

Howard University Pres. Ben Vinson Suddenly Steps Down

By Lauren Burke

NNPA

In a surprising announcement, Howard University President Ben Vinson III, 55, will leave his position as Howard University's 18th President. Vinson's departure comes at a usual time: The start of the academic year. "We understand that this news may be surprising to some, coming at the start of the academic year," said Leslie Hale, Howard University Board of Trustees chair, on a video posted on Howard University's website. A statement on Howard's website posted before the news of Vinson's departure reads, "As we stand on the threshold of this new



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academic year, I am filled with optimism and hope for what lies ahead. Let us continue to embrace the spirit of Howard University – a spirit that encourages us to push boundaries, seek justice, and strive for excellence in all that we do."

A campus-wide engagement tour is also posted on the President's page online as of August 22. Though Vinson's departure happens at a moment when military National Guard troops have occupied Washington, DC, at the orders of President Trump, there is no indication at this time that Vinson's departure is related to DC being occupied by federal police and the military. Vinson became President of Howard only

two years ago, on September 1, 2023. In 2023, right before he began to lead Howard, Vinson told The Washington Post that, "all of us have been recognizing over the past several years an overall declining faith in the value of higher education. It's been under scrutiny. And so this is a time for all of our institutions to really rise to the moment. What that looks like is going to look quite different in every particular institution."

Vinson is a former provost at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. Former Howard President Wayne A.I. Frederick was selected by Howard's Board of Trustees to return as Howard University's president on an in-

terim basis in ten days. "On behalf of the Howard University Board of Trustees, we extend our sincere gratitude to Dr. Vinson for his service and leadership as president," said Hale, Chair of the Board of Trustees, in a statement issued on August 22. "As we move forward, the Board of Trustees and University leadership remain steadfast in our commitment to maintaining Howard's mission of excellence, truth, and service and a vibrant, welcoming, and innovative academic environment where students continue to succeed," added Board Chair Hale. How long Frederick will remain as interim President of Howard is unknown.

Africa's Plan To Redraw 'Skewed' World Map

By Imogen Garfinkel

DailyMail

African nations are demanding that the 'distorted' world map be redrawn to show the true scale of the continent that they argue has been misrepresented for centuries.

The African Union (AU) has backed a campaign to end the use by governments and international organisations of the 16th-century Mercator map of the world, in favour of one that more accurately displays Africa's size.

The 55-nation bloc has accused the map of skewing continent sizes, enlarging areas near the poles like North America and Greenland while shrinking Africa and South America.

They argue the distortion leads to an underplaying of the size and importance of Africa, while disproportionately accentuating the scale of America and Europe to make them look larger than they are.

The Mercator projection, one of the world's most common maps, was created by the Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator for navigation in 1569.

It makes Africa look relatively small as it increases the size of countries further from the equator. This means Greenland looks almost the same size as Africa, when in reality the continent is 14 times larger.

"It might seem to be just a map, but in reality, it is not," AU Commission deputy chairperson Selma Malika Haddadi told Reuters, saying the Mercator fostered a false impression that Africa was 'marginal', despite being the world's second-largest continent by area, with over a billion people.



Such stereotypes influence media, education and policy, she said. The campaigners argue that Africa's diminished scale on the map breeds harmful misconceptions about its geopolitical and economic significance.

Now, the AU is supporting the 'Correct the Map' campaign to urge organisations to adopt the 2018 'Equal Earth' projection as an alternative, which tries to reflect the true scale of countries.

The campaign says: 'In a world where size is often equated with power, misrepresenting Africa's true scale reinforces harmful misconcep-

tions about its geopolitical and economic significance.

"You could fit the United States, China, India, Japan, Mexico and much of Europe into Africa and still have land to spare.

"Yet, most of the world continues to favor this distorted map, misrepresenting Africa's scale and diminishing its significance."

Criticism of the Mercator map is nothing new, but the campaign to have it replaced has built momentum through the work of advocacy groups such as Africa No Filter and Speak Up Africa.

Campaigners demand for the

'Equal Earth' projection to be implemented by international bodies like the United Nations and the World Bank as well as in schools and the media.

A World Bank spokesperson said they already use the Winkel-Tripel or Equal Earth for static maps and are phasing out Mercator on web maps.

"The current size of the map of Africa is wrong," Moky Makura, executive director of Africa No Filter, said.

"It's the world's longest misinformation and disinformation campaign, and it just simply has to stop," Fara Ndiaye, co-founder of Speak Up Africa, said the Mercator affected Africans' identity and pride, especially children who might encounter it early in school.

"We're actively working on promoting a curriculum where the Equal Earth projection will be the main standard across all (African) classrooms," Ndiaye said, adding she hoped it would also be the one used by global institutions, including Africa-based ones.

