

Groton Daily Independent

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Thursday, March 19

Birthdays: Katie Zeeb, Landon Kokales.

Senior Menu: Turkey chow mein, rice/chow mein noodles, broccoli, breadsticks, sour cream apple pie square.

No School - Spring Break

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.: NP Clery at Emmanuel Lutheran

1:30 p.m.: WELCA at Emmanuel Lutheran

Friday, March 20

Birthdays: Kassidi Stumpf, Dale Busing, Shanda Sundstrom.

No School- Spring Break

Senior Menu: Baked fish, au gratin potatoes, 3-bean salad, peach cobbler, whole wheat bread.

Saturday, March 21

Birthdays: Cheyenne Leonhardt, Courtney Pray, Duane McDonald, Melissa Raap, Michelle Sunding, Rayce Harder, Taylor Leonhardt, Terri Kjellsen.

Anniversary: Tim and Peggy Fliehs.

Show Choir at Mitchell

Pastor at Rosewood Court

Sunday, March 22

Anniversaries: Bruce & Pam Merkel, Jennifer & Brett Grenier

Birthdays: Brett Grenier, Don Walter, James Mortenson.

9 a.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Sunday School

9:15 a.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Fellowship

10:00 a.m.: Heaven Bound Ministires worship at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Pierpont

10:15 a.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Worship

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

Two bedroom apartment in the Rix Apartments (former city apartments) at 407 N Garfield

FOR RENT

Attached garage.

Major appliances included.

\$700 per month

Roger: 605/397-7118

JOHNSON AGENCY

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Jay Johnson, Broker

www.johnsonagencygroton.com

102 N Main St.
Groton, SD 57445

Office: 605/397-2424
Home: 605/397-8565



South Dakota Division of Motor Vehicles Clarifies Registration Fees

PIERRE, S.D., -- Noncommercial vehicle registrations and renewals that occur in a County Treasurer's Office or a Division of Motor Vehicles electronic terminal on or before March 31 will pay the current fee for noncommercial vehicle registration.

"April 1 is the date when the fee switches according to the new Highway Funding Bill," Peggy Laurenz, director of the South Dakota Division of Motor Vehicles said. "For example, if a customer with a May renewal date were to visit a County Treasurer's Office or a DMV self-service electronic terminal on or before March 31, they would pay the current fee."

Noncommercial vehicle registrations and renewals that occur in a County Treasurer's Office or a DMV electronic terminal on or after April 1, will pay the new fee set forth in the Highway Funding Bill.

Andy Gerlach, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Revenue said, "We are pleased for the opportunity to work alongside South Dakota counties to implement provisions of the Highway Funding Bill that improves South Dakota infrastructure."

The Division of Motor Vehicles is currently updating forms, website information and programming to reflect the changes the Highway Funding Bill requires.

Classifieds

Apartments For Rent

ONE AND TWO bedroom apartment for rent. HDS subsidized. Rent includes utilities and heat. No smoking. Pets okay. Contact Darlene Daly at 605/397-8131.

Notice of Garbage Pickup!

Effective Immediately Your cooperation

is greatly appreciated during the spring thaw.

Groton residents are asked to bring their garbage to the following locations

until further notice:

Railroad Avenue

Main Street

Sixth Street

Highway 37

Residents of Cottonwood Trailer Park need to take their garbage to

Highway 37

Residents north of 13th Avenue (Olson and Jacobson Development) need to bring their garbage to the

Bus Barns.



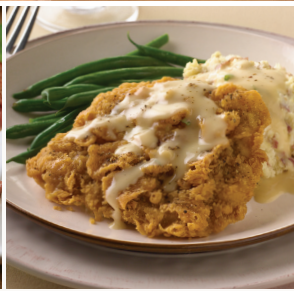
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Home. Cooked.
GOODNESS.

The taste of togetherness.



The Happy Family Banquet

- 2 (5 oz.) Filet Mignons
- 2 (5 oz.) Top Sirloins
- 4 (3 oz.) Polynesian Pork Chops
- 4 (4½ oz.) Chicken Fried Steaks
- 20 oz. pkg. All-Beef Meatballs
- 4 (4 oz.) Omaha Steaks Burgers
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HOME SECURITY SPECIAL
monitoring starting around
\$999
per week
*with \$99 customer installation charge and purchase of alarm monitoring services.

Did You Know?

- A burglary occurs every **14.6 seconds**.¹
- **1 out of every 5 homes** will experience a break-in or home invasion.²
- A home without a security system is **3 times more likely to be burglarized**.³
- **85% of Police Officials surveyed** believe home alarms deter burglary attempts.⁴

1. Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2008 National Crime Report http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2009/june/ucr_stats060109 2. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/press/vdhbpr.cfm>
3. FBI, 2008 National Crime Report http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2009/june/ucr_stats060109 4. <http://www.beyondidentitytheft.com/home-security-statistics.html>

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Two-thirds of the blocks have been laid into place as the backstop for Locke-Karst Field is renovated. The city crew have been busy with the project during the past week.

In the left photo, Steve Giedt has been the master planner for the back-stop renovation. He was taking measurements this week so he can order the nets.

Legislative Wrap Up from Pierre from Rep. Dennis Feickert, District 1

The main run of the 2015 Legislative Session ended late Friday night, March 13. We will return to Pierre on March 25 to consider Governor Dugaard's vetoes, if there are any. We passed some interesting and important bills before going home.

SB1, the very first bill introduced into the Senate, passed both the House and Senate on the afternoon of the very last day of the regular session. This bill was introduced on behalf of the Interim Committee on Highway Needs and Financing after that committee conducted hearings around the state last summer and fall. It saw several changes before it passed. While I can't say that the bill is perfect, in the end after lengthy discussions I needed to support it. Its short comings include not enough funding designated to county roads and bridges and too much of the burden for maintenance of local infrastructure pushed back to the local property tax payers.

Still, we have studied this problem extensively and must admit the tremendous need to work to fix our infrastructure. Over my years in the Legislature I have been a prime sponsor on a number of bills which dealt with this exact issue. While those bills couldn't get traction in the past, the great need to do something finally led to action. The compromise between the Governor's version and the Task Force plan was finally agreed to on the last day of Session. The story won't end here as we continue in the next legislative Session to try to redirect some of the gas tax or vehicle excise tax revenues back to the counties and townships.

Senate Bill 73 (SB73) enacts recommendations of last year's Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Initiative Task Force. The Task Force found that South Dakota had the nation's second highest rate of youth incarcerations, many for relatively minor offenses. This is very expensive and often counterproductive because it exposes less serious offenders to more serious offenders.

Under the new plan, youth with less serious offenses will be diverted to community-based programs that reduce recidivism and cost less than incarceration. These include drug and alcohol courts, intensive probation, and other non-residential programs. More serious offenders will still be sent to state residential facilities.

These juvenile justice reforms are in the same spirit as the reforms we enacted for adult offenders two years ago, which are beginning to produce better outcomes and lower costs for the state.

SB2 is a product of the Regional Watershed Advisory Task Force, on which District 1 Senator Jason Frerichs served so ably. It establishes nine River Basin Natural Resource Districts. The bill states that "The recommended boundaries of the districts shall follow as closely as possible the hydrologic patterns of the river basins," but the boundaries "may follow existing boundaries of political subdivisions or voting precincts, wherever feasible." No district at this point will have "any regulatory or taxing authority." First class municipalities will not be included in the districts.

