottles filled with gasoline to ignite the Pennsylvania governor's mansion pleaded guilty Tuesday to attempted murder and other charges.

Cody Balmer, 38, also entered pleas to terrorism, 22 counts of arson, aggravated arson, burglary, aggravated assault of Gov. Josh Shapiro, 21 counts of reckless endangerment and loitering in the April 13 attack that did millions of dollars in damage to the state-owned brick building. Under a plea deal, Balmer was sentenced to 25 to 50 years in prison.

Shapiro and members of his family had to be awakened and evacuated, but no one was injured. The multiple arson and endangerment charges reflected the number of people in the residence at the time, including the governor's family, guests and state troopers.

The fire was set hours after they celebrated the Jewish holiday of Passover in the residence.

Judge blocks land deal for Trump library in Miami

FL MIAMI — A Florida judge on Tuesday temporarily blocked the planned transfer of prime downtown Miami land for President Donald Trump's future presidential library.

The move by Circuit Judge Mavel Ruiz came after a Miami

activist alleged that officials at a local college violated Florida's open government law when they gifted the sizable plot of real estate to the state, which then voted to transfer it to the foundation for the planned library.

"This is not a case, at least for this court, rooted in politics," Mavel said Tuesday when explaining her ruling from the bench, finding that the college didn't give the public reasonable notice ahead of the vote last month.

The nearly 3-acre property is valued at more than \$67 million, according to a 2025 assessment by the Miami-Dade County property appraiser.

Marvin Dunn, an activist and chronicler of local Black history, filed a lawsuit this month in a Miami-Dade County court against the Board of Trustees for Miami Dade College, a state-run school that owned the property. He alleged that the board violated Florida's Government in the Sunshine law by not providing sufficient notice for its special meeting on Sept. 23, when it voted to give up the land.

Court rejects Alex Jones' appeal of judgment

DC WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected an appeal from conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and left in place the \$1.4 billion judgment against him over his description of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting as a hoax staged by crisis actors.

The Infowars host had argued that a judge was wrong to find him liable for defamation and infliction of emotional distress without holding a trial on the

merits of allegations lodged by relatives of victims of the shooting, which killed 20 first graders and six educators in Newtown, Conn.

The justices did not comment on their order, which they issued without even asking the families of the Sandy Hook victims to respond to Jones' appeal. An FBI agent who responded to the shooting also sued.

Jones filed for bankruptcy in late 2022, and his lawyers told the justices that the "plaintiffs have no possible hope of collecting" the entire judgment.

Newsom signs legislation for reparations study

CA SACRAMENTO — California Gov. Gavin Newsom delivered a mixed bag Monday for proponents of bills aimed at addressing the state's legacy of racist and discriminatory policies against Black Americans.

He signed a law authorizing \$6 million for California State University to study how to confirm an individual's status as a descendant of an enslaved person.

But he vetoed other bills the California Legislative Black Caucus championed as tools to atone for the state's history.

One of them would have authorized public and private colleges to give admissions preference to descendants of enslaved people. Another would have required the state to investigate claims from families who say their property was taken by the government unjustly on the basis of race through eminent domain. A third would have set aside 10% of the money from a loan program for first-time

homebuyers for descendants of enslaved people.

Democratic Assemblymember Isaac Bryan, who authored the university admissions preference bill, said Newsom's veto was "more than disappointing."

But Newsom called the bill unnecessary, saying colleges already have the authority to make such admissions decisions.

State wipes out \$6.5B in medical debt for 2.5M

NC RALEIGH — More than 2.5 million North Carolina residents are getting over \$6.5 billion in medical debt eliminated through a state government effort that offered hospitals extra Medicaid funds from Washington if they gave low- and middle-income patients the financial relief and implemented policies to discourage future liabilities.

Democratic Gov. Josh Stein, the state health department secretary and other officials announced Monday results so far from what then-Gov. Roy Cooper unveiled 15 months ago as a first-of-its-kind initiative.

While helping almost one-quarter of North Carolina residents, Stein said the effort has exceeded expectations in giving individuals and families a second chance to succeed financially after medical crises. Officials previously estimated it could help about 2 million people get rid of \$4 billion in debt. The debt that had been held by hospitals, and are usually difficult to recover, will be pulled from credit reports, the governor said.