Haddadi said the AU endorsed the campaign, adding it aligned with its goal of 'reclaiming Africa's rightful place on the global stage' amid growing calls for reparations for colonialism and slavery.

The AU will advocate for wider map adoption and discuss collective actions with member states, Haddadi added.

The Mercator projection is still widely used, including by schools and tech companies. Google Maps switched from Mercator on desktop to a 3D globe view in 2018, though users can still switch back to the Mercator if they prefer.



'I'm Gonna Be Homeless.' Chapel Hill Flood Victims Ask City For Help As Deadline To Move Nears.



By Greg Childress

NC Newline

Displaced residents of Camelot Village in Chapel Hill are growing anxious as time runs out on their stay at the Comfort Inn in Durham. The residents were forced to leave their rental homes in early July after rain from Tropical Storm Chantal sent Bolin Creek overflowing its banks and spilling into the nearly 60-year-old townhome community.

At a press conference Wednesday, the residents told reporters that they must leave the hotel Aug. 29 after disaster assistance from Orange County, Triangle Mutual Aid and private citizens runs out.

"I'm gonna be homeless, pretty much because I haven't found a place to go that I can afford," said Jessica Tickles. "I had to take out of work to find housing, so I'm like restarting back to work and it's like starting from zero."

Residents complained that landlords and town and county officials have been slow to respond to concerns and have not done enough to help as they struggle to find housing in the aftermath of the storm, which they say left them financially strapped and stressed.

With the help of the Triangle Tenant Union, the residents issued these demands:

- Return of July rents due to the uninhabitability of the units after the storm.
- Return of security deposits to assist tenants in securing new housing.
- Cancellation of leases and August rent for tenants who want to move.
- Relocation assistance in securing permanent housing that meets their needs.
- Temporary accommodations for tenants who want to return after building repair and remediation.

"It's unlawful to charge rent for an uninhabitable apartment in North Carolina," said C.R. Clark with Triangle Tenant Union. "This is a legal violation, but we're trying to ensure that people can make demands of this landlord and move that forward rather than trying to go through court."

Clark said the former tenants have only one week to secure housing and the county is telling them to "just figure it out."

"A lot of these people have been through so much trauma that figuring it out is really hard..." Clark said. "Their rent and those deposits are their money and that's not being returned so that they can move forward with their lives, get housing, return to their dignity."

He said "people are gonna be on the street" if Chapel Hill Mayor Jess Anderson doesn't step up and provide staffing to "get some of these things done, to get some relocation assistance, to pay for some of these application fees..." so that folks can get relocated and begin to rebuild their lives.

Many residents lost everything in the flood and as many as three-fourths of them were unhoused before moving into Camelot Village, Clark said. The townhome rentals provided low-income residents with rare affordable housing in affluent Chapel Hill, he said.

Some residents had federal Section 8 vouchers which means their rent was based on income. Others without vouchers pay as much as \$950 a month to live there.

"Camelot was the only affordable housing that I was able to be placed in, and I was not made aware of a flooding situation until the time of signing my lease, and at that point, I could not back out because of how the system works with people that are on county funding and things like that," said Heather Gibbs. "If you say 'no' to something in the process, then you are put out on the street and left to find housing somewhere else on your own."

Gibbs said she has applied to three or four places for housing and paid more than \$300 in non-refundable application fees. The fees aren't refunded even if the unit doesn't pass required inspections for Section 8 vouchers, she said.

"It's been really complicated for us to get in somewhere else that is safe," Gibbs said. "I definitely would not return there [Camelot Village]."

Dale Weldele, a recent amputee who now walks with the aid of a prosthetic leg, said he barely survived the flooding at Camelot Village.

"The neighbors saved my life, they got me to safety," Weldele said. My prosthetic came off in the current. I couldn't stand against it, so I'm on one leg with crutches, trying to make it to the stairs..."

The prospect of starting over is daunting," Weldele said.

North Carolina Central Tops Southern 31-14

ATLANTA (AP) — Chris Mosley ran for a career-high 180 yards, the North Carolina Central defense did not allow a point in the second half, and the Eagles defeated Southern 31-14 on Saturday night in the season-opening MEAC/SWAC Challenge Kickoff.

Mosley, a senior who had never had more than 10 carries in a game, had 17 carries and his 180 yards included a 49-yard touchdown run that helped North Carolina Central of the MEAC take a 17-14 halftime lead.

In the third quarter, the Eagles cashed in on a shanked punt and drove 34 yards culminating in a short Walker Harris touchdown pass to Kyle Morgan for a 24-14 lead. Later in the quarter, Aleni Mageo's



6-yard touchdown run made it 31-14.