The Legislature will appoint a River Basin Natural Resource District Oversight Advisory Task Force, which will recommend water management policies and guidelines. Clearly much remains to be done before these new policies are fully implemented, but we hope they will make water policy more rational by recognizing that water follows natural contours and does not respect established political boundaries. Watershed issues are so important to our area and have been one of my legislative focuses over the years. I look forward to continue the discussions in the future.

Considering the Session as a whole, I still feel the Legislature fell short in other respects. Medicaid expansion seems to have been ignored and education at all levels again received short shrift.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to serve you, the residents of District 1. Please feel free to contact me at rep.feickert@state.sd.us or call me at 605-216-3451 with any questions, concerns or comments. I welcome your contact even when we are not in Session.

Growing In Agriculture

Thanking our Farmers, Ranchers and Consumers

A column by Secretary Lucas Lentsch

This week marks National Ag Week with National Ag Day celebrated on March 18. We celebrate the farm and ranch families who supply our world with safe and affordable food. We also appreciate the consumers who place their confidence in our American feed, fuel, fiber and food system.

Consumers put their trust in America's farmers and ranchers every day. Every time you visit the grocery store to pick up that gallon of milk or pound of beef, you place your trust in our nation's food system. You trust that farmers and ranchers make good choices for animal care and plant health which in turn yields wholesome, nutritious and safe food for your family. As a result, we have the safest, most reliable food system in the world. Producers are also able to provide consumers with an abundance of choices among products and practices used to grow those products.

Here in South Dakota, we are proud of our 31,700 farm and ranch families and the wide variety of products they grow every year. From sunflowers to bison and corn to cattle, South Dakota continues to rank in the top 10 states for production. South Dakota farmers and ranchers continue to supply the food found on consumers' plates around the world.

Our state's agricultural industry realizes we would not be able to continue doing what we love without consumers' support. During this National Ag Week, let's celebrate the hardworking and productive farm and ranch families across our state. Let's also thank our consumers for being a partner in this effort. We are in this food system together.



Booking Days Specials on all Inventories



Oil, grease, filters and tires

March 18-19, 2015

Cash and Carry on certain items

Lunch will be provided

Farmers Union Co-op Assn.

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Groton Area High School National Honor Society



In back, left to right, are Maggie Simon, Carly Wheeting, Lily Cutler and Matt Knecht; in front, left to right, are Hailey Hanson, Megan Unzen, Marlee Jones and Katie Miller.

The Groton Area High School chapter of National Honor Society will be holding an induction ceremony for new members on Monday, March 30, 2015 at 7:00 PM in the GHS conference room in the new addition and will be open to all parents, grandparents, and friends of the members and inductees.

The new members of NHS were selected from a field of eligible students by a ten-member committee. Eligibility is based on a 3.0 grade point and then the students are evaluated further on the basis of their completed application. This evaluation considers each student's accomplishments in the areas of academics, character, leadership, and service.

The current members of the Groton Area Gold Key Chapter of the NHS are Gabriel Dohman, Kathleen Groeblichhoff, Taylor Gustafson, Breanna Marzahn, Kaitlin O'Neill, Luke Smith, Lucas Sternhagen, Haley Unzen, and Kasey Waage. The students who will be inducted this year are senior Matt Knecht, son of Mick and Becky Knecht, and juniors Lily Cutler, daughter of James and Lisa Cutler, Hailey Hanson, daughter of Jeff and Shawn Hanson, Marlee Jones, daughter of Jim and Mendy Jones, Maggie Simon, daughter of Steve and Peggy Simon, Carly Wheeting, daughter of John and Chris Wheeting, Katie Miller, daughter of Kenneth and Lynn Miller, and Megan Unzen, daughter of Jake and Tiffany Unzen.

Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Shih Tzus 17 ½, Jackelopes 15, Pocket Gophers 12 ½, Foxes 12, Coyotes 9, Chipmunks 6

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 230, Ryan Sperry 223, Roger Spanier 219, 214, 209, Doug Jorgensen 215, 213, Brad Larson 211

Women's High Games: Vicki Walter 188, 170, Darci Spanier 173, Sue Stanley 170

Men's High Series: Roger Spanier 642, Doug Jorgensen 621, Brad Waage 617

Women's High Series: Vicki Walter 484, Darci Spanier 472, Dar Larson 450

Groton Area School District #06-6 School Board Meeting March 23, 2015 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.

2. Program Overview Presentations At-Risk Program, K-12 Guidance...K. Sombke, A. Seeklander, J. Sternhagen

Food Service...Chuck Padfield

3. School Board Committee Reports:

a. Building, Grounds, & Transportation: Lars Hanson, Merle Harder, Marty Weismantel

i. Meeting on March 16th, 2015

b. Personnel, Policy, & Curriculum: Dorene Nelson, Grant Rix

c. Negotiations: Kelly Kjelden, Steve Smith

4. Second Reading and Approval of Board Policy KGBA Spectator Conduct at School Activities

5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principals' Reports; (c) Business Manager Report (Wells Fargo Banking Fees)

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve fixed price natural gas contract for purchase and delivery of natural gas for November 2015 through April 2016 at \$0.439/therm.

2. Consider request from St. John's Lutheran Preschool for use of a school bus on April 23, 2015.

3. Other items, as may be appropriate or as deemed necessary.

ADJOURN Reminder: April 13, 2015 Board Meeting will begin at 7:30 PM.

Bowdle CDE Results

Congratulations to the following individuals and teams for placing in the Bowdle CDE on Tuesday!

Milk Quality - 1st Place Team: (Nicholas Achen - 2nd Place, Paityn Bonn - 5th Place, Tori Bjerke - 8th Place, Audrey Wanner)

Farm Business Management - 2nd place team: (Lucas Sternhagen - 1st Place, Sheldon Herr - 4th Place, Adam Herman, Landon Larson, Chance Strom)

Floriculture - 2nd Place Team: (Nicole Lewandoski - 3rd Place, Haley Unzen - 10th Place, Michaela Cutler, Katie LaMee)

Livestock - 2nd Place Team: (Hailey Hanson - 7th Place, Carly Wheeting - 8th Place, Maryn Howard, Braiden Craig, Colt Hokana, John Jensen)

Natural Resources - 2nd Place Team

(Brody Sombke - 6th Place, Kyle Miller, Hayden Anderson, Tevin Abeln)

Vet Science: (Trey Wright - 5th Place, Kate Helmer - 11th Place)

Meat Evaluation: (Madilyn Wright - 11th Place)

Agronomy: (Alec Voss - 11th Place)

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Today in Weather History

March 19, 1968: During a severe weather event, hail up to 1.75 inches in diameter fell 2 miles south of Brookings. In addition, hail 1.00 inch in diameter fell 3 miles northeast of Sioux Falls.

March 19, 2006: Heavy snow of 7 to as much as 20 inches fell from the afternoon of the 18th until around noon on the 20th. The South Dakota Department of Public Safety issued a travel advisory for any travel but especially for the State Basketball Tournament travelers. Interstate-90 was closed on Sunday into Monday morning with many people stranded. Many cars and trucks were stuck on the roads. Many schools and meetings were postponed or canceled. Snowfall amounts include 8 inches at Blunt, Onida, and Lake Sharpe, 9 inches at Mission Ridge, 10 inches at Pierre, 11 inches at Fort Pierre and near Stephan, 12 inches at Eagle Butte, 14 inches northwest of Presho, 16 inches at Murdo, and 20 inches near Iona.

1907 – The highest March temperature in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma was set when the temperature soared to 97 degrees. Dodge City, Kansas also set a March record with 98 degrees. Denver, Colorado set a daily record high of 81 degrees.