— From wire reports

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Yamamoto, Dodgers take 2-0 lead over Brewers

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Relying on an old-school pitching strategy has the defending World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers two wins from returning to the Fall Classic.

As long as their star-studded rotation can continue working deep into games, they don't need to worry about their inconsistent bullpen.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto threw a three-hitter for the first postseason complete game in eight years as the Dodgers beat the slumping Milwaukee Brewers 5-1 on Tuesday to extend their lead in the National League Championship Series. Yamamoto's gem in Game 2 came one night after two-time Cy Young Award winner Blake Snell allowed one hit in eight shutout innings for a 2-1 victory.

"We said before this postseason started, our starting pitching was going to be what carried us," said Max Muncy, who set a Dodgers record by hitting his 14th career postseason homer. "And so far it's been exactly that."

It's a dramatically different

approach than the one Los Angeles took last year, when starting pitchers worked six innings in only two of its 16 postseason games. The Dodgers have seen seven quality starts in eight playoff games this year, and their starters own a 1.54 postseason ERA.

That stellar pitching has LA closing in on another World Series berth even with the bullpen struggling and three-time MVP Shohei Ohtani going 2-for-25 at the plate in his last six games.

After winning nine of their last 11 regular-season games, the Dodgers are 7-1 in the postseason.

"Our entire team is playing the best baseball we've played all year," manager Dave Roberts said. "The focus, the concentration level is at the highest, and we're peaking at the right time."

Teoscar Hernández also homered to help them leave Milwaukee with a 2-0 advantage in the best-of-seven series, which shifts to Los Angeles for Game 3 on Thursday. Yamamoto allowed a home run to Jackson Chourio on

the first of his 111 pitches — 81 strikes — but shut down the Brewers the rest of the way.

The \$325 million right-hander struck out seven and walked one during his first complete game in two major league seasons. He retired his final 14 batters and didn't give up a hit after the fourth inning.

"I reset my mind (after Chourio's homer) and then I just focused on executing my own pitches," Yamamoto said through an interpreter.

The last postseason starter to go the distance was Justin Verlander when he tossed a five-hitter with 13 strikeouts for the Houston Astros against the New York Yankees in Game 2 of the 2017 ALCS on Oct. 14, 2017 — eight years ago to the day.

Yamamoto's complete game was the first for the Dodgers since Gavin Stone's four-hit shutout on June 26 last year at the Chicago White Sox. The last LA pitcher to throw a complete game in the postseason was Jose Lima against St. Louis in Game 3 of their 2004 NL Division Series.

"I established my rhythm and then I dictated the tempo based off the game," Yamamoto said. "So that was great."

This is the first time since 1970 that both LCS road teams started 2-0. The Mariners owned a 2-0 lead over the Toronto Blue Jays in the ALCS heading into Game 3 on Wednesday in Seattle.

Twenty-four of the previous 27 teams that took the first two games on the road in a best-of-seven series with a 2-3-2 format have gone on to win. The three teams to come back after losing Games 1 and 2 at home all came in World Series: the 1985 Kansas City Royals against the St. Louis Cardinals, the 1986 New York Mets against the Boston Red Sox, and the 1996 New York Yankees against the Atlanta Braves.

"You guys might have us counted out," Milwaukee manager Pat Murphy said. "And I understand that 90% of the teams that have been in this situation don't win the series. But this team has been counted out a lot this year. And I think there's some fight left in them."

Canadian slugger Naylor helps M's put Jays in ALCS hole

Associated Press

TORONTO — It was a tough start to the American League Championship Series for Toronto. Canada's team headed west for Game 3 in Seattle facing a daunting 2-0 deficit in the best-of-seven playoff.

Part of the reason for the Blue Jays' big hole? A big Game 2 performance by a Canadian slugger, Mariners first baseman Josh Naylor.

Born and raised in Mississauga, Ontario, the city immediately west of Toronto, Naylor went 3 for 4 with a two-run homer in Monday's 10-3 victory, putting Seattle two wins from its first World Series appearance.

Naylor is the eldest of three baseball-playing brothers all drafted in the first round. Middle brother Bo is a catcher for the Cleveland Guardians, while little brother Myles is a minor league infielder in the Athletics organization.