The Jaguars had one last opportunity to score but Thomas Johnson forced and recovered a fumble by Jaguars quarterback Cam'Ron McCoy inside the red zone.

Harris completed 22 of 27 passes for 189 yards with the touchdown.

Trey Holly led the Jaguars of the SWAC with 119 yards rushing on 10 carries. He had an 80-yard touchdown run that gave Southern a 14-10 lead in the second quarter.

The Eagles had 409 yards of offense, with 234 yards coming on their first three drives.

The Jaguars ran only 19 plays in the first half and held the ball for 7:55 but Holly's long touchdown and a 69-yard touchdown run by McCoy made it a three-point game at halftime.

Wall Street Soars On Hopes For Lower Interest

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street rallied to its best day in months on Friday after the head of the Federal Reserve hinted that cuts to interest rates may be on the way, along with the kick they can give the economy and investment prices.

The S&P 500 leaped 1.5% for its first gain in six days and finished just shy of its all-time high set last week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average soared 846 points, or 1.9%, to its own record after topping its prior high from December. The Nasdaq composite jumped 1.9%.

"Ka-Powell" is how Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management, described the reaction to Jerome Powell's highly anticipated speech in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. "The Fed isn't going to be the party-pooper."

The hope among investors had been that Powell would hint that the Fed's first cut to interest rates of the

year may be imminent. Wall Street loves lower rates because they can goose the economy, even if they risk worsening inflation at the same time.

President Donald Trump has angrily been calling for lower rates, often insulting Powell while doing so. And a surprisingly weak report on job growth this month pushed many on Wall Street to assume cuts may come as soon as the Fed's next meeting in September.

Powell encouraged them on Friday after saying he's seen risks rise for the job market. The Fed's two jobs are to keep the job market healthy and to keep a lid on inflation, and it often has to prioritize one over the other because it has just one tool to fix either.

But Powell also would not commit to any kind of timing. He said the job market looks OK at the moment, even if "it is a curious kind of balance" where fewer new workers are chasing

after fewer new jobs. Inflation, meanwhile, still has the potential to push higher because of Trump's tariffs.

In sum, Powell said that "the stability of the unemployment rate and other labor market measures allows us to proceed carefully as we consider changes to our policy stance."

Treasury yields tumbled in the bond market as bets built that the Fed would cut its main interest rate in September. Traders see an 83% chance of that, up from 75% a day earlier, according to data from CME Group.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.25% from 4.33% late Thursday. The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks expectations for Fed action, sank to 3.69% from 3.79% in a notable move for the bond market.

On Wall Street, stocks of smaller companies led the way. They can benefit more from lower interest rates because of their need to borrow

money to grow. The smaller stocks in the Russell 2000 index surged 3.9% for its best day since April and more than doubled the S&P 500's rally.

Homebuilders jumped on hopes that easier interest rates could encourage more people to buy homes. Lennar, PulteGroup and D.R. Horton all rose more than 5%.

Travel companies, meanwhile, climbed amid hopes that easier interest rates could help U.S. households spend more. Norwegian Cruise Line rallied 7.2%, Delta Air Lines flew 6.7% higher and Caesars Entertainment rose 7%.

Shares of Nio, a Chinese electric-vehicle maker, that trade in the United States leaped 14.4% after it began pre-sales of its flagship premium SUV model, the ES8.

Intel climbed 5.5% after Trump said the chip company has agreed to give the U.S. government a 10% stake in its business.

Trump Signs Exec. Orders Aimed At Ending Cashless Bail

Cashless bail is a system where defendants are released from jail while awaiting trial based on their promise to appear in court, rather than by paying a specific cash amount. In contrast to traditional cash bail, which requires a financial payment, cashless bail relies on a defendant's commitment to the court and can also involve pre-trial monitoring.

The order on D.C., first reported by Axios, also asks law enforcement officials to work to ensure that people arrested in the city are taken into federal custody "to the fullest extent permissible under applicable law," the fact sheet obtained by NBC News said.

The executive order aimed at other cities across the nation directs the administration to find federal funds that could be "suspended or terminated" in jurisdictions that have cashless bail policies, the fact sheet said.

A spokesperson for Mayor Muriel Bowser's office declined to comment to NBC News.

Trump signed another executive order on Monday aimed at prosecuting people who "desecrate" the American flag, a third fact sheet said. That order, first reported by Fox News, directs Bondi to "vigorously prosecute those who violate our laws in ways that involve desecrating the flag, and to pursue litigation to clarify the scope of First Amendment in this area."

The order also targets noncitizens by asking the administration to "deny, prohibit, terminate, or revoke



visas, residence permits, or naturalization proceedings, and other immigration benefits, or seek removal" of non-citizens who desecrate the flag. The order could hit a legal obstacle in that the Supreme Court decided in Texas v. Johnson in 1989 that flag burning was protected by the First Amendment.

