



County’s top 50 football players ahead of 2025 gridiron action

SPORTS, 1B

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Every state has its own transportation agency that handles driver’s licensing, so standardizing laws for new drivers isn’t as easy as it sounds – even if some safety advocates find the inconsistency alarming. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Many states enact tougher requirements for new drivers

Terry Collins
USA TODAY

A new wave of state laws is enforcing stricter requirements for new drivers, but states still can’t agree on how much practice is needed. • While most states have some form of graduated driver’s licensing laws, ranging from as low as 20 and as high as 70 supervised hours, more states are looking into adopting tougher mandates for young people, said Jonathan Adkins, CEO of the Governors Highway Safety Association, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit.

Florida, Washington and New Jersey tightened up requirements for new drivers in 2025, but even these new laws have inconsistent requirements. The new laws come as some traffic safety advocates say the United States would benefit from more uniform laws on the topic.

“There should be a national law for teen drivers,” said Cheryl Giles, the longtime owner of Lakeland Atlantic Driving School in Winter Haven, Florida, which conducts about 1,000 student driving tests annually. “We desperately need some consistency.”

Meanwhile, motor vehicle crashes continue to be among the leading causes of death for teens in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Teen drivers also face a disproportionately higher risk of crashes in comparison with older drivers, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports.

“I would call it an epidemic right now, and we all

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“Whether you are in Virginia, Florida, Utah or even in the most rural parts of the country, the roads can be very dangerous places, especially when you don’t fully understand the dangers of driving.”

Tammy Gweedo McGee
Safe driving advocate

Human rights report softened

Softens criticism of some of Trump partner nations

Daphne Psaedakis
and Humeyra Pamuk
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump’s administration has scaled back a key U.S. government report on human rights worldwide, dramatically softening criticism of some countries that have been strong partners of the Republican president.

Among such nations are El Salvador and Israel, which rights groups say have extensive records of abuses.

Instead, the widely anticipated 2024 Human Rights Report of the U.S. State Department sounded an alarm on the erosion of freedom of speech in Europe and ramped up criticism of Brazil and South Africa, with which Washington has clashed on a host of issues.

Any criticism of governments over their treatment of LGBTQ+ rights, which appeared in Biden administration editions of the report, appeared to have been largely omitted.

The report’s section on Israel was much shorter than last year’s edition and contained no mention of the severe humanitarian crisis or death toll in Gaza. More than 61,000 people have been killed in the Gaza Strip, the Gazan health ministry says, as a result of Israel’s military assault after an attack by Palestinian militant group Hamas in October 2023.

The report was delayed for months as Trump appointees altered an earlier State Department draft dramatically to bring it in line with “America First” values, said government officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The report introduced new categories such as “Life” and “Liberty,” and “Security of the Person.”

“There were no credible reports of significant human rights abuses,” the

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Slides reveal details of proposed Golden Dome

Mike Stone
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The Trump administration’s flagship Golden Dome missile defense system will include four layers – one satellite-based and three on land – with 11 short-range batteries located across the continental United States, Alaska and Hawaii, according to a federal government slide presentation on the project first reported by Reuters.

The slides – tagged “Go Fast, Think Big!” – were recently presented to 3,000 defense contractors in Huntsville, Alabama, and reveal the unprecedented complexity of the system, which faces an ambitious 2028 deadline set by President Donald Trump.

The system is estimated to cost

\$175 billion, but the slides show uncertainties still loom over the basic architecture of the project because the number of launchers, interceptors, ground stations and missile sites needed for the system has yet to be determined.

“They have a lot of money, but they don’t have a target of what it costs yet,” said one official.

So far, Congress has appropriated \$25 billion for the system in Trump’s tax-and-spending bill passed in July. Another \$45.3 billion is earmarked in Trump’s 2026 presidential budget request.

Intended as a multilayered missile defense shield for the United States, Golden Dome draws inspiration from Israel’s Iron Dome, but is significantly bigger due

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So far, Congress has appropriated \$25 billion for the Golden Dome missile defense system. Another \$45.3 billion is earmarked in President Donald Trump’s 2026 budget request. KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS FILE

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