Naylor's 359-foot drive in the seventh inning Monday made him the first Canadian-

born player to hit a postseason home run against the Blue Jays in Toronto.

Naylor called it a "little kid moment" to hit a meaningful October homer in the stadium he once visited as a fan of the home team.

"As kids, me and my friends and teammates growing up, we all looked up to a lot of Blue Jays players specifically," he said.

Naylor is the fourth Canadian-born player to hit a home run in their home country during the playoffs. Russell Martin and Michael Saunders both did it for Toronto in 2016, and Montreal-born Vladimir Guerrero Jr. joined the club earlier this month in the Blue Jays' Division Series win over the New York Yankees.

"Super cool to do it in front of my family, too," Naylor said. "Very blessed to have them all here, all my friends, and it was a really cool moment for them."

Still, while Naylor's family was no doubt delighted, the result was tougher not just for millions of Canadian fans, but also a bunch of

Toronto players who were once Naylor's teammates.

In the four-plus seasons he spent in Cleveland, Naylor took the field alongside infielders Ernie Clement and Andrés Giménez, outfielder Myles Straw, and pitchers Nick Sandlin and Shane Bieber. All but the injured Sandlin are on the Blue Jays' ALCS roster.

"We were all super, super close when we were there, and those memories last forever, those friendships last forever," Naylor said after Game 2. "They'll go down as some of my favorite teammates I've ever had."

Before the ALCS began, Straw said he considers Naylor a favorite, too.

"I love Nays forever," Straw said Saturday. "He was one of the best teammates I played with, for sure. Talked to him in the off-season all the time. Actually went to his baby shower throughout the season here while we were in Toronto. That was pretty cool to be a part of that. I'm always a Naylor fan but obviously this series it's a little different."

OT goal lifts Canadiens over Kraken

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Cole Caufield scored his second goal of the game at 3:25 of overtime to give the Montreal Canadiens a 5-4 win over the Seattle Kraken.

Montreal rookie standout Ivan Demidov tied the game with less than three minutes left in the third period, forcing OT.

Alex Newhook and Kirby Dach also scored for the Canadiens. Samuel Montembeault made 18 saves as Montreal ran its winning streak to three games in the opener of a four-game homestand.

Jaden Schwartz, Jani Nyman, Jamie Oleksiak and Jared McCann scored for Seattle, which dropped its first game of the season and the opener of a six-game trip.

Capitals 3, Lightning 2 (OT):

Jacob Chychrun scored 1:19 into overtime and host Washington beat Tampa Bay for its third straight win.

Tom Wilson had a goal and two assists, and Aliaksei Protas also scored for the Capitals. Dylan Strome had two assists and Logan Thompson finished with 17 saves.

Maple Leafs 7, Predators 4: Oliver Ekman-Larsson and John Tavares each had a goal and two assists and host Toronto snapped a two-game skid with a win over Nashville.

Auston Matthews had two goals, including an empty-netter, and Jake McCabe and Bobby McMann also scored for the Maple Leafs. Cayden Primeau made 26 saves. William Nylander had two assists and an empty-net goal.

Golden Knights 4, Flames 2: Jack Eichel scored twice to lead visiting Vegas over Calgary.

Kaedan Korczak also scored for the Golden Knights, and Tomas Hertl added an empty-net goal with seven seconds left.

Stars 5, Wild 2: Wyatt Johnston scored on a power play to extend his season-opening goal streak to three games, Jake Oettinger stopped 39 shots and Dallas won its home opener over Minnesota.

The Stars are 3-0 in Glen Gulutzan's return as their head coach. This is only the third time since moving to Dallas before the 1993-94 season that they scored at least three goals in each of their first three games.

Hurricanes 5, Sharks 1: William Carrier and Eric Robinson scored 4½ minutes apart late in

the second period, and visiting Carolina beat San Jose.

Sean Walker, Shayne Gostisbehere and Jackson Blake also scored for the Hurricanes, who have won three straight to open the season. Logan Stankoven had two assists and Brandon Bussi stopped 16 shots in his NHL debut.

Ducks 4, Penguins 3: Chris Kreider scored his second power-play goal in his home debut with 1:27 to play, and Anaheim beat Pittsburgh for its 10th consecutive victory in home openers.

