

NATIONAL BRIEFS

Bondi makes arrests in Minnesota church protest

MINNEAPOLIS — Attorney General Pam Bondi says a woman who led an anti-immigration enforcement protest that disrupted a service at a Minnesota church has been arrested. Bondi announced the arrest of Nekima Levy Armstrong in a post on X on Thursday. On Sunday, protesters entered the Cities Church in St. Paul, where a local official with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement serves as a pastor. Bondi said later a second person was also arrested. The group interrupted services by chanting “ICE out” and “Justice for Renee Good,” referring to the 37-year-old mother of three who was fatally shot by an ICE officer in Minneapolis this month. Levy Armstrong, a civil rights attorney, had called for the pastor affiliated with ICE to resign.

Smith defends his Trump investigations at a public hearing

WASHINGTON — Former Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith has defended his investigations of Donald Trump at a public congressional hearing. Smith insisted Thursday he had acted without regard to politics and had no second thoughts about the criminal charges he brought. Smith’s two criminal investigations shadowed Trump during his 2024 Republican presidential campaign. Smith testified behind closed doors last month but returned to the House Judiciary Committee for the public hearing. The hearing divided along partisan lines between Republican lawmakers looking to undermine Smith and Democrats hoping to elicit new and damaging testimony about Trump’s conduct in the Washington, D.C., and Florida cases.

House moves to finish government funding

WASHINGTON — The House is looking to pass this year’s final batch of spending bills. The effort on Thursday is being complicated by Democratic lawmakers’ concerns the measure funding the Department of Homeland Security inadequately addresses President Donald Trump’s mass deportation efforts. House Democratic leaders Hakeem Jeffries, Katherine Clark and Pete Aguilar announced in a closed-door meeting they would oppose the Homeland Security bill.

Consumer spending pushes US economy up 4.4% in third quarter

WASHINGTON — Powered by strong consumer spending, the U.S. economy grew at the fastest pace in two years from July through September, the government said Thursday in a slight upgrade from its first estimate. The Commerce Department reported that America’s gross domestic product — the nation’s output of goods and services — rose at a 4.4% annual pace in the third quarter, up from 3.8% in the April-June quarter and from the 4.3% growth the department initially estimated. The economy hasn’t grown faster since third-quarter 2023.

Trump sues JPMorgan for \$5 billion

He alleges the bank closed his accounts for political reasons

BY KEN SWEET
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — President Donald Trump sued banking giant JPMorgan Chase and its CEO Jamie Dimon for \$5 billion on Thursday over allegations that JPMorgan stopped providing banking services to him and his businesses for political reasons after he left office in January 2021.

The lawsuit, filed in Miami-Dade County court in Florida, alleges that JPMorgan abruptly closed multiple accounts in February 2021 with just 60 days notice and no explanation. By doing so, Trump claims JPMorgan and Dimon cut the president and his businesses off from millions of dollars, disrupted their operations and forced Trump and the businesses to urgently open bank accounts elsewhere.

“JPMC debanked (Trump and his businesses) because it believed that the political tide at the moment favored doing so,” the lawsuit alleges.

In the lawsuit, Trump alleges he tried to raise



Rebecca Blackwell | Associated Press
Jamie Dimon, CEO of JPMorgan Chase, speaks at the America Business Forum on Nov. 6, 2025, in Miami.

the issue personally with Dimon after the bank started to close his accounts, and that Dimon assured Trump he would figure out what was happening. The lawsuit alleges Dimon failed to follow up with Trump. Further, Trump’s lawyers allege that JPMorgan placed the president and his companies on a reputational “blacklist” that both JPMorgan and other banks use to keep clients from opening accounts with them in the future.

In a statement, JPMorgan said it believes the suit has no merit.

Trump threatened to sue JPMorgan Chase last week at a time of heightened tensions between the White House and Wall Street. The president said he wanted to cap interest rates on credit cards at 10% to help lower costs for consumers. Chase is one of the largest issuers of credit cards in the country and a bank official told reporters that it would fight any effort by the White House or Congress to implement a rate cap on credit cards. Bank industry executives have also bristled at Trump’s attacks on the independence of

the Federal Reserve.

Debanking occurs when a bank closes the accounts of a customer or refuses to do business with a customer in the form of loans or other services. Once a relatively obscure issue in finance, debanking has become a politically charged issue in recent years, with conservative politicians arguing that banks have discriminated against them and their affiliated interests.

Debanking first became a national issue when conservatives accused the Obama administration of pressuring banks to stop

extending services to gun stores and payday lenders under “Operation Choke Point.”

