

NATION A3
WHAT TO EXPECT FROM TRUMP'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

SPORTS C1
GAUDREAU'S FAMILY SEES OLYMPIC HOCKEY DREAM REALIZED

SPORTS C1
PAINTER AGAIN IN RUNNING FOR PHILLIES ROTATION



PHILLY & REGION B1
QUAKERTOWN SCHOOLS OFFER COUNSELING AFTER ICE PROTEST

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

VOL. 196, NO. 269

ESTABLISHED IN 1829

CITY & SUBURBS C \$2.95

The Philadelphia Inquirer

ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.



Snow covers Boathouse Row on Monday. More than a foot of snow fell across the region, between Sunday and Monday. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer

Detention cases filling court docket

Before this summer, detained immigrants filed release petitions with Philadelphia's federal court a handful of times a year. A new ICE detention policy led to hundreds of filings in recent months.

By Abraham Gutman and Chris Palmer
Staff Writers

Philadelphia's federal courthouse has become awash in lawsuits filed by undocumented immigrants challenging the government's attempts to detain them, an Inquirer review has found, the latest example of how the mass deportation push by President Donald Trump's administration has been affecting the nation's legal landscape.

Through six weeks this year, court figures show, 168 such lawsuits have been filed in Pennsylvania's Eastern District Court, up from 115 in all of 2025.

By contrast, only 11 such suits were filed between 2020 and 2024, meaning a new practice of litigation dominating the region's federal court practically sprung up overnight.

U.S. District Judge Paul S. Diamond wrote in a recent court filing that these lawsuits, known as habeas petitions, now represent more than one in six civil suits filed in the district.

In other jurisdictions, the surge has become so pronounced that judges and attorneys say they're struggling to keep up. In New Jersey, the region's chief judge last week issued new procedures for filing and litigating the petitions, writing: "The volume and timing of these filings is creating a substantial burden on the Court's ability to expeditiously docket, assign, and address" them.

→ SEE LAWSUITS ON A6

Heavy snow won't stick around

The storm, which dumped as much as 20 inches of snow in parts of South Jersey and Bucks County, closed schools and disrupted travel.

By Anthony R. Wood and Rob Tornoe
Staff Writers

If it wasn't an actual blizzard, Philly's biggest snowfall in a decade sure acted like one, and the weather the rest of this week isn't expected to be particularly pleasant.

But in terms of disruption — not to mention esthetics — this was in a wholly different category from the Jan. 25 siege of snow and ice. And the aftermath should not be anywhere near as punitive and burdensome.

Although the 14 inches measured officially at Philadelphia

International Airport, dwarfed the 9.3 inches of snow and sleet that accumulated in last month's storm, Zach Schwartz, 33, was among those who found the picturesque snow more palatable than the attack of ice balls and an Arctic freeze.

"The last snowstorm was a tough time for everyone," said Schwartz, who was at a Point Breeze playground helping a friend build an igloo for their kids, "and I think the city was kind of in shock a little bit."

The most recent storm, which left as much as 20 inches of snow in parts of South Jersey and southeastern Bucks County, did cause some issues.

More than 130,000 households lost power at some point. Scores of trees came down as the snow, heavy and wet at the start, glommed onto branches that took beatings from the winds that gusted past 40 mph.

The storms closed schools to the chagrin of hundreds of thousands of learning-eager children, and museums on Monday. It disrupted

SEPTA services and airport operations.

At least 87 trees across the city were downed as a result of the storm as of Monday afternoon, and the city was working to determine which ones to prioritize clearing first, Parks and Recreation commissioner Susan Slawson said.

Mayor Cherielle L. Parker advised Philadelphians to avoid unnecessary travel as crews worked to clear the streets.

Yet early fears that the snowfall would reach what the National Weather Service called "potentially historic" levels didn't quite materialize, and it was not known if the storm had met "blizzard" criteria. Stopping short of "historic," New Jersey Gov. Mikie Sherrill called it "a generational storm."

This one likely won't have the staying power of last month's storm

While the volume of snow is formidable, road crews throughout the

region now have a tremendous ally — the late-February sun.

The amount of solar energy beaming toward Philadelphia is more than 35% stronger than it was on Jan. 25, according to NASA's figures, and blacktop is great absorber of sunlight. Plus the region now is getting an hour more of daylight.