The D.C. executive order on cashless bail is Trump's latest step to broaden the administration's control

over the capital. It comes on the heels of the White House's move to deploy and arm National Guard troops in an effort to fight crime. Critics, though, have slammed the administration's handling as overreach and unnecessary.

They argue that cash bail disproportionately hurts low-income people, who may have more difficulty securing the money to pay bail for release from jail.

Trump, though, has criticized the practice, saying earlier this month that it was a "disaster" and caused "so many problems come that we never had before."

"So they're watching us today, and if they don't learn their lesson, if they haven't studied us properly, because we're going to be very successful," Trump said of other cities earlier this month.

The U.S. Attorney for D.C., Jeanine Pirro, claimed on "Fox & Friends" on Monday morning that cashless bail "is when all of the problems started." She criticized defendants being released, asserting that "they are reoffending and they're reoffending again."

D.C. has had a cashless bail system since 1992. The policy means that judges decide whether people charged with crimes pose a risk to others or the community at large or would pose a flight risk if released without money for bail connected with the person's freedom. If judges make any of those determinations, then they may opt to hold a defendant in a detention facility before trial.

As part of the city government's own safety measures, the D.C. Council

extended its pretrial detention policy in July.

Several states have eliminated or nearly eliminated cash bail, including Illinois, New Mexico and New Jersey.

The expected executive order comes as National Guard troops in D.C. began carrying firearms Sunday evening. Also over the weekend, Trump threatened to deploy troops to Baltimore. Just days earlier, he floated sending the National Guard to Chicago and New York.

Trump's focus on how the capital is run is a stark departure from prior administrations. He has enacted sweeping changes by surging National Guard and federal agents into the city, pushing enforcement agencies to clear homeless encampments and restoring a Confederate memorial in Arlington National Cemetery.

Last week, Trump also announced that he ordered attorneys to review Smithsonian museums, arguing that the storied museums were not positive enough about U.S. history, "where everything discussed is how horrible our Country is, how bad Slavery was, and how unaccomplished the downtrodden have been."

Supermarket Gunman Who Targeted Black People Wants Charges Dropped, Says The Grand Jury Was Too White

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Attorneys for the white supremacist gunman who killed 10 Black people at a Buffalo supermarket told a judge Thursday that the federal charges against him should be dropped because there weren't enough Black people and other minority groups on the grand jury that indicted him.

Payton Gendron did not attend the hearing, during which his lawyers argued that his constitutional rights to a grand jury drawn from a cross section of the community were violated.

At the hearing's start, U.S. District Judge Lawrence Vilaro noted Gendron's objection to the prevalence of white people on the panel seemed "a little incongruous" in the hate crimes case. He did not immediately rule on the motion.

Gendron could face the death penalty if convicted in the 2022 mass shooting at a Tops supermarket, which he targeted because of its location in a primarily Black neighborhood. Those killed ranged in age from 32 to 86. Three others were



wounded. Gendron already is serving a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole after pleading guilty in November 2022 to multiple

state charges, including murder.

A trial on the pending federal hate crime and weapons counts is expected to begin next year. The Justice Department said it would seek the

death penalty if Gendron is found guilty.

Attorney John Elmore, who represents some of the victims' relatives in lawsuits, said Gendron's lawyers are doing what they can to keep him alive. He said challenges to the makeup of juries rarely succeed, even though he regularly sees juries lacking minorities.

"It is very ironic that attention to this problem is being brought out in this case, where Payton Gendron committed a racially motivated homicide," he said by phone after the hearing. "But this has been a persistent problem in our courts that needs to be addressed."

Gendron's lawyers argued in a court filing that Black and Hispanic people and men are "systemically and significantly underrepresented" in the lists from which jurors are selected in the Buffalo area.

"To illustrate this point, the grand jury that indicted Payton Gendron was drawn from a pool from which approximately one third of the Black

persons expected and one third of the Hispanic/Latino persons expected," Gendron's lawyers wrote. Exacerbating the problem, they said, was that the data sources used by a vendor to pull the lists together weren't preserved.

"We don't know what the vendor did," Assistant Public Defender Soniya Zoghlin said. "More importantly, the vendor doesn't know what he did."

Statistically, the addition of two more Black people on the 60-person grand jury panel would have balanced the panel, Vilaro said.

"Can't that be the result of an accident," the judge asked, rather than systemic exclusion?

In opposing the motion, Assistant U.S. Attorney Caitlin Higgins said that at worst, the issue constitutes a "technical violation," not grounds to dismiss the indictment.

The federal law governing jury selection "doesn't entitle the defendant to a perfect representation," she said. Zoghlin said the issue was larger

than the panel that ultimately heard Gendron's case and included the exclusion of certain groups from the selection process, including inactive voters.