1935 - Suffocating dust storms occurred frequently in southeastern Colorado between the 12th and the 25th of the month. Six people died, and many livestock starved or suffocated. Up to six feet of dust covered the ground. Schools were closed, and many rural homes were deserted by tenants. (The Weather Channel)

1950 - Timberline Lodge reported 246 inches of snow on the ground, a record for the state of Oregon. (The Weather Channel)

1956 - The second heavy snowstorm in just three days hit Boston. Nearby Blue Hill received 19.5 inches contributing to their snowiest March of record. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm in the western U.S. produced rain and snow from the northern and central Pacific coast to the northern and central Rockies. Heavier snowfall totals included 13 inches at Clear Creek UT, 12 inches at Snow Camp CA and Glacier Park MT, and 10 inches at Kayenta AZ. Wind gusts reached 54 mph at Winslow AZ. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Seven cities in California and Nevada reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 80s and lower 90s. Los Angeles CA reported a record high of 89 degrees. Five cities in south central Texas reported record lows, including El Paso, with a reading of 22 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)








1989 - Six cities reported new record low temperatures for the date as cold arctic air settled into the Upper Midwest for Palm Sunday, including Marquette MI with a reading of 11 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Rather wintry weather in the eastern U.S. replaced the 80 degree weather of the previous week. Freezing temperatures were reported in northern sections of the Gulf Coast States, and snow began to whiten the Northern and Central Appalachians. Up to eight inches of snow was reported in western Virginia. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2003 – One of the worst blizzards since records began in 1872 struck the Denver metro area and Colorado's Front Range began with a vengeance. Denver International Airport was closed stranding about 4,000 travelers. The weight of the snow caused a 40-foot gash in a portion of the roof forcing the evacuation of that section of the main terminal building. Winds gusting to 40 mph produced drifts six feet high in places around the city. Snowfall in foothills was even more impressive. The heavy wet snow caused numerous roofs of homes and businesses to collapse. The estimated cost of property damage alone, not including large commercial buildings, was \$93 million dollars, making it the most costly snowstorm on record for the area. In Denver alone at least 258 structures were damaged. Up to 135,000 people lost power during the storm and it took several days for power to be totally restored. Mayor Wellington Webb of Denver said, "This is the storm of the century, a backbreaker, a record breaker, a roof breaker." Avalanches in the mountains and foothills closed many roads, including Interstate 70, stranding hundreds of skiers and travelers. The Eldora Ski area 270 skiers were stranded when an avalanche closed the main access road. After the storm, a military helicopter had to deliver food to the resort until the road could be cleared. Two people died in Aurora from heart attacks after shoveling the heavy wet snow. The National Guard sent 40 soldiers and 20 heavy duty vehicles to rescue stranded travelers along a section of I-70. The storm made March 2003 the snowiest March on record, the fourth snowiest month on record and the fifth wettest March on record. The total of 22.9 inches is the greatest 24-hour total in March. The storm also broke 19 consecutive months of below normal precipitation for Denver. The 31.8 inches of snow was recorded at the former Stapleton Airport in Denver for its second greatest snowstorm on record (the greatest was 37.5 inches on 12/4-12/5/1913) with up to three feet in other areas in and around the city and more than seven feet in the foothills. Higher amounts included: Fritz Peak: 87.5 inches, Rollinsville: 87.5 inches, Canin Creek: 83 inches, Near Bergen Park: 74 inches, Northwest of Evergreen: 73 inches, Cola Creek Canyon: 72 inches, Georgetown: 70 inches, Jamestown: 63 inches, Near Blackhawk: 60 inches, Eldora Ski Area: 55 inches, Ken Caryl Ranch: 46.6 inches, Aurora: 40 inches, Centennial: 38 inches, Buckley AFB: 37 inches, Southwest Denver: 35 inches, Louisville: 34 inches, Arvada: 32 inches, Broomfield: 31 inches, Westminster: 31 inches and Boulder: 22.5 inches. This storm was the result of a very moist intense slow moving Pacific system which tracked across the four corners and into southeastern Colorado which allowed a deep easterly upslope to form among the front-range.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Chance Snow
High: 50 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 60 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 42 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 37 °F

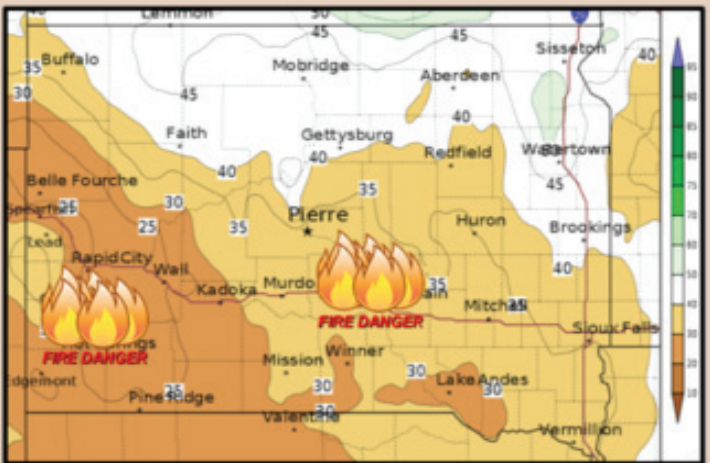
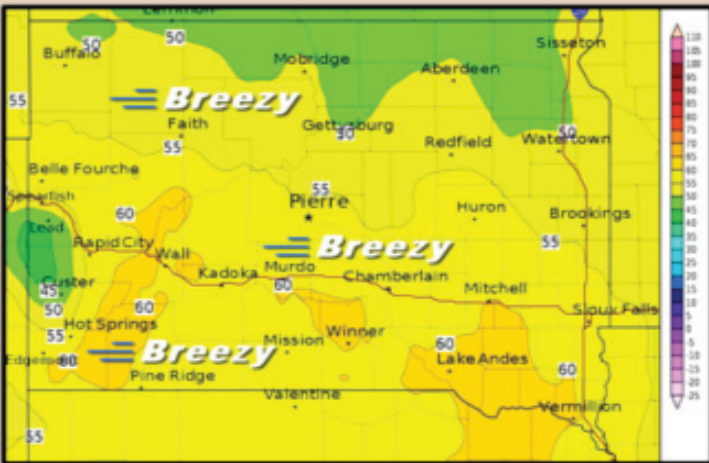


Warm, Dry Through The Week

High temperatures 15 to 25 degrees above normal on Friday

Thursday Forecast High Temps

Thursday Forecast Minimum Relative Humidity



Published on: 03/19/2015 at 5:32AM

A moisture starved low pressure system crossing the region today will bring partly to mostly cloudy skies along with increasing northwesterly winds. Highs today will range from the upper 40s, to the lower 60s. Warm temperatures will spread across the area on Friday with highs ranging from the upper 50s, to the mid-70s. Very high fire danger is expected for central South Dakota today, and for most of the areas on Friday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 39.6 at 2:58 PM