Plus, instead of an Arctic freeze, it is forecast to be moderately cold this week, with highs in the low 30s Tuesday, and in the 40s Wednesday and Thursday.

A weak clipper could produce an inch or less of snow early Wednesday, but, sorry kids, that won't be another school-closer. More light rain or snow or a mix is possible Thursday.

Computer models on Monday were seeing a potential for more snow early next week, but they may well sober up come Tuesday.

After the Jan. 25 storm, Philly had 18 consecutive days of at least 3 inches on the ground officially at the airport, the longest stretch in

→ SEE SNOW ON A10

Mexican forces tracked cartel boss to secluded cabin, officials report

Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes died after he was captured, and violence has erupted in several cities.

By Samantha Schmidt and Leo Sands
Washington Post

GUADALAJARA, Mexico — Mexican forces located the drug kingpin known as "El Mencho," whom they killed in a major operation over the weekend, in part by tracking one of his girlfriends to a secluded cabin, Mexican officials said Monday.

Officials canceled school in some states and warned communities to stay inside as reports spread of violent cartel reprisals, and authorities deployed thousands of troops to the western Mexican state of Jalisco. But Mexico's president said Monday the country was under control and returning to normalcy.

Security forces closed in on Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes,

59, at a cabin in Tapalpa, in Jalisco. He fled as his bodyguards opened fire. Eight cartel members were killed in the gun battle, Gen. Ricardo Trevilla Trejo, Mexico's secretary of national defense, told reporters Monday.

Authorities captured the cartel leader, wounded by gunfire, in nearby woodlands. They took him, two of his bodyguards, and a wounded soldier by helicopter to get medical treatment, but they died en route, Trevilla said. Officials decided to head for an airport in Michoacán to transport the bodies by air force plane to Mexico City.

Mexican special forces and National Guard troops helped plan and execute the operation, with support from the Mexican Air Force, Trevilla said. Mexican troops "accomplished their mission," he said, emotional and tearful, and demonstrated the "strength of the Mexican state, without a doubt."

The killing of Mexico's most powerful drug lord provoked violence: Beginning Sunday, the cartel burned vehicles, blocked

→ SEE MEXICO ON A5

Can Gov. Shapiro and lawmakers avoid another budget standoff?

Pa. is on track to spend more than it brings in this fiscal year. The governor proposed spending \$4.3 billion more than the state is projected to raise in revenue.

By Gillian McGoldrick and Katie Bernard
Staff Writers

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania's top leaders want to avoid another ugly, monthslong budget standoff, showing resolve this year to begin negotiations much sooner in hopes of approving a spending deal by their June 30 deadline.

But that doesn't change the state's financial predicaments: Pennsylvania is again on track to spend more than it brings in this



Gov. Josh Shapiro is trying a new strategy to avoid a prolonged impasse. Hannah Beier / For The Inquirer

fiscal year. Gov. Josh Shapiro has pitched spending at least \$4.3 billion more than the state is projected to raise in revenue next fiscal year, part of his \$53.2 billion budget proposal.

Shapiro, who is up for reelection this year and is a rumored 2028 presidential contender, has struggled in budget negotiations since taking office to deliver on his national image as a moderate Democrat willing to work across the

aisle while leading the state with a GOP-controlled Senate and narrow Democratic House majority.

And after last year — when lawmakers couldn't agree on a state budget deal for months, leading to a bitter impasse and negotiations stretching into November while schools and counties went unfunded — the governor is trying a new strategy.

Shortly after unveiling his budget proposal to lawmakers last month, Shapiro called top legislative leaders in for a meeting in his office to discuss their spending priorities. Last year, the initial negotiation conversation took place just before the June budget deadline, taking months to arrive at an agreement. House Majority Leader Matt Bradford (D, Montgomery), Senate Majority Leader Joe Pittman (R., Indiana), House Minority Leader Jesse Tupper (R., Bedford), and Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa

→ SEE BUDGET ON A10

WEATHER C8
PARTLY SUNNY 34/25

INQUIRER.COM
@PHILLYINQUIRER

© 2026 The Philadelphia Inquirer, LLC. Home delivery: 215-665-1234 or 1-800-222-2765. Single-copy price may be higher in outlying areas.

7 97910 20648 5