Trump and other conservative figures have alleged that banks cut them off from their accounts under the umbrella term of “reputational risk” after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. Since Trump came back into office, the president’s banking regulators have moved to stop any banks from using “reputational risk” as a reason for denying service to customers.

“JPMC’s conduct ... is a key indicator of a systemic, subversive industry practice that aims to coerce the public to shift and re-align their political views,” Trumps lawyers wrote in the lawsuit.

Trump accuses the bank of trade libel and accuses Dimon himself of violating Florida’s Unfair and Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

In its statement, JPMorgan said that it “regrets” that Trump sued the bank but insisted it did not close the accounts for political reasons.

“JPMC does not close accounts for political or religious reasons,” a bank spokesperson said. “We do close accounts because they create legal or regulatory risk for the company.”

Trump appointees ask about White House ballroom’s design, scale

BY BILL BARROW
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Some of Donald Trump’s handpicked appointees who have a say in his White House ballroom project asked questions Thursday about its “immense” design and scale, even as they broadly endorsed the president’s vision for a massive expansion.

The Commission on Fine Arts discussion, which also included a brief review of mostly negative public comments on Trump’s plans, revealed no immediate threat to Trump’s overall idea, which historic preservationists are separately asking a federal court to slow down. But it demonstrated the sensitivity and political controversy involved since the president approved the demolition of the East Wing after unveiling designs that would more than double the square footage of the White House as it was before.

“This is an important thing to the president. It’s an important thing to the nation,” said the new Fine Arts chairman, Rodney Mims Cook Jr., in the panel’s first public hearing on Trump’s proposal.

“You can’t have the United States of America entertaining people in tents,” Cook said, noting that administrations long before Trump complained about having to host State Dinners and major events in temporary structures. The question, the chairman added, is “if we can do this in a way that this building remains” true to its fundamental character and still “take care of what the president wants us to do.”

3D SCALE MODELS REQUESTED BY FINE ARTS COMMISSIONERS

After lead architect Shalom Baranes presented renderings during Thursday’s online meeting, commissioners asked him to return to a future, in-person session with 3D scale models of the White House complex with the proposed addition. Baranes said an in-person presentation, per the commissioners’ request, also would include scale mod-



Pablo Martinez Monsivais | Associated Press
Marine One, with President Donald Trump aboard, lifts off the South Lawn on Jan. 13 at the White House in Washington. The new ballroom construction can be seen on the right.

els of the U.S. Treasury Department building to the east of the presidential mansion and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building to the west.

Baranes and commissioners alike came into the meeting aware of concerns about the project’s scale and whether it can be incorporated well enough into the White House, even as Trump remains under-terred.

“President Trump is working 24/7 to Make America Great Again, including his historic beautification of the White House,” said West Wing spokesman Davis Ingle.

The total addition would be almost 90,000 square feet, Baranes confirmed, with 22,000 of that the ballroom itself. The White House was about 55,000 square feet before the East Wing, first built in 1902 and expanded in the 1940s, was demolished.

Thomas Luebke, the commission’s executive director, told the group that public comments received online ahead of the meeting were “almost all” negative “in some way,” criticizing the process, the design or both.

Luebke read one comment that he described as “more positive” because it complimented the design and style shown in renderings. Yet even that commenter, Luebke

said, wrote that “the scale appears oversized, making the main structure dominated.” Nodding to the criticism, Baranes emphasized that current plans call for the addition’s north boundary to be set back from the existing North Portico — essentially the front porch — and for the top of the new structure to be even with the primary facade of the

White House and its residence.

THE VIEW OF THE WHITE HOUSE

Baranes, whose firm has worked on other federal buildings, said this is to ensure the view of the White House from Pennsylvania Avenue would not change fundamentally. A new east side colonnade

connecting the main structure to the ballroom addition also would be two stories, rather than the single story that was demolished. This would add to the continuity of the new design, Baranes said.

He added that architects have contemplated a similar second story atop the West Wing to address concerns about symmetry. But he said during questioning that it is merely a concept. There has been no structural analysis of the existing West Wing, he said, to determine if it could support another level.

Some commissioners said they appreciated Baranes’ effort to address scale and symmetry on the north side of the White House, which fronts Pennsylvania Avenue. But they noted that still doesn’t address how much the design might change the view from the South Lawn. Renderings show a 10-column, multistory porch on the south side of the addition that looks more like the Treasury Department edifice than any part of the White House.

“It’s immense,” Cook said to Baranes.

Money Market

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