Low: 32.5 at 8:01 AM

High Gust: 20 at 10:37 PM

Snow: 0.00

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 75° in 1910

Record Low: -11° in 1965

Average High: 41°F

Average Low: 21°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.59

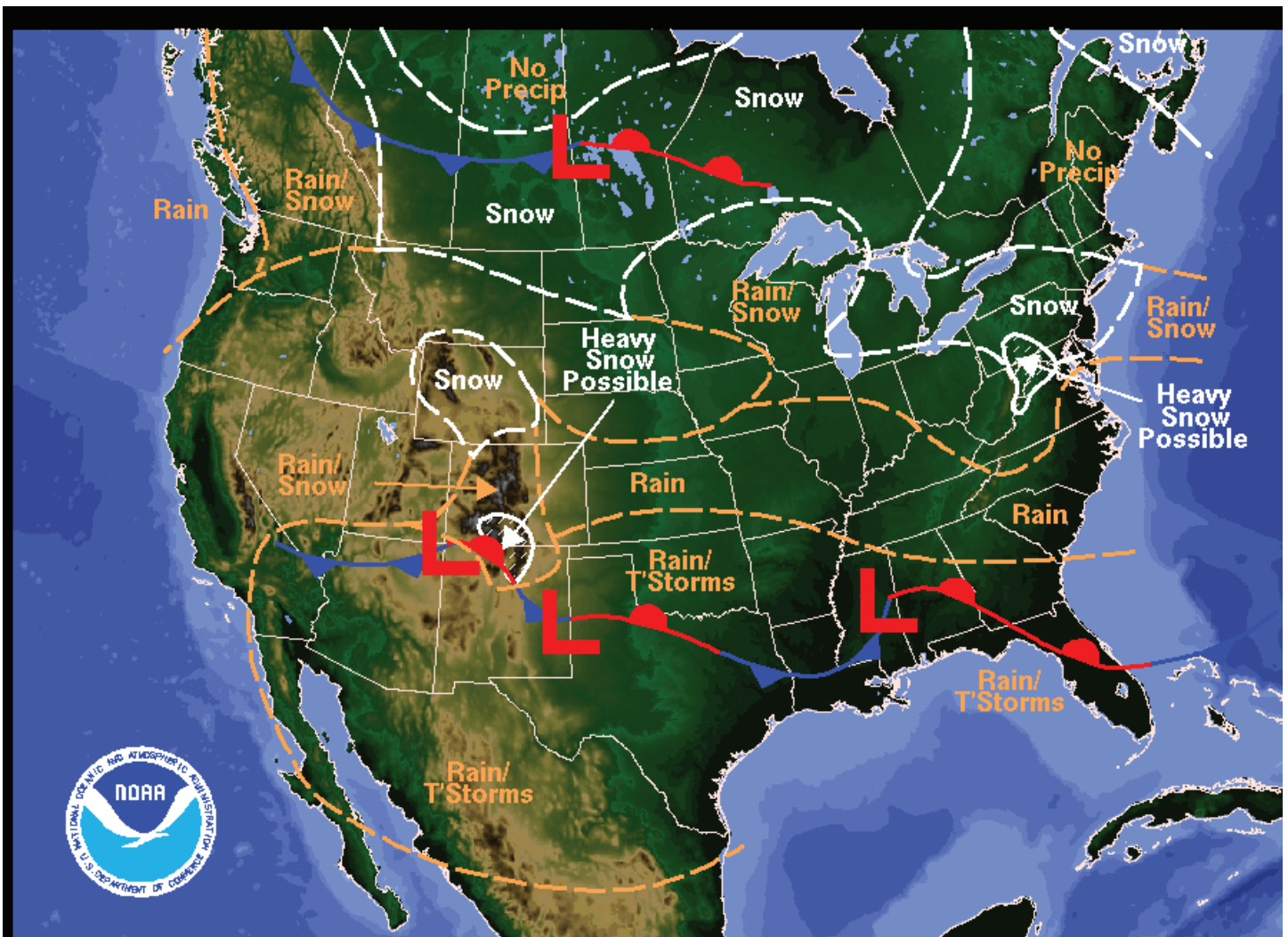
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.61

Precip Year to Date: 0.40

Sunset Tonight: 7:45 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:37 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Mar 19, 2015, issued 3:56 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



HIDE AND SEEK

It's always a time of joy filled with delightful experiences when our grandchildren come to visit. Their youthful exuberance and innocent behavior fills our home with laughter and many unexpected surprises. One of their favorite games is one most of us enjoyed when we were children: hide and seek. They find nooks and crannies, closets and furniture as "obvious" places to hide and then count from one to ten out loud. "Ready or not, here I come!" is the usual cry before the search begins.

It only takes a few minutes before the one hiding is found by the one seeking. There is no territory in our home that they have not discovered. They know where to look to find their siblings.

Often we attempt to "hide" our deeds from God, thinking there may be a place where He cannot find us. We break His laws and turn our backs on His teachings and try to rationalize or even generalize our behavior: "You know God, everyone does it so it's not all that bad." Or, "Well, God, the devil made me do it because You didn't stop Him."

Unfortunately, those excuses will not change the facts of Scripture. "The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord that sheds light on one's inmost being." This "spirit" points back to Creation when "God breathed the breath of life into man" making him different and distinct from animals.

Obviously, if God created us He certainly must know us, understand us and have access to our inmost thought and desires.

When God ignites His lamp and searches our "inmost being" it's "game over." He Himself conducts the investigation and knows exactly where to look. While we may attempt to hide our thoughts and desires from God, He knows exactly where to look!

Prayer: Father, we cannot hide from Your eye when Your turn Your lamp on us and search our hearts. Cleanse us through Christ. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Proverbs 20:27 The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord that sheds light on one's inmost being.

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News from the  Associated Press

1 of 3 announced candidates for Rapid City mayor drops out

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — One of the three people who have announced a run for mayor in Rapid City has dropped out of the race.

City Councilwoman Amanda Scott says she is no longer running, and instead will support former Police Chief Steve Allender.

Allender announced this week that he has decided to take on incumbent Mayor Sam Kooiker (KWAY'-kuhr), who is seeking his third term in the June 2 election.

Mount Rushmore begins year of celebrating 90th anniversary

MOUNT RUSHMORE NATIONAL MEMORIAL, S.D. (AP) — Mount Rushmore National Memorial is hosting a gathering next week to start the celebration of its 90 years of history.

The March 25 event in the Carver's Cafe will include a talk on the park history, cake and ice cream.

Superintendent Cheryl Schreier says 1925 was the year President Calvin Coolidge signed a bill establishing the creation of a national memorial.

Artist Gutzon Borglum arrived that August to evaluate the site and chose Mount Rushmore instead of the proposed Needles.

The site was dedicated on Oct. 1, 1925, in front of 3,000 people.

South Dakota State eliminates Colorado State from NIT, 86-76

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP) — George Marshall knows all about being roughed up and knocked around on away courts.

Two seasons at Wisconsin and playing in the Big Ten prepped the South Dakota State junior for Wednesday's National Invitation Tournament game at Colorado State.

Marshall scored 24 points and five of his team's 12 3-pointers, leading South Dakota State past Colorado State 86-76 in the first round.

"George is a seasoned guard and has played in venues like this. He's not shaken by anything that was going to go on here," said Jacks coach Scott Nagy.

Marshall said, "I always try to stay aggressive. When I come off the screen I try to see the whole floor and try to make a play for myself or my teammates."

He displayed that early in the second half after Daniel Bejarano's 3-pointer had drawn Colorado State (27-7) within 49-47. Marshall scored nine points over three minutes to push the lead back to 61-48.

Deondre Parks added 17 points and Jake Bittle, 15, for South Dakota State (24-10), regular season co-champions of the Summit League. The Jacks helped themselves by making 14 of 18 free throws.

J.J. Avila led Colorado State with 19 points and 11 rebounds. Daniel Bejarano had 17.

The lead reached 80-65 on a reverse layup by Marshall. Colorado State could get no closer than 10 and that with 59 seconds left.

"I must have said four times that this is the biggest stop of the year," Colorado State coach Larry Eustachy said. "We had to get a stop and they hit a three or we couldn't stop their penetration."

The Rams, steeling reeling from an NCAA Tournament snubbing, led for only 90 seconds of the game. Bejarano's layup (2-0) and a rebound basket by Tiel Daniels (4-3) were the only leads.

