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## ANALYSIS



# Trump-Putin bromance sours

# U.S. president appears to be shifting his thinking

**Kim Hjelmgaard, Francesca Chambers  
and Cybele Mayes-Osterman**  
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump said he would end the war in Ukraine within his first 24 hours in office.

But now, more than 4,000 hours in, Trump's patience with Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom the U.S. president in June called "very kind," appears to be wearing thin.

Relations have hit a wall as Russia's leader has pushed forward with intensifying drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian cities while appearing to repeatedly rebuff Trump's attempts to broker a ceasefire.

“We get a lot of (expletive) thrown at us by Putin, if you want to know the truth,” Trump told reporters on July 9, summing up what Uk-

rainians and other seasoned Russia watchers have been saying for two decades. "He's very nice to us all the time, but it turns out to be meaningless."

Trump initiated direct talks with Putin shortly after taking office, saying – much to Putin’s delight – that he was effectively ready to let Russia keep the Ukrainian territory it had already taken when Moscow invaded Kyiv in February 2022. Trump also said Ukraine’s Crimea region, which Putin seized in 2014, “will stay with Russia.” At the same time, Trump said he was not interested in spending more on Ukraine’s defense, an issue that exploded out into the open when Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the White House in February.

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**Momentum is building for bipartisan legislation that would impose severe sanctions on Russia – amounting to a 500% tariff – on any country that buys, sells or supplies Russian oil, gas and petroleum if Russia refuses to negotiate a peace deal with Ukraine.**

# New laws will require free kindergarten

## NJ school districts will have four years to implement their plans

**Mary Ann Koruth**

NorthJersey.com

USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

Free, full-day kindergarten will soon be mandatory in New Jersey, and school districts have four years to implement their programs, according to new laws signed by Gov. Phil Murphy on July 9.

While federal law mandates free and compulsory school from grades 1 to 12, it does not include free kindergarten. Full-day kindergarten in all public schools will be free by the 2029-2030 school year in New Jersey, under the law. Districts that are not able to implement a program by the deadline can enter into send-receive agreements with neighboring districts, the governor's office said.

The new law also cements the Murphy administration's goal to provide universal, high-quality pre-K across the state. It makes into law the administration's practice of expanding preschool offerings in its annual budgets, reflecting the governor's often-touted priority to provide free, full-day kindergarten and early

**See KINDERGARTEN, Page 2A**

# River Centre's office deal big for Monmouth

## Will be largest lease transaction for the county in last two years

**David P. Willis**

Asbury Park Press

USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

MIDDLETOWN – Hackensack Meridian Health has signed up for 52,320 square feet of space at River Centre, making it the largest office lease transaction in Monmouth County since 2023, commercial real estate brokerage Newmark announced July 10.

The new offices for Hackensack Meridian, one of Monmouth County's largest employers, will encompass two floors at the large office campus off of Newman Springs Road, according to Newmark, which represented the owner, Paramount Realty, in the lease transaction.

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