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Wednesday, May 13, 2026

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War fuels another uptick in inflation

LUCIA MUTIKANI
Reuters

WASHINGTON — U.S. consumer inflation increased further in April, with prices rising at the fastest annual rate in three years, heightening political risks for President Donald Trump and his Republican party ahead of November's midterm elections.

The back-to-back rises in the Consumer Price Index reported by the Labor Department on Tuesday reflected strong gains in the costs of energy products amid the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran. Food prices surged last month and inflation also spilled over to the services sector, with higher rental costs and airfares.

Trump won reelection in 2024 in large part because of his promise to reduce inflation, but Americans have soured on his handling of the economy and many blame him for the pain at the pump.

Trump said he's not thinking about Americans' financial concerns about rising gas prices and is only worried about preventing Iran from building a nuclear weapon as he negotiates a deal with Iran.

"Not even a little bit," Trump told reporters Tuesday when asked to what extent he's motivated by Americans' financial situation to reach a deal that ends the war.



EVELYN HOCKSTEIN, REUTERS

President Donald Trump speaks to the media Tuesday before departing the White House in Washington for Joint Base Andrews en route to Beijing.

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NEW TERMS FOR WACO CITY COUNCIL



ROD AYDELLOTTE, TRIBUNE-HERALD

District 3 Waco City Council Member Jed Cole, from left, District 1 Council Member Andrea Barefield and Mayor Jim Holmes take their oath of office Tuesday. Cole joins the city council after running unopposed May 2, while Barefield and Holmes won reelection, Barefield to a fifth term and Holmes to a second.

Cole, Barefield, Holmes sworn in as Borderud steps down

BY CHRISTOPHER DE LOS SANTOS
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Jed Cole officially joined the Waco City Council on Tuesday, filling the District 3 seat as Josh Borderud steps down after three terms.

Cole, a local real estate and private equity investor, joined Council Member Andrea Barefield and Mayor Jim Holmes in taking the oath of office for their new two-year terms.

Before the ceremony, Borderud cast his last city council vote along with the rest of the council to approve, or canvass, the results of the May 2 election. Cole announced his run for the District 3 seat last summer, shortly after Borderud said he would not seek a fourth term, and Cole remained unopposed.

District 3 stretches from the area around the McLennan County fairgrounds southwest past Loop 340, including neighborhoods near Hewitt and Woodway and the Texas Central Industrial Park.

Barefield won a fifth term in District 1, which includes East Waco and parts of North and South Waco, with 57.6% of the vote. She faced a reelection challenge from Rachel E. Pate, a vice president at the Cen-Tex African American Chamber of Commerce.

Holmes won his first reelection bid as mayor with 83.1% of the vote over challengers David Ponder and Aiden Morgan, with Morgan suspending his campaign shortly



JOSH BORDERUD, PROVIDED

Waco City Council Member Josh Borderud, left, and his daughter, Lillie, pose with the new city of Waco flag in front of the Texas state Capitol in Austin in July 2024.

before Election Day. Holmes held the District 5 seat from 2016 until his election as mayor two years ago. District 5 Council Member George Chase was selected as mayor pro tem at Tuesday's meeting.

Holmes welcomed Cole to the city council, saying he has a great business reputation.

Barefield said she hopes Cole brings the energy and drive he displayed during his time on the Waco Plan Commission and the Waco Metropolitan Planning

Organization Policy Board to the city council.

"I have the utmost respect for the five of you [mayor and council members] and I look forward to what we get done," Cole said.

Several city council members and department heads thanked Borderud for enthusiastic spirit and work including support for updates and new development of city parks and his push that led to the design and approval of a new city flag.

SpaceX faces two lawsuits on McGregor test facility

BY BLAKE HOLLINGSWORTH
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SpaceX faces two lawsuits filed in recent weeks, each seeking more than \$1 million in damages tied to the company's McGregor rocket engine testing facility.

A personal injury lawsuit filed April 30 in Waco's 74th State District Court alleges SpaceX ignored equipment malfunctions, leading to a fuel delivery contractor suffering serious injuries when he was doused with liquified methane.

A suit filed May 1 in Waco's 414th State District Court by 77 residents of McGregor, Moody, Crawford and Oglesby alleges SpaceX's regular rocket engine tests in McGregor have caused significant property damage.

In addition to the local lawsuits, a federal suit filed April 30 in the Southern District of Texas by 80 South Texas residents alleges 11 rocket launches between 2023 and last year at SpaceX's Starbase site on the Gulf coast in Cameron County caused sonic booms that damaged their homes.

Fueling injuries

The personal injury lawsuit, filed by Houston attorney Tevin Thompson on behalf of Tarrant County resident Thaddeus Barideaux, says Barideaux was working June 13, 2024, as a liquid natural gas driver for Applied Natural Gas Fuels Inc., a third-party contractor delivering methane to SpaceX's testing facility in McGregor.

Barideaux reported multiple equipment malfunctions to SpaceX personnel during the offloading process, but SpaceX personnel directed him to continue offloading fuel, according to the suit.

"Plaintiff was doused in liquid methane ... a discharge that should not have occurred if the Equipment had been functioning properly," the petition says.

The suit also alleges SpaceX personnel knew about recurring malfunctions reported before the day of the incident.

"Defendant had actual, subjective awareness of the risk involved but nevertheless proceeded with conscious indifference to the rights, safety, and welfare of Plaintiff and others," the lawsuit says.

Liquified methane, also known as liquified natural gas, is produced by super-cooling gaseous methane to -260 degrees Fahrenheit.

The incident in McGregor left Barideaux with serious bodily injuries, including chemical burns, that required months of medical treatment and left him with permanent scarring and nerve damage, according to the lawsuit.

Property damage

The lawsuit over property damage surrounding the McGregor site alleges the facility's static rocket engine testing has subjected residents in neighboring communities to "an unchecked, daily barrage of terrestrial bombardment" that has caused "severe, escalating property damage."

Brownsville attorney Benigno Martinez filed the suit on behalf of the 77 plaintiffs.

"Plaintiffs' homes are literally cracking under the pressure, suffering from fractured foundations, differential settlement, and compromised structural integrity," the suit says.

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