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## AT THE CAPITOL

# DHS nominee withdrawn

Commissioner Shireen Gandhi's hearing was to be Tuesday; Connolly now interim

By Alex Derosier  
ADEROSIER@PIONEERPRESS.COM

The commissioner of the fraud-troubled Minnesota Department of Human Services will no longer lead the agency, Gov. Tim Walz announced a day before her Senate confirmation hearing scheduled for Tuesday.

Shireen Gandhi held the official post of commissioner for two months after having previously led the agency as interim commis-

sioner since early 2025. She took over Human Services following the resignation of Commissioner Jodi Harpstead.

Under what Walz described as an effort to "shore up" leadership, Gandhi will now serve as a deputy commissioner overseeing Medicaid programs. Significant fraud has happened in private programs receiving government Medicaid funding since 2018, according to federal prosecutors.

Gandhi's exit comes after Democratic U.S. Sen. Amy



Gandhi

programs if she were elected.

### NEW COMMISSIONER

Walz is set to leave office early in 2027 after eight years. He suspended his campaign for a third term in January amid growing pressure on his record on fraud. He said he'd use his

Klobuchar, who is running for governor this year, said Sunday she planned to change leadership at state agencies and conduct a "top-to-bottom" audit of state

remaining eight months in office to address the issue.

"Since February of 2025, I have led aggressive and proactive work to protect Minnesota's Medicaid program for Minnesota's most vulnerable people, to detect and prevent fraud, to prevent federal cuts to funding, and to improve internal culture at the agency," Gandhi said in a statement through the governor's office.

"My goal has been to hand off the Minnesota Department of Human Services in a stronger position to the next administration in 2027."

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## CLIMATE

# Feds sue Minnesota over green initiatives

Justice Dept. alleges state usurps federal pollution authority

By Karen Zraick  
NEW YORK TIMES

The federal government is suing Minnesota to try to stop a state lawsuit against Exxon Mobil, the American Petroleum Institute, Koch Industries and its subsidiary, Flint Hills Resources.

The state lawsuit accuses the oil-industry players of violating Minnesota's consumer protection laws by misleading the public about the dangers of climate change. That lawsuit, filed six years ago, remains pending, after surviving motions to dismiss in state courts.

The case filed Monday by the Justice Department in the U.S. District Court for Minnesota accuses state officials of attempting to regulate global greenhouse gas emissions, usurping the power of the federal government.

The federal government's move to try to stop regional climate litigation with its own climate litigation follows an executive order issued by President Donald Trump last year directing the Justice Department to protect the energy industry from "state overreach."

"President Trump promised to unleash American energy dominance, and Minnesota officials cannot undermine his directive by mandating that their woke climate preferences become the uniform policy of our Nation," said Stanley E. Woodward Jr., the associate attorney general.

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## WAR IN IRAN

# U.S.: Ceasefire holding



An Iranian demonstrator waves a flag of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group under an anti-U.S. billboard Monday during a pro-government gathering at Islamic Revolution Square in Tehran. **VAHID SALEMI — ASSOCIATED PRESS**

## Attacks continue in Strait of Hormuz and against UAE; shippers cautious

By Adam Schreck, Ben Finley and Elena Becatoros  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. military leaders said a ceasefire is still in effect a day after Iran was blamed for new attacks in the Strait of Hormuz and against the United Arab Emirates, a key

American ally that later said it came under Iranian drone and missile attack again Tuesday.

Still, the fragile truce reached nearly a month ago appeared to be holding as U.S. forces pressed ahead with efforts to reopen the strait, a vital waterway for global energy. On Monday, the U.S. said

it had opened a lane and sunk six small Iranian boats that had threatened commercial ships.

So far, only two merchant ships are known to have passed through the new U.S.-guarded route, with hundreds more bottled up in the Persian Gulf. Shippers are still wary, and it's unclear whether U.S. military action can reassure them without reigniting the conflict that began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran on Feb. 28.

Iran's effective closure of the strait, through which major oil and gas supplies passed before the war, along with fertilizer and other petroleum products, has sent fuel prices skyrocketing and rattled the global economy. Breaking Iran's grip would deny its main source of leverage as U.S. President Donald Trump demands a major rollback of its disputed nuclear program.

See **IRAN** on Page A12

## DRUG PRICES

# \$529B in savings seen over 10 years

Democrats want underlying data for White House analysis

By Josh Boak  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — White House economists estimate that President Donald Trump's deals with pharmaceutical companies to lower some of their U.S. prescription drug prices to what they charge in other countries could save \$529 billion over the next 10 years.

The analysis obtained by the Associated Press includes the first economywide projections behind a policy at the core of Trump's pitch to voters going into November's midterm elections for control of the House and Senate.

Democratic lawmakers have been doubtful about the savings claimed by Trump and these new numbers are likely to trigger additional questions about the underlying data.

Cost-of-living issues are at the forefront of voters' concerns and higher energy prices tied to the Iran war have deepened the public's anxiety.

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## CONGRESS

# GOP budget bill augments ballroom project

Senate Judiciary Committee adds \$1 billion for White House security to immigration measure

By Carl Hulse  
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans have inserted \$1 billion for White House East Wing security enhancements in the immigration enforcement funding bill they hope to rush through Congress this month, setting up

a political fight over a ballroom project that President Donald Trump has said would be financed with private money.

The leaders of the Judiciary and Homeland Security committees on Monday released plans for the roughly \$70 billion package, which would significantly bolster spending on Immigration

and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol through the end of Trump's term using a party-line legislative process that can skirt a filibuster.

A surprise addition to the measure was the \$1 billion proposed by the Judiciary Committee for security work related to the White House renovation initiated by the president. The measure doesn't mention the president's proposed new ballroom, which is being challenged

in court, but Trump has insisted that a main reason for the project is to enhance security.

He and congressional Republicans have escalated their efforts to defend the project after the attempted assault late last month at a journalism gala in Washington attended by the president. Trump has also previously insisted that the project would be funded through private donations.

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