Parks' basket off a sharp cut gave South Dakota State the lead for good. The Jacks controlled the

tempo and made 17 of 35 shots to take a 47-38 edge into intermission.

"We knew they were disappointed not getting into the (NCAA) Tournament, but we were, too," Nagy said. "We just had a couple of more days to work through that emotionally."

South Dakota State will take on Vanderbilt in the second round on Friday.

Man pleads not guilty to charge from hockey game incident

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Philip man who authorities say spilled beer on and used racial slurs toward a group of Native American students in January at a Rapid City Rush hockey game has pleaded not guilty.

Attorney Patrick Duffy entered the plea on Wednesday for 41-year-old Trace O'Connell, who's charged with disorderly conduct. Duffy says a trial is set for June.

A chaperone has said students from the American Horse K-8 school in Allen were harassed at the game on Jan. 24.

Duffy says his client did not use racial slurs or spray beer on the students and has since received death threats. He says the city indicated that it wouldn't take jail time for O'Connell off the table.

Duffy says O'Connell could face up to 30 days in jail.

Rick Weiland returns with new nonpartisan political group

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Former Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Rick Weiland is borrowing the "Take it Back!" slogan from his anti-big-money-in-politics Senate bid to start a South Dakota-based political organization of the same name dedicated to removing special interest influence in government.

Weiland and Drey Samuelson, former chief of staff to retired Democratic U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson, will formally announce a nonprofit advocacy group and political action committee on Thursday that will use the state's ballot initiative process to push for policy reforms and support similarly minded candidates running for office.

Weiland foreshadowed the new efforts, housed under the moniker TakeItBack.Org, during his Election Night concession speech when he declared: "This fight isn't over." In the months since Nov. 4, Weiland's defunct campaign sent out curiously worded fundraising pitches hinting there was more to come.

He and Samuelson decided to dive back in shortly after the election, where Weiland lost in a four-way contest to Republican Mike Rounds.

They thought, "Do we just want to throw in the towel here and wring our hands and let some other folks figure it out ... or do we want to take a deep breath and re-engage?" Weiland told The Associated Press. "This is how we continue to form a more perfect union. You just can't throw in the towel. That's just not who I am."

Weiland said the nonpartisan organization aims to take on corruption in government and cut through the partisan rancor that grips the political system. Weiland said he and Samuelson are still working on the specifics of ballot initiatives they'll put forward, but said they will relate to fighting corruption, increasing transparency in campaign contributions and in state contracts. Samuelson said initiatives could also address issues such as instituting a nonpartisan redistricting commission.

Steve Jarding, a longtime national Democratic strategist and friend to Weiland and Samuelson, said he loved the idea when he heard it. But he cautioned that it would likely take some time to get the organization off the ground. Weiland said the group hopes to eventually expand and noted that 24 states

have the initiative process.

Weiland said he wants to focus on TakeItBack.Org and has no plans to run against U.S. Sen. John Thune or U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem, both Republicans, in 2016.

Samuelson and Weiland said they don't yet have any hard fundraising goals. Voter initiatives are likely the place the group can make the biggest impact.

Weiland pointed to the ballot measure that voters passed 55 percent to 45 percent in November to raise the state's minimum wage. He said ballot questions give citizens an avenue to act when their legislators don't address important issues.

"This is a way to do things more quickly and to have debates with the entire state," Samuelson said.

South Dakota Republican Party Chairwoman Pam Roberts said she's unfamiliar with the new organization. But she defended the work of the Legislature, which is controlled by GOP supermajorities, and said she hasn't heard an outcry against lawmakers in Pierre. She said she thought the group is "suspect" and said it could be political.

Weiland said he anticipates some will question the sincerity of what they're trying to do.

"This is a nonpartisan, independent effort to recruit people who are interested in taking their government back from big money and the partisan rancor that is destroying our democracy," Weiland said. "It's not just a shell for some kind of Democratic takeover. It's an organization to take our government back."

SD police use beanbag rounds to subdue shooting suspect

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The suspect in a weekend shooting in western South Dakota is now in custody after police fired beanbag rounds to subdue him.

The Rapid City Police Department says the 69-year-old male suspect was arrested Wednesday after an altercation with police. Authorities suspect the Sturgis man fired the shot that seriously injured a 29-year-old man near a bar Saturday in Rapid City.

Authorities say law enforcement had been in contact with the suspect throughout the investigation and believe the shooting is the result of an accidental discharge of a firearm.

Police say the suspect agreed to meet with officers on Wednesday in a parking lot, but after a discussion, he exited the vehicle and threatened to take his own life with a knife. He reportedly also threatened officers.

Officers then fired several non-lethal beanbag rounds and arrested the suspect. Charges against him are pending.

Regents OK Confucius Institute at Northern State University

BY KEVIN BURBACH, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Northern State University is on track to create a Chinese language and cultural center that will be the first of its kind in the Dakotas, a move officials hope will give students and the state a direct link to China's growing economy.

The South Dakota Board of Regents voted 7-0 Wednesday to allow for the Aberdeen-based university to establish a Confucius Institute in conjunction with the University of Jinan in China. There are institutes in nearly every state except the Dakotas.

A Confucius Institute will allow the partner universities to exchange instructors, students and academic information in addition to giving them the opportunity to work on joint research and seminars.

An agreement finalizing the partnership will be signed in early April on campus.

University President James Smith said the partnership will be especially beneficial to students looking for international business and study abroad experience.

"Being more acquainted with China will allow them to expand their professional portfolio," he said.

The two universities plan to offer Mandarin Chinese courses to NSU students as early as fall 2015. No other University in South Dakota offers the language courses. Northern State stopped offering Mandarin language courses in 1996.

The regents pushed last summer for the Legislature to allocate \$400,000 to fund the institute for the first year, but the memorandum agreed upon Wednesday shows that money will come from an anonymous private donor. The Confucius Institute Headquarters in Hanban, China, will also donate \$150,000 in startup costs and a 3,000 volume library of Chinese books and teaching materials. All salaries of visiting personnel will be provided by the headquarters.

Plans are also underway to develop a cultural center in the university's Beulah Williams Library, which would house Chinese cultural exhibit.

As of 2011, there were more than 350 Confucius Institutes in 104 countries, according to documents previously provided by the regents. The majority of U.S. states have at least one. If approved, the cultural center at Northern State would be one of the last in the country for now. The institute stopped taking applications to partner with American institutions at the end of 2014.

Northern State isn't the first university in the Dakotas to vie for one.

The North Dakota Board of Higher Education had given Dickinson State University permission to establish a partnership with a Chinese university and set up a Confucius Institute, but it never happened. A majority of faculty members voted against the idea and state officials also found that the university had given Chinese exchange students hundreds of unearned diplomas.

FEMA gives Union Co. ultimatum; flood insurance could go up

REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — More than 400 homeowners whose property lies along the Missouri River in southeast South Dakota could end up paying a \$50 surcharge on their flood insurance if officials in Union County do not meet a federal deadline to submit flood insurance-related records.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency plans to put Union County on probationary status with the National Flood Insurance Program starting in mid-May unless it addresses what it calls "program deficiencies" and "floodplain management violations." FEMA is accusing the county of not having adequate record keeping and failing to manage development in the floodplain.

Barb Fitzpatrick, a flood plain specialist with FEMA, said the agency is waiting to receive records from the county regarding issues such as construction of basements in the mapped floodplain area, as well as the placement of a levee and an embankment.

Fitzpatrick said the documentation is standard procedure for communities in the flood insurance program.

