



Brewers' Mitchell aims to balance health, aggression

SPORTS, 1B

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WI school districts struggle against closures

Alec Johnson

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Within the past two years, 69 public schools in Wisconsin shut down. More will close in coming years.

The closures come as school districts grapple with high costs, state-imposed revenue limits, limited state funding, insufficient funds for special education and declining enrollment – which has dropped for 11 straight years statewide.

State funding has not kept up with inflation since the 2009-11 budget act eliminated that adjustment, according to a January 2025 report from the state's Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, attempted to ease funding woes in 2023 by using a partial veto to increase the revenue limit by \$325 per student for the next 400 years. Republicans have proposed action to undo that maneuver. But even if Evers' increase remains, funding remains short of the rise in costs.

The lack of state aid to offset the property tax impact of that increase could especially affect districts experiencing dropping enrollment and those that cover the cost of a large number of voucher students, according to an analysis of the state's 2025-27 biennial budget by the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials.

Special education funding is also part of the equation. The state had initially pledged a 42% reimbursement rate this year and 45% next year; the amounts were a compromise, as Evers had proposed a 60% reimbursement rate. But in November, the state Department of Public Instruction announced it would reimburse districts for just 35% of their special education costs.

Special education reimbursement is drawn from a fixed pot of money set by the Legislature. Since districts spent more on special education last year than estimated when calculating aid in the state budget, total claims exceeded the allotted amount, the DPI said. Consequently, the agency said it must lower the initial reimbursement rate to avoid overspending.

See **SCHOOLS**, Page 2A

STUDY: PLANET IS IN WATER BANKRUPTCY



Much of world's population faces severe scarcity

Kaveh Madani

United Nations University | THE CONVERSATION

The world is now using so much fresh water amid the consequences of climate change that it has entered an era of water bankruptcy, with many regions no longer able to bounce back from frequent water shortages. • About 4 billion people – nearly half the global population – live with severe water scarcity for at least one month a year, without access to sufficient water to meet all of their needs. Many more people are seeing the consequences of water deficit: dry reservoirs, sinking cities, crop failures, water rationing and more frequent wildfires and dust storms in drying regions.

Water bankruptcy signs are everywhere, from Tehran, where droughts and unsustainable water use have depleted reservoirs the Iranian capital relies on, adding fuel to political tensions, to the United States, where water demand has outstripped the supply in the Colorado River, a crucial source of drinking water and irrigation for seven states.

Water bankruptcy is not just a metaphor for water deficit. It is a chronic condition that develops when a place uses more water than nature can reliably replace, and when the damage to the natural assets that store and filter that water, such as aquifers and wetlands, becomes hard to reverse.

A new study I led with the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health concludes that the world has now gone beyond temporary water crises. Many natural water systems are no longer able to return to their historical conditions. These systems are in a state of failure – water bankruptcy.

See **WATER**, Page 5A



Remnants of a boat sit on the dry bed of Lake Urmia, once the largest lake in the Middle East, in northwestern Iran on Dec. 19, 2025. Droughts and unsustainable water use have also depleted reservoirs Iran's capital Tehran relies on, adding fuel to political tensions. MORTEZA AMINOROAYAYI/MIDDLE EAST IMAGES/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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Poll: 60% of Americans disapprove of President Trump

Kathryn Palmer

USA TODAY

Ahead of President Donald Trump's first State of the Union address of his second term, a new poll shows a majority of Americans disapprove of the president's job performance, especially on inflation, tariffs and foreign policy.

In a Washington Post-ABC News-Ipsos poll released on Feb. 22 – two days before Trump's highly anticipated ad-

dress to Congress – 60% of Americans said they disapprove of the way he is handling his role. Of that number, 47% indicated a strong disapproval. Another 39% said they approve of the president's performance.

The pollster said the last time Trump's disapproval touched 60% was shortly after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The five-day poll was conducted among 2,589 U.S. adults from Feb. 12-17

and has a margin of error of 2 percentage points.

A New York Times average of other recent approval polls place the president's disapproval rate at 56% and approval at 41%.

The latest survey also shows a fierce partisan divide. Among respondents, 85% of Republicans said they approve of Trump's job performance. Conversely, both Democrats and independents significantly disapproved of the presi-

dent – at a rate of 94% among Democrats and 69% among independents. Those numbers are almost identical to the partisan breakdown in the poll's last survey in October 2025.

The polling doesn't signal sweeping support ahead of Trump's State of the Union address to Congress on Feb. 24. It comes a little more than two weeks before 2026 primary voters head to the

See **APPROVAL**, Page 5A

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