



THE BUFFALO NEWS

BUFFALONEWS.COM

Serving Western New York since 1880

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

Copyright 2026

MONDAY, JULY 13, 2026

‘Fishy’ mask suit gets moved out of city to Albany

Issue is a state law that bars coverings for federal agents

PATRICK LAKAMP
News Enterprise Editor

It will be a federal judge in Albany – not Buffalo – who decides whether a New York State law that bars federal agents from wearing masks while interacting with the public passes constitutional muster.

U.S. District Judge Lawrence Vilardo on Friday transferred the Justice Department’s lawsuit over the ban to the federal court system’s Northern District of New York. Justice Department lawyers objected to moving the case out of Buffalo, but Vilardo said he had “reason to smell something fishy” with their decision to file the lawsuit in Buffalo.

The Justice Department lawsuit filed last month named Michael Russo as one of the defendants in his official capacity as the assistant state attorney general in charge of the Buffalo regional office.

But Russo has not held

that position for more than two years. The judge noted that “careless error,” but he said he dismissed Russo as a defendant because the 154-paragraph lawsuit mentioned Russo only in a single paragraph, failing to make any connection between the office that Russo once held to the harm the Justice Department says the new law poses.

“Once Russo and his former office are removed from the equation, there simply is no basis to keep the case here,” Vilardo said.

On the same day the Justice Department filed its lawsuit, the state hours later filed a mirror-image lawsuit in federal court in Albany seeking a declaratory judgment about whether the new laws are lawful.

“It doesn’t make sense to have two cases pending on the same issue, does it?” Vilardo asked at a recent court hearing as federal and state lawyers argued over the venue choice.

Lawyers for State Attorney General Letitia James, a defendant in the federal lawsuit, asked Vilardo to

Please see **LAWSUIT**, Page A5

Graham’s unexpected death shakes up the Senate and midterms

ETHAN COHEN, ALISON MAIN
AND LAUREN FOX
CNN

The sudden death of influential Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina will have implications for legislative business in the Senate, where the GOP’s slim margin is already under stress with the absence of Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell and the midterms coming up in November.

Graham died following an aortic tear, according to a preliminary finding Sunday from the Washington, D.C., medical examiner.

Here’s what we know about what comes next.

can appoint a temporary replacement to fill Graham’s now-vacant seat.

But because Graham was up for re-election this year, his death will kick off a sprint primary election to replace him on the November ballot.

Officials have yet to announce how Graham will be replaced, but state law appears to call for a special primary election on Aug. 11 – with a possible runoff on Aug. 25 – to choose a new nominee.

Under that timeline, candidate filing would run from July 21-28.

However, that schedule could come into conflict with

Please see **GRAHAM**, Page A5

How will Graham’s seat get filled?

Under South Carolina law, Gov. Henry McMaster

■ **OBITUARY:** Lindsey Graham, Senate defense hawk turned Trump ally, dies at 71. **Page B4**

BUFFALO NEXT: HIGHER EDUCATION

Tripathi has guided UB to a much better place



DEREK GEE, BUFFALO NEWS

University at Buffalo president Satish Tripathi is stepping down after 15 years at the helm. “It’s hard for me to define my own accomplishments,” he said.

As he prepares to step down, president reflects on growth and change

Satish Tripathi oversaw tremendous change at the University at Buffalo during his 15 years as president.

Enrollment boomed, rising to about 30,000 students. UB added new academic departments, fostered startup growth, moved its medical school downtown, and built or renovated an array of buildings.

The state designated UB as the hub for its Empire AI initiative, enhancing its status as a flagship of the SUNY system. UB’s reputation as a research institute has grown, and the university’s Boldly Buffalo fundraising campaign raised \$1.1 billion.

Ask Tripathi about all of those results, and he deflects the credit.

“It’s hard for me to define my own

accomplishments,” he said. “Attracting the best students here, the faculty that we bring in here, the infrastructure that we have created, the rankings that have gone up, the impact we have in the Western New York region – all those are really institutional impact, and I have contributed to all of those for 22 years.”

Tripathi, a native of India, served as UB’s provost for seven years before he was named president in 2011. He is handing the reins to Caroline Attardo Genco, a Buffalo native. She officially starts Aug. 10.

But Tripathi isn’t retiring. He will return to his faculty role in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, spending the next year focusing on research.

Push for more students

When Tripathi took over, enrollment at UB was about 28,000 students.

“We decided not to grow for a while, and then

Please see **TRIPATHI**, Page A5

Trump snub of housing bill blunts Republicans’ midterm messaging

KATY O'DONNELL
Bloomberg News

A sweeping housing bill became law on Saturday without Donald Trump’s signature, or any White House fanfare, after the president soured on a package of dozens of affordability provisions that he derided as “a yawn.”

Trump’s scuttled support and the dead-of-night enactment are

setbacks for his allies on Capitol Hill, who’d been looking to cast the law as a major bipartisan win on an issue voters are prioritizing heading into midterm elections.

The president’s turnabout also serves as a reminder of how quickly he can swerve on policy matters – even on a law that features provisions he and his own advisers negotiated. As recently

as June, Trump hailed the package as “the most comprehensive and consequential housing legislation in the history of our country.”

The 21st Century Road to

Please see **HOUSING**, Page A4

■ **INSIDE:** Could low birth rates yield a glut of housing in the U.S.? **Page A4**

INDEX

Asking Eric..... B5
City & Region B1
Classified B6

Comics B5
Crossword..... B7
Horoscope B5

Local News..... B3
Obituaries..... B4
Opinion A6

Scoreboard C6
Sports C1
Television B8



WEATHER
Partly sunny and warm. High 87, low 71. Details on Page B8

BUFFALO'S HOME FOR NEW GARAGE DOORS

Proudly Serving Orchard Park & all of WNY Local & Family Owned

Professional, Quick Garage Door Repair Open 24/7 We Accept Urgent Jobs 716-710-7212

\$0 SERVICE CALL
With Any Repair \$69 value. Not valid with any other offers. **EXPIRES 7/24/26**

GARAGE DOOR TUNE-UP SPECIAL \$49
TUNE UP SPECIAL
29 - Point Safety Inspection (Reg. \$299)
With this coupon. Not valid with any other offers. Includes lubrication of moving parts, opener chain & spring. Residential only. Offer expires 7/24/26.

BROKEN SPRING REPLACEMENT \$55 OFF
Replacement
With this coupon. Not valid with any other offers. Offer expires 7/24/26.

WI-FI LIFTMASTER OPENER \$100 OFF
with installation
With this coupon. Not valid with any other offers. Offer expires 7/24/26.

INSULATED GARAGE DOOR \$300 OFF
Max insulated with installation
With this coupon. Not valid with any other offers. Offer expires 7/24/26.

SAVE \$ ON GARAGE DOORS \$1200 \$1700
single door double door
2500 Pro Safe Models only
With this coupon. Not valid with any other offers. Offer expires 7/24/26.