The county also faces apparent violations for the construction of basements, which are banned in the floodplain.

The National Flood Insurance Program, a part of FEMA, underwrites flood insurance policies sold by commercial insurance companies. Union County joined the program in 1977 and the area's current floodplain map was drawn in 2001.

Traditional insurance policies for homeowners and renters do not cover flood damage. People who live outside a mapped floodplain can get insurance at low rates, while premiums within flood plains depend

on how buildings are built.

Zoning director Dennis Henze on Wednesday said the county plans to meet the deadline.

"We have a deadline of May 18, but the thing is they ask for certain information, we give it to them. Then, they decide they need more information, and I just hope they don't drag it past the 18th," Henze said. "They are continually asking for more information."

FEMA's regional office in Denver sent the county a letter in January listing the deficiencies and violations following a site inspection.

Henze, the only employee in his office, said two engineers had to be hired to gather all the information that FEMA requested. The county and area developers are paying for the engineers.

The county has 424 flood insurance policies. Only homeowners in the unincorporated area of the county, including Dakota Dunes, would be affected by the surcharge. But incorporated areas, such as North Sioux City, would not have to pay the penalty.

The levy documentation FEMA wants is for one built in Dakota Dunes following the Missouri River flooding in 2011. FEMA officials want to make sure the permanent levy, which was built along the 18th hole of a private country club, is not in the floodway.

Low-lying areas in Union County, including Dakota Dunes, faced rising water in June 2011 as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers increased flows through dams on the Missouri River to get rid of water from rains of up to 8 inches that fell in Wyoming, eastern Montana and western North Dakota and South Dakota.

Branstad: Beef execs complained about workers' comp official

RYAN J. FOLEY, Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The founders of a beef company who were major donors to Gov. Terry Branstad's campaign were among the business leaders who raised concerns about a state official the governor later tried to force out, according to court documents released to The Associated Press on Wednesday.

In a legal deposition, Branstad denied allegations levied in a lawsuit that he targeted former Iowa Workers' Compensation Commissioner Chris Godfrey because Godfrey is gay. The governor said he asked Godfrey to resign and cut his pay in 2011 so he could name a more business-friendly commissioner to rule on disputes involving employers and injured workers.

Branstad has said publicly that business interests raised concerns about Godfrey. But the deposition revealed that those leaders included Beef Products Inc. founders Eldon and Regina Roth, top donors to Branstad's 2010 campaign with \$152,000 in contributions.

Branstad testified that he recalled having a "very serious" meeting with the Roths about their concerns in 2010 at the company's headquarters in Dakota Dunes, South Dakota, which is near the Iowa border. The company makes a lean, finely textured beef, which critics call it "pink slime," and had a processing plant in Iowa at the time.

"They said they were concerned about the direction that the workers' compensation commission was going in Iowa, that it was driving up the costs of their business, and making the state of Iowa less competitive," Branstad testified.

Branstad's attorney, George LaMarca, said Wednesday that the governor acted lawfully in asking for Godfrey's resignation and cutting his pay. He said "no one person or business influenced the governor" on the matter.

Branstad's testimony came during a Nov. 26 deposition in a lawsuit in which Godfrey alleges the governor and his aides discriminated and retaliated against him because he is gay.

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Branstad asked Godfrey, who was confirmed to a six-year term in 2009, to resign shortly after winning the November 2010 gubernatorial election. When Godfrey declined a second request to quit in July 2011, Branstad slashed Godfrey's pay by nearly \$40,000 to \$72,000, the lowest allowed under the position by law. Branstad testified that Godfrey's pay cut was the only one he's approved for a state executive.

The Iowa Attorney General's Office released a 441-page transcript of Branstad's deposition testimony after the AP requested the documents under the open records law. The lawsuit — which has lasted more than three years and cost the state more than \$648,000 in legal fees — is set for trial in November.

Godfrey left the state job last year for a position ruling on workers' compensation disputes involving federal employees with the U.S. Department of Labor. In an interview Wednesday, Godfrey said he was surprised that Beef Products Inc. executives tried to "use political influence like that."

"That's very, very troubling," he said.

Godfrey noted that the company was concerned about a pending dispute involving an employee who suffered a work-related rotator cuff injury in 2007. Godfrey said he had little involvement in the case, in which one of his deputies faced criticism for being biased in favor of the worker.

During the deposition, Branstad repeated assertions that he didn't know Godfrey was gay until after he cut his pay. The governor said he wanted a new commissioner based on concerns that the office's decisions were potentially hurting job growth.

Branstad noted that Iowa had one of the nation's best workers' compensation climates according to one business survey, but had slipped in recent years to the middle of the pack. Workers' compensation costs in Iowa were going down, but not as fast as in states that cut benefits, according to the testimony.

Beef Products Inc., or BPI, makes its product using a process in which butchered cow trimmings are heated, lean meat is separated from fat, and ammonia gas is applied to the meat to kill bacteria. The company didn't respond to a request for comment.

When the product came under attack among critics who dubbed it "pink slime" and portrayed it as unsafe in 2012, Branstad defended BPI from what he called an unfair smear. He went with other governors to tour one of the company's plants in Nebraska to demonstrate its safety.

Facing a sudden drop in demand, the company suspended operations at three plants, including in Waterloo, Iowa. BPI filed a lawsuit in 2012 against ABC News, saying the network's coverage prompted consumer to shun the product.

Branstad repeatedly defended the company's product in the deposition, bristling when attorney Roxanne Conlin called it "pink slime."

"It's inappropriate and I strongly object to people using that pejorative, unfair term," he said.

Armed home invasion being investigated in Brookings County

ELKTON, S.D. (AP) — The Brookings County Sheriff's Office is investigating an armed home invasion in rural Elkton.

Authorities say a man entered an unlocked residence north of Elkton about 7 a.m. Monday, armed with a handgun and a knife. The man tied up the lone male occupant of the home, disabled his cell-phone and ransacked the home.

The thief stole more than \$1,000 worth of cash, clothing and electronics.

The occupant of the home was not hurt.

10 Things to Know for Today

The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. TUNISIA FINDS NO LINKS TO TERROR GROUP

But one of the two gunmen who killed 19 tourists and others at a Tunis museum was known to intelligence services.

2. HERZOG HAS STRONG WORDS FOR ISRAELI LEADER

The defeated centrist leader accuses Netanyahu of running a campaign that bordered on racist and says his party will not join the next government.

3. GANG VIOLENCE SUSPECTED IN SWEDEN SHOOTOUT

A shooting inside a restaurant in Goteborg killed two people and left up to 15 wounded — three or four of them seriously.

4. DESPERATION GROWS FOR VANUATU'S SURVIVORS

Relief groups struggle to get supplies to residents living in the cyclone-ravaged South Pacific nation's outer islands, as food and water become scarce.

5. DEFENSE HAWKS SEEK TO EASE PENTAGON CUTS

Some Senate Republicans hope to rewrite the party's day-old budget plan to add tens of billions of dollars to ease cuts to the military.

6. WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT 'OBAMACARE'

A new poll finds that most Americans are unaware of a Supreme Court case that could unravel the health care law.

7. SUSPECTED IPAD THEFT LEADS TO PRISON ODYSSEY

A deaf Ethiopian immigrant who's fluent in American Sign Language says he sat in a Virginia jail for six weeks without access to an interpreter.

8. WHY REMOTE ATLANTIC ISLAND LODGING IS IN DEMAND

Hotels have been sold out for years in the Faeroes and Svalbard where, weather permitting, enthusiasts will have front-row seats to a total solar eclipse tomorrow.