In a written filing, the U.S. Attorney's office said Gendron didn't prove a systematic underrepresentation that was caused by the district's jury plan. Any disparities in the racial makeup were within accepted guidance, they wrote, and not caused by the selection process, which draws from voter, driver, tax, disability and unemployment rolls.

Higgins said courts have routinely rejected similar challenges: Vilaro said he was unaware that any such motions had been granted in cases with similar disparities in New York state's federal courts.

Gendron's attorneys, in an earlier filing, argued that Gendron should be exempt from the death penalty because he was 18 years old at the time of the shooting, an age when the brain is still developing. That motion is pending.

Democrats Set To Take Texas Redistricting Fight To The Courts

The Hill— The Texas redistricting battle is entering a new front as the fight turns to the courts, where Democrats and civil rights groups are expected to challenge the newly passed maps.

Texas House Democrats who had fled the state to stall the maps said that they were returning "to the House floor and to the courthouse" this week — and several groups signaled they are ready to sue as soon as Gov. Greg Abbott (R) signs the

legislation. But experts forecast Democrats will face an uphill climb to stop or even stall the maps, which could net five GOP House seats, from taking effect ahead of next year's high-stakes midterms.

"Literally minutes after Abbott signs this bill and the redistricting plan goes into effect, there'll be litigation, most likely by Democrats, by the ACLU, by LULAC, by the NAACP," said Jon Taylor, the Uni-

versity of Texas at San Antonio's department chair of political science.

"A host of organizations will make the argument that what was already viewed as a racial gerrymander that took place in 2021 has become even more so in 2025. So, oh yeah, they're going to court — literally, almost at the same time that Abbott does his thing."

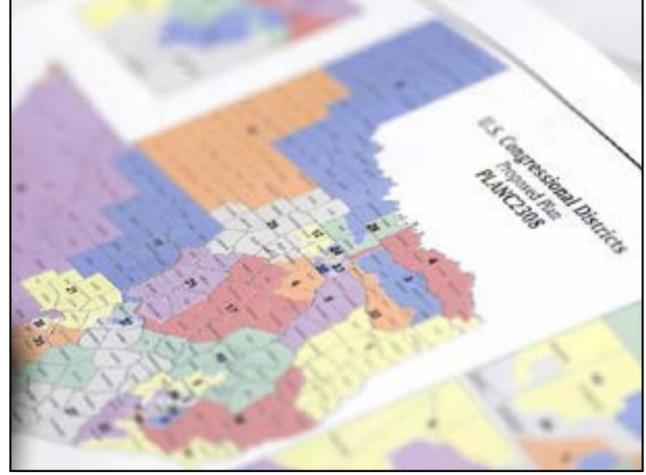
The Republican-controlled Texas legislature was expected to approve the maps on Friday after a dramatic standoff with Democrats, who left the Lone Star State for two weeks to deprive the state House of the numbers it needed to function.

Democrats returned to the state Capitol this week on the condition that Abbott closed the first special session — and that California moved forward with its plan to counter GOP gains in Texas with Democrat-friendly redistricting in the Golden State.

In announcing their intent to end their quorum break, Democrats said that they "must return to Texas to build a strong public legislative record for the upcoming legal battle against a map that violates both the current Voting Rights Act and the Constitution."

In the days since, the Texas proposal sailed through the GOP supermajority in the House, though a Democratic filibuster effort was set to stall in the state Senate. Unlike in other states, including California, approval from the Legislature and the governor are all that's needed for the maps to take effect.

"Next step is the courts. We will



not stop," Texas House Democratic Caucus Chair Gene Wu said Thursday on X.

Democrats have largely argued that the maps are racially discriminatory, disenfranchising millions of minority voters in the state, as they accuse Trump and Republicans of attempting to rig the 2026 midterms in their favor.

"There'll be two central arguments. The first is that this redistricting plan is a racial gerrymander that violates the federal constitution. The second is that this redistricting plan violates section two of the Voting Rights Act," said David Froomkin, assistant professor of law at the University of Houston Law Center.

While the U.S. Supreme Court generally accepts redrawing lines on a partisan basis, the VRA — a landmark 1965 law aimed at shoring up civil rights — protects against maps that dilute the voting power of minority voters.

Republicans, notably, have hit back sharply against the criticisms.

"Democrats claiming that redistricting is racist are lying. 4 of the 5 districts the Texas Legislature is drawing will be Hispanic districts," reads a post from the governor's office earlier this month.

But opponents of the maps are expected to move quickly.

Democratic State Rep. Rhetta Bowers told CBS Austin on Wednes-

day that Democrats were readying to file a potential case with the Texas Supreme Court immediately after the expected map passage.

