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# Iran reopens Strait of Hormuz



Iran announced on April 17 that the Strait of Hormuz is opened to commercial vessels following a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon. REUTERS FILE

## Trump says naval blockade to continue

Zac Anderson, Christopher Cann, Andrea Riquier and Michael Loria  
 USA TODAY

Iran declared the Strait of Hormuz “completely open” to commercial vessels April 17 – then threatened to again close the global shipping lane if the United States did not end its blockade on Iranian ports and ships.

It was the latest back-and-forth between the countries as the clock wound down on a delicate two-week ceasefire.

Iran’s foreign minister, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, declared the waterway open after a separate 10-day ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel went into effect April 16.

The United Nations’ maritime transport agency said it was verifying whether the strait was open. U.N. Secretary-

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Smoke rises following artillery shelling in Lebanon on April 11. Lebanon and Israel came to a 10-day ceasefire agreement on April 16. AMIR COHEN/REUTERS

## Milwaukee convention hotel plan advances

Committee: Full board should consider issue

Tom Daykin

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
 USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

A possible hotel tied to downtown Milwaukee’s convention center is taking a step closer to reality.

The Wisconsin Center District, the state-created agency that owns Baird Center, should explore the feasibility of eventually developing a large hotel to help host conventions and other events.

That’s according to comments from members of a district board committee that’s been studying the issue. Its final meeting was April 16, and the committee will report its findings at the full board’s May 15 meeting.

“People have stopped dreaming big dreams about Milwaukee,” said Wauwatosa Mayor Dennis McBride, a committee member.

“We should think big about Milwaukee,” he said.

Milwaukee is losing conventions to competing cities because of a lack of convention center-oriented hotel rooms, McBride and other committee members said.

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A new Wisconsin Center District study shows a 650-room hotel and other new uses at the current Miller High Life Theatre site. The study was obtained by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on Jan. 29. TVS/HUNDEN PARTNERS

# ‘Virtual assistant’ texted voters about candidate

Mary Spicuzza

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
 USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

Liberal Justice-elect Chris Taylor had a lot of things going for her in her crushing, 20-point victory in last week’s Wisconsin Supreme Court race — including more money, more advertising airtime, and more third-party spending on her behalf.



Wisconsin Supreme Court candidates Chris Taylor, left, and Maria Lazar.  
 HANNAH SCHROEDER/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

A new tool also entered the chat on Taylor’s behalf – a “virtual assistant” powered by artificial intelligence that was texting voters and offering to answer their questions about the race.

The AI-powered assistant, which was available to voters 24/7, was funded by a Pennsylvania-based group named Defend Our Courts and created by Convos, a startup company that built the platform.

“I’m a virtual assistant built by Defend Our Courts to help Wisconsin voters learn about the April 7 Supreme Court election. Our Supreme Court is an important firewall against MAGA’s attacks on our rights and freedoms,” one March 20 text sent to a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reporter read.

Judge Chris Taylor has spent her

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