9. MOVE OVER MICKEY, HELLO KITTY

Brown the bear and Cony the bunny, emoticons popular in Asia, will soon be unleashed worldwide through stores, virtual reality and possibly an animated film.

10. 'BIG DANCE' GETS UNDERWAY

Prohibitive favorite Kentucky meets Hampton this evening as the full-field portion of the NCAA tournament tips off just after noon

AP News in Brief

Cruise ships leave Tunisia after attack; Prime minister says 1 gunman known to intelligence

TUNIS, Tunisia (AP) — One of the two gunmen who killed 19 tourists and others at a prominent Tunisian museum was known to intelligence services, Tunisia's prime minister said Thursday. But no formal links to a particular terrorist group have been established in an attack that threatens the country's fledgling democracy and struggling tourism industry.

Razor wire ringed the National Bardo Museum on Thursday and security forces guarded major thoroughfares, while authorities hunted for two or three more people believed to have been involved in Wednesday's attack, the worst in years targeting a tourist site.

It also spelled new trouble for the tourism industry, which brings throngs of foreigners every year to Tunisia's Mediterranean beaches, desert oases and Roman ruins — and had just started to recover after years of slump. Two cruise ships whose passengers had been among the victims left the port of Tunis early Thursday.

In an interview with France's RTL radio, Prime Minister Habib Essid said Tunisia is working with other countries to learn more about the attackers, identified as Yassine Laabidi and Hatem Khachnaoui. They were killed by security services in a raid after they attacked the museum.

He said Laabidi had been flagged to intelligence, although not for "anything special."

Analysis: More than just nationalism, many reasons led to victory for Netanyahu

JERUSALEM (AP) — It's a mystery to many: Benjamin Netanyahu's campaign gained steam when he ruled out the creation of a Palestinian state, and he seems determined to continue settling occupied land with Jews.

So why would Israelis again back policies that promise friction of all kinds — and will dramatically dilute the Jewish character of their hard-won state by making it eventually inseparable from the millions of Palestinians in the West Bank?

The answer lies in the details of a conundrum so complicated that the dynamics of democracy seem hardly able to contain it. Tellingly, perhaps, the campaign did not even focus on the grand strategic issue that is now presented as having been decided: Instead the opposition pledged to address bread-and-butter issues, like the high cost of living.

The outcome may be different under circumstances that force the Palestinian issue to the table. If international boycott initiatives start exacting an economic price on a country that appreciates its high standard of living, or if the Europeans who are Israel's top trading partners take off the gloves. Or if the Palestinians rebel, creating a major security headache, or the United States steps in with peace proposals backed by muscle.

Another game-changer would be if the moderate opposition united behind a truly compelling candidate after a succession of leaders who were simply not perceived by enough people as ready for prime time. The last Labor Party leader to achieve an effective brand of gravitas was one-time military chief Ehud Barak, who won in 1999.

Defeated centrist leader vows not to join new Israeli government, accuses Netanyahu of racism

JERUSALEM (AP) — The center-left front-runner defeated in Israel's parliamentary election said Thursday his party will not join the next government and accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of rousing voters with racist remarks on election day.

Isaac Herzog said his Zionist Union, which finished second in Tuesday's vote, would sit in the opposition as a counterweight to the nationalist right-wing governing coalition that Netanyahu is poised to form.

The vote, Herzog told Israeli Army Radio, showed that "the nation wants an extreme right-wing government."

"We will challenge it," he added, referring to his role in the opposition.

The resounding victory by Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party was a stunning turnaround after a tight race that had put his lengthy rule in jeopardy. The latest tally from Tuesday's vote shows the Zionist

Union got 24 seats, compared to Likud's 30.

At least 2 killed, up to 15 injured in Swedish restaurant shooting; gang violence suspected

STOCKHOLM (AP) — A shooting inside a restaurant in Sweden's second largest city killed two people and left up to 15 wounded — three or four of them seriously, police said, adding that the incident was likely gang-related.

Spokesman Bjor Blixter said Thursday the eatery in Goteborg was full when men with automatic weapons opened fire late Wednesday, and some of those wounded may have been ordinary guests.

"Innocent people have been hit," Blixter said. He said none of the wounded was in a life-threatening condition.

The victims were two men in their 20s. Blixter said there were known gang members inside the restaurant in the suburb of Biskopsgarden, adding the shooting spree was likely related to gang feuds. The neighborhood is known for a history of gang violence.

One witness told Swedish broadcaster SVT that two men entered the restaurant and started shooting with automatic weapons.

Warrant: Handwriting analysis error delayed authorities linking Durst to California killing

HOUSTON (AP) — A document examiner's erroneous handwriting analysis 14 years ago delayed authorities in linking millionaire Robert Durst to a friend's death until after he was accused of killing someone else, according to a search warrant.

Durst, a member of a wealthy New York real estate family, was arrested in New Orleans over the weekend and charged with murder in California for the December 2000 shooting death of Susan Berman. Durst's arrest came shortly before the finale of an HBO series about his links to three killings — that of his first wife, who disappeared in New York in 1982; Berman, the daughter a mobster and a close friend who acted as his spokeswoman after his wife disappeared; and a 71-year-old neighbor in Texas whose chopped up body was found floating in Galveston Bay in 2001. Durst has only ever been tried for the Texas killing, and he was acquitted of murder.

Authorities on Tuesday searched Durst's Houston home, and the warrant released Wednesday details the timeline of the Berman case.

It shows that police focused in on Durst's handwriting early on after a note received by police tipped them to Berman's death. The envelope and note, written in block letters, misspelled "Beverley Hills Police" and included the word "cadaver" along with Berman's Beverly Hills address.

In 2001, Los Angeles Police Department document examiner William Leaver concluded it was "highly probable" that the envelope and note were written by Nyle Brenner, Berman's manager and friend. The assessment was "rubber stamped" by Leaver's supervisor, who told detectives this past September that she had not performed her own technical review.

As cyber criminals lurk overseas, US officials consider rewards for their arrest

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI considers Evgeniy Bogachev one of the world's most prolific and brilliant cyber criminals, slapping his photos — bald, beefy-faced and smiling faintly — on "Wanted" fliers

posted online. The Russian would be an ideal target for prosecution — if only the Justice Department could find him.

Unable to bring him into custody in the 10 months since his indictment, the government has turned to a time-honored technique long used for more conventional crime: putting a bounty on Bogachev's head.

It's too soon to say whether the \$3 million reward for information leading to his arrest — the first of its kind offered under a special State Department program — will ever pay off. But federal officials say they intend to use the strategy in additional cyber cases involving international hackers whose whereabouts are either unknown to the U.S. government or who are holed up in nations that have little or no diplomatic relations with the United States.

"We've really not done something like this" in cyber cases, Robert Anderson, an FBI executive assistant director, said in announcing the reward. "All of a sudden, somebody's putting an 'x' on somebody, saying, 'Bring him to justice, you get \$3 million.'"

The reward is also a reminder of how many accused masterminds of cyberattacks on U.S. targets remain out of reach for federal law enforcement.

Even as Fed deliberates rate hikes, the era of cheap credit will continue

NEW YORK (AP) — Nobody knows when exactly, but the day will eventually come when the Federal Reserve nudges its benchmark lending rate from next to zero to something slightly higher.

When that happens, it will put upward pressure on borrowing rates throughout the economy — for credit cards, mortgages and student loans. But that doesn't mean the era of incredibly low interest rates will soon be over.

The Fed's chair, Janet Yellen, has taken pains to be cautious. On Wednesday, the central bank gave more signals that it will move slowly toward its first interest-rate increase in nearly a decade. By the end of the year, Fed officials expect the benchmark rate will reach 0.625 percent.