Several groups, including the National Redistricting Foundation, the National Democratic Redistricting Committee's nonprofit arm; the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF); and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) filed a motion on Monday asking the U.S. District Court in El Paso to set aside time for a hearing on a preliminary injunction next month.

That filing argues that the maps are unconstitutional, which would send the matter to a three-judge panel, according to legal experts. A panel ruling could then be appealed directly to the U.S. Supreme Court.

But winning in the courts is going to be tough for Democrats in most directions, experts said.

For one, the forthcoming battles in Texas comes as Republicans are increasingly bullish they can chip away at the VRA, with a major Louisiana redistricting battle set to be reheard by the Supreme Court next term.

And their arguments may meet tough audiences in the conservative-leaning Texas and U.S. Supreme Courts.

"Many of the judges that this could go in front of our Abbott appointees. And so I don't know how much support we'll actually get in the court," said Lana Hansen, executive director of Texas Blue Action, an Austin-based Democratic advocacy group.

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Beaches Reopen In New York And North Carolina After Hurricane Erin

NEW YORK (AP) — New York and North Carolina have begun to reopen beaches that had been closed due to Hurricane Erin, which sent strong winds and dangerous waves across the U.S. East Coast.

Erin's outer bands brushed North Carolina on Wednesday, but the storm never made landfall and caused no widespread damage to infrastructure despite being twice the size of an average hurricane. After progressing north in the Atlantic, it weakened into a post-tropical cyclone Friday, far from land.

In North Carolina's Outer Banks, Highway 12 on Hatteras Island opened at noon Saturday for residents, property owners and workers, according to North Carolina's



Department of Transportation. All restrictions will lift at 5 a.m. Sunday.

Beachgoers can also swim again at Jones Beach State Park in New York and wade at Robert Moses State Park, but there are still restrictions at other beaches as conditions remain rough. Both beaches had been closed Thursday and Friday.

The Outer Banks — essentially sand dunes sticking out of the ocean a few feet above sea level — are vulnerable to erosion. Storm surges can cut through them, washing tons of sand and debris onto roads and sometimes breaking up pavement and creating new inlets. The dunes took a beating by Erin but there were no new inlets or significant structural damage to homes or businesses.

Business & Finance

City Workers Across The US Are Embracing AI Guidelines

NC Newsline—While some states and the federal government take their time in considering how artificial intelligence can and should be used, municipalities across the U.S. have been forging their own way in making AI policies for their government employees.

"AI is generally useful," Boston's Chief Innovation Officer Santiago Garces said. "But it is a set of technologies that also carries unique risks that need to be considered. And I think that our employees are generally concerned about accuracy, privacy, security and intellectual property."

Boston was among the first cities in the U.S. to make a set of guidelines for its employees, rolling out a document outlining the purpose of generative AI in government work, sample use cases, and a set of principles in May 2023.

Garces and his team watched the rollout and quick growth of ChatGPT in 2022, and believed that AI tools were going to have widespread adoption within most industries very quickly. Use of AI felt inevitable in most of the tedious or repetitive tasks of government employees, and Garces said they wanted to work with their employees to figure out the ethical use of AI, instead of resisting it.

"The notion behind the guidelines was enabling this city to be able to get into this period of responsible experimentation, so that we could learn," Garces said. "Instead of just waiting to see what happened, we would look at managing the risk in a way that was proactive, and engage with all of our workforce as partners in learning."

What do the guidelines say?



Boston is far from alone in enacting its own AI policy. Many other cities and counties across the U.S. have developed similar policies in recent years, usually in the form of "guidelines" that steer how a government employee may evaluate AI's accuracy or efficiency with specific tasks.

Guidelines can mirror some state legislation, and dictate when not to use the technology, like with confidential information or in making life-altering decisions such as hiring. The guidelines are meant to stay open-ended and to be flexible with changing state regulations, several city tech officials said.

In Lebanon, New Hampshire, the city's AI policy is purposefully meant to be changed and shaped with the influence of state or city laws, Melanie McDonough, the city's chief innovation and AI officer, said.

"We're trying to build a policy that's robust, that can withstand the pace at which AI is changing," she said. "Policy is harder to change. Guidelines can be updated more frequently just to say, 'oh, be aware, we're actually not allowing the use of this particular feature internally because it doesn't have enough protection.'"

The city's policy, first released in December 2023, drew a lot from the Biden-era 2022 White House AI Blueprint. It's centered on how city workers may use AI operationally, how they can center privacy and protection in their use and how they may navigate new AI as it becomes more pervasive in everyday life.

