



Chefs say war has hit ingredients, raised costs

BUSINESS, 6B

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Low Trump approval threatens Senate GOP



Majority Leader John Thune has led the Senate GOP caucus through the first two years of President Donald Trump's second term. KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

Democrats would need 'perfect game' for majority

Phillip M. Bailey
USA TODAY

A few months ago, the prevailing thinking in Washington was that while Republicans could lose the House in the 2026 midterm elections, their Senate majority was secure.

To win control of the Senate, Democrats would need to upset four GOP incumbents, including in some states where President Donald Trump sailed to victory in 2024 by double digit margins.

But a strong candidate recruitment effort, coupled with significant fund-

raising and Trump's declining popularity and his base's infighting, have given them a credible chance of pulling it off.

Democratic Senate contenders are leading or statistically tied, according to recent polls, for seats held by Republicans in Alaska, Maine, North Carolina and Ohio.

The increasingly sour national environment for Republicans and rising optimism for Democrats, experts say, comes down to one thing: Trump's tanking poll numbers.

"Donald Trump is a millstone around the neck of Republican U.S.

Senate candidate from Maine to Texas," Mark P. Jones, a political science professor at Rice University, said.

Prediction market companies, such as Kalshi, show Senate control as a tossup. At the start of the year, Kalshi gave Republicans a 67% chance at keeping the majority, but that has dwindled to 51% as of April 29.

But other political observers note that Republicans will be narrow favorites to retain the upper chamber given the near perfect election season Democrats must have.

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Hard Rock Casino Rockford gets license renewal

Nida Tazeen
Rockford Register Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Illinois Gaming Board has approved its first license renewal for Hard Rock Casino Rockford.

The Rockford casino was the first of the new casino licenses authorized by the state as part of its 2019 gaming expansion law to open when it commenced gaming operations on Nov. 10, 2021.

Hard Rock Casino Rockford, Illinois' 11th casino, operated in a temporary location until August 2024 when it moved into its current location at 7801 E. State St.

The board renewed Hard Rock Casino Rockford's license for four years on April 23, according to a community announcement. The action is retroactive to January 2026.

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KARA HAWLEY/ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

Forecasters: Don't be fooled by May's weather

Jeanine Santucci
USA TODAY

It's the calm before the storm – for the temperature, that is.

After an early spring marked by ups and downs in temperature trends, forecasters say much of May will be cooler than normal for most of the country, ahead of what could be a summer of coast-to-coast heat.

The cooldown will be pronounced in the Midwest, said the Climate Prediction Center's meteorologist Brad Pugh. In that region, there could even be some overnight lows that dip into frosting or freezing territory, he said.

For most of the eastern half of the United States, at least the first part of the month will feel more like early spring, AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Expert Paul Pastelok said. During that time, there may be some sunny days, but "more times than not, we're going

"The nation could be divided by weather extremes this summer."

Paul Pastelok
AccuWeather expert

to have a lot of clouds during the day," Pastelok said.

The notable exception to the cooling trend is the West Coast, especially the Pacific Northwest, which is getting an early start to above-average temperatures. The transition to summer-like temperatures there will be much quicker than the rest of the nation, and during the course of May, the warmth will spread from West to East as summer approaches, Pastelok said.

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List of 10 most expensive homes sold in area in '25

Corina Curry
Rockford Register Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

The most expensive homes sold during the year in the Rockford area ranged from \$700,000 to \$1,000,000.

1. 5049 Smokethorn Trail, Belvidere

Sale Price: \$1,000,000
Listing Agent: John & Diane Dowd, Dickerson & Nieman Realtors
Sold: June 5, 2025

2. 8325 E. Crockett Road, Roscoe

Sale Price: \$900,000
Listing Agent: Dianne Parvin, Berkshire Hathaway Crosby Starck Real Estate
Sold: May 5, 2025



5049 Smokethorn Trail, Belvidere
PROVIDED BY CLEARSKY IMAGERY/SEAN TLAPEK

3. 466 Quail Trap Road, Caledonia

Sale Price: \$875,000
Listing Agent: Pamela Cunningham, Gambino Realtors
Sold: October 16, 2025

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