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S.C. election chief backs state control efforts

LUCY VALESKI
The State

The incoming leader of South Carolina's election agency said he believes states should be responsible for running elections as the Trump administration aims to expand federal control ahead of the 2026 midterms.

Conway Belangia, the interim director of the State Election Commission, told reporters South Carolina should run its elections because he believes the state does a good job on its own.

"I don't like the idea of federal involvement in states' elections process because most states do it well," he told reporters Wednesday afternoon. "The ones that

don't are giving us the black eye."

"I believe in state run elections," Belangia continued. "We do it good in South Carolina, but we do it good because we have good state law. Don't mess things up with federal legislation that they try to pass to affect every state, because we're not every state."

In his second administration, President Donald Trump has tried to take more control over administering elections, including suggesting a national eligible voter database and asking for sensitive voter information from states. But trust in elections should be built at a local level, Belangia said.

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TRACY GLANTZ, HILTON HEAD ISLAND PACKET

Directional signs are posted outside Hand Middle School in Columbia for the municipal election on Nov. 4.

WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

ISRAELI STRIKES THREATEN IRAN TRUCE



EMILIE MADI, REUTERS

Khadija, who was wounded in an Israeli strike that killed her father, is escorted by family Thursday as they prepare for the burial of Khadija's father at Rafik Hariri University Hospital in Beirut, Lebanon.

More than 300 killed in Lebanon; US-Iran talks planned

PARISA HAFEZI, MAYA GEBEILY
AND ARIBA SHAHID
Reuters

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday he wants direct talks with Beirut, a day after the worst bombardment of the war killed more than 300 people in Lebanon and placed Donald Trump's U.S.-Iran ceasefire in jeopardy.

Trump announced a ceasefire in the six-week-old Iran conflict late Tuesday on social media, just hours before a deadline after which he threatened to destroy Iran's "entire civilization."

In Pakistan, authorities prepared for

the first round of U.S.-Iran talks, locking down parts of the capital Islamabad.

But there was no sign Iran lifted its near-total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which caused the worst disruption to global energy supplies in history, with Israel's ongoing attacks on Lebanon cited as a key sticking point.

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said Thursday that Iran doesn't seek war but won't forfeit its rights.

The statement attributed to Khamenei was read on state TV. He has not been seen in public since he took over from his father, who was killed on the first day of the war. Khamenei said Iran will seek retribution

for attacks against it and "will take management of the Straits of Hormuz into a new phase." He also vowed to avenge the deaths of his father Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Iran's "martyrs."

Little traffic

In the first 24 hours of the ceasefire, just a single oil products tanker and five dry bulk carriers sailed through a strait that typically accommodated 140 ships a day before the war, accounting for about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flows.

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