Boston's guidelines outline the purpose of generative AI, and call it a tool — "We are responsible for the outcomes of our tools," the

policy says. The guidelines list several principles including empowerment, inclusion, respect, transparency, accountability, innovation, risk management, privacy, security and public purpose, and includes a list of "dos" and "do nots" in how to uphold those principles while using AI.

"We were thinking about how we capture the risk and opportunity specific to the technology in a way that does not create conflicting or additional things that might conflict with existing regulations," Garces said of Boston's policy.

Tempe, Arizona released a similar policy for its city workers just a month after Boston in 2023. Its principles also include ideas about the purpose and scope of the technology, and talks about human-centered approaches to using AI, and human responsibility with AI outcomes.

One of its creators, Stephanie Deitrick, Tempe's chief data and analytics officer, said she began thinking about an AI framework about a year and a half before the city released it, as she was researching data, bias and inequity when it came to machine learning algorithms. When ChatGPT released, Deitrick said she realized that generative AI chatbots would soon be in the hands of everyday people, and she felt the city needed safeguards.

All new AI tools are reviewed by a governance committee, Tempe's Director of Information Technology Jared Morris said, and state and federal legislation is reviewed and incorporated as needed. Though Tempe's policy specifically talks about AI use, Deitrick said it's broad enough to apply to any technology city workers use.

"These are our values, and we are going to make sure that whatever governance we have aligns with these values," she said of Tempe's policy. "And then it lays out the responsibility to the city, IT, the departments and the users that they have to participate in governance, and they are active users who are actively responsible for what they're doing."

AI uses in local government Garces' team is looking to update its 2023 guidelines, and surveyed its workforce this spring about how they currently use AI.

Of those surveyed, 60% of employees said that they use AI in some form at least once a week, and 78% said that they were interested in learning more about generative AI. Most of the current uses are for drafting memos, proofreading emails, and some data analysis or

code generation, Garces said.

A few employees use multimodal models that can help generate images or videos. Garces said one of the city's departments recently used Google's Veo 3 to create a 20-second video about best practices on trash disposal. A preliminary quote for the educational video was around \$20,000 for traditional film-making, but using AI cost the department about \$30 in credits through Google, he said.

"You start seeing the potential impact in helping us do things that were either out of our reach or being able to do them faster or being able to do them for less money," Garces said.

In Tempe, city employees have about 150 different applications of AI in their work, Morris said, with employees reaching a high point of about 100,000 uses in a given month. Many of these AI uses are "off the shelf," models like ChatGPT that can assist with writing or research tasks. But others are paid models, like a partnership with AI company Axon, which does real-time object recognition that Tempe uses for a "whole of city" approach, Morris said.

For example, if someone calls into the emergency department about a person in distress in a blue car, the object recognition system can alert officials to blue cars out on the road, and get police or medical staff to them.

The city's guidelines are careful to outline the potential harms decision-making and generative AI tools are capable of contributing to, Morris said. Though they use object recognition, they aren't using facial recognition technology, he said.

NC Supreme Court Says Bars' COVID-19 Lawsuits Can Continue

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The North Carolina Supreme Court issued favorable rulings Friday for bars and their operators in litigation seeking monetary compensation from the state for COVID-19 restrictions first issued by then-Gov. Roy Cooper that shuttered their doors and, in their view, treated them unfairly compared to restaurants.

The majority decisions by the justices mean a pair of lawsuits — one filed by several North Carolina bars and their operators and the second by the North Carolina Bar and Tavern Association and other private bars — remain alive, and future court orders directing the state pay them financial damages are possible.

As a way to ease the spread of coronavirus, Cooper — a Democrat who left office last December and is now running for U.S. Senate — issued a series of executive orders that closed bars starting in March 2020. By that summer, bars still had to remain closed, but restaurants and breweries could serve alcohol during certain hours. Later in 2020, bars could serve alcoholic drinks in outdoor seating, with time limits later added, but the plaintiffs said it was unprofitable to operate. All temporary restrictions on bars were lifted in May 2021.

Lawyers defending Cooper have said the orders issued in the ninth-largest state were based on the most current scientific studies and public health data available at a time when thousands were ill or dying and vac-



cines weren't widely available.

On Friday, the court's five Republican justices in one lawsuit agreed it could continue to trial, rejecting arguments from state attorneys that the litigation must be halted based on a legal doctrine that exempts state government from most lawsuits. That decision largely upheld a Court of Appeals decision from two years ago that had affirmed a trial judge's order to allow the action filed by Tiffany Howell, seven other people and nine businesses to be heard.

"We acknowledge that the CO-

VID-19 pandemic was a chaotic period of time," Chief Justice Paul Newby wrote in the prevailing opinion. "It is important to remember, however, that the Governor was not the only person facing uncertainty. Small business owners across the state dutifully shuttered their doors and scaled back operations without knowing exactly when they could open or operate fully again."