Cutter Gauthier and Drew Helleson also scored and Lukas Dostal made 23 saves for the Ducks, who matched Boston and Toronto for the NHL's longest active victory streak in home openers.

NBA refs use 'automated officiating' to make better calls

Associated Press

The play, in real time to the naked eye, might have looked very close to a violation. LeBron James leaped, got his right hand on the ball with a few tenths of the game's final second remaining and tapped it through the basket to give the Lakers a buzzer-beating win last season.

Referees on the floor called it correctly. Video replay backed up their call, and Los Angeles got a victory over the Indiana Pacers.

Turns out, it wasn't close at all.

The NBA has a relatively new tool called "automated officiating," and the robotic eyes that are now tracking just about everything on basketball courts showed that James was nowhere near committing offensive basket interference on that play. It wasn't needed to decide matters in that case — again, the humans got it right — but the NBA is tapping into technology more and more to ensure that

plays like those get adjudicated correctly.

"Turns out, computers are really good at this," said Evan Wasch, an NBA executive vice president overseeing basketball strategy and analytics.

"So if we can invest in this technology to get more calls right on the objective ones, we do two things.

"One, the accuracy on those calls, by definition, goes up. But we also free up the human referees to not have to focus on those calls and in turn allow them to focus more closely on the really difficult judgment plays that they're so adept at and actually increase accuracy there, too. We think there's what we call double bottom-line benefit to doing this from an accuracy perspective."

Basketball, of course, is not alone in veering toward higher-tech officiating.

Robot umpires are getting called up to Major League Baseball next season. Humans will

still make the calls, but teams can challenge ball or strike calls and an automated system will determine if those challenges were successful. Many major tennis tournaments, even Wimbledon, have replaced line judges with electronic line-calling. Soccer has technology to tell referees if a ball fully crossed a goal line or if someone was off-sides, calls that in real time might just be guesswork.

It's important to note that NBA referees are not being replaced, technology is just helping. Instead of six human eyes on a court, it's now six human eyes and a whole lot of camera lenses that are there to collect as much data as the league can think of.

"Let's get it right," Milwaukee Bucks coach Doc Rivers said. "And let's get right quicker."

Those are the goals, the NBA has insisted. Using technology helps with game flow thanks to shorter review times, helps with

the accuracy and also provides transparency in the ability to show fans and players computer-generated images to explain how calls were made.

Cameras in arenas are helping to precisely make calls such as the ones along sidelines and baselines — who was a ball off, was it out of bounds, etc. — as well as determining if blocked shots were good or was goaltending committed on those plays.

"What we're doing is tracking a bunch of objects in space with incredible precision," Wasch said.

"We are tracking a basketball, fingers, feet, heads, hands, all the parts of the body. We're tracking them in space with cameras and sensors. And there's an element of machine learning and artificial intelligence to build those algorithms on top of that to then know what in fact happened from a basketball perspective based on the movement of all those things."

Bengals all-in on rookies starting vs Steelers

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Between Week 3 and Week 5, Cincinnati Bengals defensive coordinator Al Golden used a rotation at middle linebacker between veteran and team captain Logan Wilson and rookie Barrett Carter.

But then for last Sunday's matchup against the Green Bay Packers, Carter took over as the starter and played every snap.

"It definitely builds a lot of confidence," Carter said. "That's what they told us coming in: They didn't draft us to come in and not play. That's what the plan was. For us to come in and help this team."

Carter played all 61 defensive snaps in the Bengals' 27-18 loss to the Packers. Only the New York Jets and the Cleveland Browns are counting on rookies more than the Bengals, who could possibly start five rookies this Thursday against the first-place Pittsburgh Steelers.

There are only seven rookie li-

nebackers who have made a start this season, and two of them are Bengals. Only 20 rookie offensive linemen have made a start, and two of them are Bengals.

Only 51 rookies in the NFL have made at least three starts this season. Three of them are Bengals. Defensive end Shemar Stewart, who has been out since Week 2 with an ankle injury, and Carter are on their way to joining that list.

Against the Packers, rookie linebackers Demetrius Knight Jr. and Carter combined for 11 solo tackles. They combined to be a part of a key third down blitz which created a pressure that forced an interception, and the Bengals' run defense was good for the bulk of the game.

But Carter and Knight also made a few mistakes, including a touchdown run by Packers running back Josh Jacobs where neither linebacker filled an open run lane up the middle.