It was a different world the last time the Fed began a series of hikes. Rates were already much higher than today. In June 2004, the Fed lifted its benchmark rate from 1 percent to 1.25 percent. By the time the Fed was finished in 2006, the rate had reached 5.25 percent.

Nobody expects anything like that now. With the economy still growing slowly and inflation minuscule, rates will likely hover near historic lows. The Fed doesn't want to ratchet up the monthly payments on your credit card. It's in no rush.

Vanuatu's cyclone survivors increasingly desperate for food, water; aid rushed to outer isles

PORT VILA, Vanuatu (AP) — Relief groups struggled to get supplies to residents living in Vanuatu's cyclone-ravaged outer islands on Thursday, as survivors grew desperate for food and water five days after the fierce storm flattened villages across the South Pacific nation.

With power, phones and Internet still down across much of the country, officials faced logistical headaches in sorting out where to send supplies, particularly in Tanna Island, which was hit hard by Cyclone Pam's 270 kilometer (168 mile) per hour winds. Tanna's roads remained blocked by debris, forcing aid workers to hike across the island to inspect damage to schools and other buildings, UNICEF said.

"The phone network being down makes things incredibly difficult," said Evan Schuurman, a member

of Save the Children's emergency response team. "It's meant that it's taken a lot longer to actually find out what's happening in some of the outlying islands, and so the sooner the communications can get back up and running, the better."

Though the death toll from the disaster stood at 11, officials and relief teams were growing increasingly concerned about islanders' long-term survival, with food and water scarce in the worst-hit areas and access to some of the archipelago's more remote islands remaining difficult.

More than 100 residents on Tanna, including the elderly and a newborn, have been sheltering in a store since Friday. With no relief supplies yet to reach them, they have taken to eating fruit they find on the ground and drinking water from a creek to survive.

Battle between GOP defense hawks, fiscal conservatives delays vote on budget plan

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two Senate Republican defense hawks are joining House rebels in trying to rewrite the party's budget plans to add tens of billions of dollars to ease deficit-driven cuts to the military.

Thursday's move comes after the House Budget Committee abruptly called off a vote aimed at tamping down an uprising among pro-Pentagon lawmakers by removing restrictions on additional defense funding that's aimed at matching President Barack Obama's \$38 billion increase for the department. The party's anti-spending wing was pushing back.

The failure of the House panel to approve its budget as scheduled was unprecedented in recent memory and could delay floor debate into April. Conservative Budget Chairman Tom Price, R-Ga., appeared out of synch with GOP leaders seeking to placate defense hawks.

The developments arrived as Republicans in both the House and the Senate were trying to advance budget blueprints designed to show how they would carry out promises to balance the budget within a decade without raising taxes.

Both plans rely on deep but often unspecified cuts to the social safety net that advocates for the poor say could drive millions of people from programs like Medicaid and food stamps.

Guide to the Madness: The top teams, players and underdogs to watch in the '15 NCAA Tournament

The 2014 NCAA Tournament was one for the ages, filled with bracket-busting upsets, buzzer-beating finishes and star players rising up.

This year's bracket could be even better.

It's got Kentucky trying to make history, two players running neck-and-neck for national player of the year honors and a group of mid-majors poised to capture the nation's attention with a magical run.

Here's a few things to look for when the main bracket fires up on Thursday:

Today in History **The Associated Press**

Today is Thursday, March 19, the 78th day of 2015. There are 287 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 19, 1945, during World War II, 724 people were killed when a Japanese dive bomber attacked the carrier USS Franklin off Japan; the ship, however, was saved. Adolf Hitler ordered the destruction of German facilities that could fall into Allied hands in his so-called "Nero Decree," which was

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largely disregarded.

On this date:

In 1687, French explorer Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle - the first European to navigate the length of the Mississippi River - was murdered by mutineers in present-day Texas.

In 1863, the Confederate cruiser Georgiana, on its maiden voyage, was scuttled off Charleston, South Carolina, to prevent it from falling into Union hands.

In 1918, Congress approved daylight saving time.

In 1920, the Senate rejected, for a second time, the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') by a vote of 49 in favor, 35 against, falling short of the two-thirds majority needed for approval.

In 1931, Nevada Gov. Fred B. Balzar signed a measure legalizing casino gambling.

In 1955, the inner-city school drama "Blackboard Jungle," starring Glenn Ford, was released by MGM.

In 1965, the wreck of the Confederate cruiser Georgiana was discovered by E. Lee Spence, 102 years to the day after it had been scuttled.

In 1976, Buckingham Palace announced the separation of Princess Margaret and her husband, the Earl of Snowdon, after 16 years of marriage.

In 1979, the U.S. House of Representatives began televising its floor proceedings; the live feed was carried by C-SPAN (Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network), which was making its debut.

In 1987, televangelist Jim Bakker resigned as chairman of his PTL ministry organization amid a sex and money scandal involving Jessica Hahn, a former church secretary.

In 1993, Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White announced plans to retire. (White's departure paved the way for Ruth Bader Ginsburg to become the court's second female justice.)

In 2003, President George W. Bush ordered the start of war against Iraq. (Because of the time difference, it was early March 20 in Iraq.)

Ten years ago: Police in Citrus County, Florida, found the body of 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford, more than three weeks after she'd disappeared from her bedroom. (Convicted sex offender John Evander Couey was later sentenced to death for kidnapping, raping and burying Jessica alive; he died of natural causes in September 2009.) Irina Slutskaya (sloot-SKY'-yah) won the gold medal for the second time at the World Figure Skating Championships, held in Moscow; Sasha Cohen of the United States won the silver medal for the second straight year. Automaker John Z. DeLorean died in Summit, New Jersey, at age 80.

Five years ago: The White House released an online video of President Barack Obama making a fresh appeal directly to the people of Iran, saying a U.S. offer of diplomatic dialogue still stood, but that the Tehran government had chosen isolation.

One year ago: In her first news conference as Federal Reserve chair, Janet Yellen said with the job market still weak, the Fed intended to keep short-term rates near zero for a "considerable" time and would raise them only gradually. Toyota agreed to pay \$1.2 billion to settle an investigation by the U.S. government, admitting that it had hidden information about defects that caused Toyota and Lexus vehicles to accelerate unexpectedly, resulting in injuries and deaths. Robert Strauss, 95, a prominent Democratic party powerbroker and former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, died in Washington. Former Iran-Contra chief prosecutor Lawrence E. Walsh, 102, died in Oklahoma City. Fred Phelps, founder of the Westboro Baptist Church that preached hatred of gay people, died at age 84.

Today's Birthdays: Former White House national security adviser Brent Scowcroft is 90. Theologian Hans Kung is 87. Jazz musician Ornette Coleman is 85. Author Philip Roth is 82. Actress Renee Taylor is 82. Actress-singer Phyllis Newman is 82. Actress Ursula Andress is 79. Singer Clarence "Frogman" Henry is 78. Singer Ruth Pointer (The Pointer Sisters) is 69. Actress Glenn Close is 68. Film producer

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Harvey Weinstein is 63. Actor Bruce Willis is 60. Actress-comedian Mary Scheer is 52. Playwright Neil LaBute is 52. Actor Connor Trinneer is 46. Rock musician Gert Bettens (K's Choice) is 45. Rapper Bun B is 42. Rock musician Zach Lind (Jimmy Eat World) is 39. Actress Abby Brammell is 36. Actor Craig Lamar Traylor is 26. Actor Philip Bolden is 20.

Thought for Today: "As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world."
- Virginia Woolf, English author (1882-1941).