A broader group of plaintiffs — the North Carolina Bar and Tavern Association and scores of private bars — that sued separately but made simi-

lar claims received a favorable ruling last year from a Court of Appeals panel that reversed a trial judge's decision to dismiss the lawsuit.

Friday, the same five justices ruled that the Court of Appeals shouldn't have allowed the association to sue based on claims its members' constitutional rights for equal treatment were violated. But the plaintiffs can return to a trial judge now and present evidence on the claim that their right under the state constitution to earn a living was violated, Associate Justice Phil Berger Jr. wrote in the

majority opinion.

The association and the private bars "sufficiently alleged unconstitutional interference, and thus have a right to seek discovery to prove those allegations are true," Berger wrote.

The Supreme Court's two Democratic justices opposed decisions made by the majority in both cases and said the lawsuits should be dismissed. Associate Justice Allison Riggs wrote that the Bar and Tavern

Association failed to signal it had evidence of a more reasonable plan to contain the virus' impact than what Cooper chose.

Writing the dissent in the Howell case, Associate Justice Anita Earls said the majority "grants itself a roving license to second-guess policy choices, reweigh trade-offs, and displace decisions appropriately made by the political branches."

The state Attorney General's Office, which represented Cooper in both cases, said Friday it was reviewing the decisions. Through a spokesperson, Cooper's Senate campaign declined to comment.

The Bar and Tavern Association called the decision in its case a "major victory."

"From the beginning, we never asked for special treatment, only equal treatment," association President Zack Medford said. Chuck Kitchen, a lawyer representing plaintiffs in the Howell case, also praised the ruling in their litigation.

Cooper was the subject of several lawsuits challenging his COVID-19 actions early in the pandemic, and he was largely successful in court. In August 2024, the state Supreme Court sided with a small racetrack that was closed briefly for defying state gathering limits and said the oval and its operators could sue the top health regulator in Cooper's administration.

Classifieds

REQUEST FOR BID REHAB OF 4221 GREENCASTLE COURT

The City of Raleigh will accept sealed, written bids for the rehabilitation of the property located at 4221 Greencastle Court, Raleigh, NC 27604 until September 26 2025, at 2:00 p.m. (EST). Bids can be submitted at the City of Raleigh's Housing and Community Development Department at 421 Fayetteville St, Suite 1200, Raleigh, NC 27601 at which time and place bids will be publicly opened and read aloud for the construction of the Rehab of 4221 Greencastle Court project.

A non-mandatory on-site pre-bid meeting will be held on September 2, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. (EST) at 4221 Greencastle Court, Raleigh, NC 27604. Information is also posted on the North Carolina Electronic Vendor Portal (eVP): <https://www.evp.nc.gov>. The City reserves the right to reject all bids.

Snoop Dogg Sparks Debate Saying He's 'Scared' to Bring His Kids to the Movies

DailyMail—Snoop Dogg has admitted he feels uneasy about taking his grandson to the movies after being blindsided by same-sex representation in Disney's 2022 animated film Lightyear.

While appearing on the It's Giving podcast, the 53-year-old rapper recalled how what was meant to be a lighthearted family outing instead left him fumbling for answers.

"What you see is what you see, and they're putting it everywhere," the Drop It Like It's Hot hitmaker explained.

He went on to describe sitting

through the Pixar spinoff when his grandson suddenly grew confused about the character Alisha Hawthorne, who has a wife and a child.

"They're like, 'She had a baby — with another woman,'" Snoop said. "Well, my grandson, in the middle of the movie is like, 'Papa Snoop? How she have a baby with a woman? She's a woman!'"

Caught off guard, the rapper, who performed at one of President Donald Trump's inaugural events earlier this year, admitted he didn't know how to respond.

"I'm like, 'Oh sh**, I didn't come in

for this sh**. I just came to watch the goddamn movie,' he emphasized.

But his grandson pressed him further: "They just said, she and she had a baby — they're both women. How does she have a baby?"

The exchange, Snoop said, "f**ked me up. I'm like, scared to go to the movies. Y'all throwing me in the middle of sh** that I don't have an answer for. It threw me for a loop. I'm like, 'What part of the movie was this?'"

While he stressed that children naturally ask questions, Snoop questioned whether filmmakers should introduce LGBTQ+ relationships in such

a young target audience level.

"These are kids. We have to show that at this age? They're going to ask questions. I don't have the answer," he asked.

The film, voiced by Chris Evans, tells the story of Buzz Lightyear and features Alisha Hawthorne (voiced by Uzo Aduba), who is seen marrying her partner Kiko and raising a child during a montage.

The moment made headlines even before the film's release — not only because it was Disney's first prominent LGBTQ+ character, but because it featured the studio's first same-sex kiss.



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