"Anytime you put a rookie out

there, there's an element of risk to it," Bengals coach Zac Taylor said.

"When are you going to expose yourself to that risk? Are you going to do it sooner rather than later? I just felt (Carter) showed enough to (have us) continue to work through it. We're going to see constant improvement every single game. And so again, a lot of confidence in him. We'll continue with that moving forward."

While Carter, Knight and Stewart, when healthy, start on defense, the Bengals' offense is also counting on rookies. Third-round pick Dylan Fairchild has been the Bengals' left guard when healthy, and fifth-round pick Jalen Rivers has taken over at right guard.

The Bengals have more experienced starting options at that position in Lucas Patrick and Dalton Risner, but they're rolling with the rookies.

"Once you're on the 53 (man roster) or even on the (practice

squad) with a chance to get elevated to the 53, you have to be able to go perform," offensive coordinator Dan Pitcher said. "That's the expectation. You have to be willing to play those guys and they have to go do it. There's hiccups along the way that come with inexperience."

The Bengals' shift toward playing more young players began in 2024. Because they're paying Joe Burrow, Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins high-end salaries, they need more young players to contribute.

"The way we're constructed when you draft players that turn out to be the best or some of the best at their position and then you retain those players you dedicate resources to do that," Pitcher said. "The flip side is you have to be ready to play with rookies and I don't think we shy away from that at all. We understand the challenges involved in that and we work really hard to get them ready. That is what it is."

Wright scores twice as US rallies to beat Australia

Associated Press

COMMERCE CITY, Colo. — Haji Wright scored in the 33rd and 51st minutes off passes from Cristian Roldan, and the United States rallied to beat Australia 2-1 on Tuesday to end the Soccerroos' 12-game unbeaten streak on a night Christian Pulisic left the game because of an injury.

Jordan Bos had put No. 25 Australia ahead in the 19th minute on the Soccerroos' first shot, but Wright equalized just after Pulisic appeared to hurt his right leg.

The 16th-ranked Americans defeated a top 25 opponent for just the second time in 10 matches and improved to 12 wins, seven defeats and one draw since coach Mauricio Pochettino took over.

Wright, who plays for second tier Coventry in England, has 11 goals in 13 games for club and

country since August.

Roldan, a member of the 2022 World Cup roster, returned to the national team last month after a two-year absence.

Pochettino, who had not won after trailing, has his team together for just four more matches before he calls in players for his pre-World Cup training camp. The U.S. hosts Paraguay on Nov. 18 and Uruguay four days later, then has two more friendlies in March.

Australia had won seven straight games and had been unbeaten since a September 2024 loss to Bahrain in a World Cup qualifier.

Limited by a right ankle injury to a substitute role in Friday's 1-1 tie against Ecuador, Pulisic stumbled to the field when he was tripped up by Jason Geria in the 26th minute. After being checked out by an athletic train-

er, Pulisic exited the field and was replaced by Diego Luna in the 30th.

Pochettino said Pulisic appeared to have a hamstring injury, was to be evaluated further Tuesday night and will return to AC Milan on Wednesday.

Australia went ahead after Bos bounced a throw-in that James Sands tried to clear only for the ball to spin into the penalty area. Bos chested the ball to himself, split Roldan and Sands, then beat Chris Richards to the ball and hooked it with his left foot past Matt Freese's outstretched left arm for his second international goal.

Wright tied the score after Richards intercepted a pass and played it to Roldan, who headed the ball to Weston McKennie and then received a return pass. Roldan slid a through ball to Wright, who took a touch with his left foot

and with his right lifted the ball over goalkeeper Mathew Ryan from about 10 yards.

Wright got his seventh international goal after Roldan took a quick restart and booted the ball two-thirds of the way down the field and into the penalty area. Wright ran onto the ball after four bounces and cut inside as Cameron Burgess fell, then curled the ball inside the far post with his left foot from about 14 yards.

Ryan blocked Luna's point-blank, 6-yard shot in the 79th.

Pochettino changed six starters, inserting Pulisic, Wright, Roldan and Sands along with defender Mark McKenzie and right wing back Alex Freeman. Tim Weah shifted to left wing back. Sands made his first appearance since July 2023 and Freese made his 10th straight start at goalkeeper.