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Hoops Reunion

The John and Mary Hoops family reunion will be held on June 28th at the Groton Community Center. The pot-luck dinner is at 12:30, with chicken and drinks being provided.

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **Open**

Thursday, June 25

Senior Menu: Roast pork, baked potato with sour cream, apple sauce, molasses cookie, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Dodie Neumann, Carlie Peterson, Sydney Locke.

8:00am: Elementary Library open

5:30pm: U10 Blue at Milbank Blue (DH)

5:30pm: U10 Red vs. Sisseton 1 at Webster

5:30pm: U8 Groton Blue PW host Britton

6:00pm: Jr. Teeners at Milbank (DH)

6:00pm: U10 Softball at Ellendale (DH)

6:00pm: U8 Red PW host Britton

7:00pm: Amateurs host Northville

Friday, June 26

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken, boiled potatoes, green beans, cake with strawberries, whole wheat bread.

Anniversary: Jeff & Bridget Flihs

Birthday: Thomas Sternhagen

12:00pm: Chamber Golf Tourney

5:30pm: U8 Practice at Complex

6:30pm: U10 Softball practice at Complex

7:30pm: U12 Practice at Complex

Saturday, June 27

Anniversaries: Jim & Jenny Meister, Gary & Patty Baule, Jeff & Jami Larson.

Birthdays: Elaine Wolken, Cassie Monson

1:00pm: Jr. Tenors host Northville (DH)

4:30pm: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass

Sunday, June 28

Anniversaries: Doug & Melenie Sombke, Car-

Groton Chiropractic Clinic

Carol McFarland-Kutter, D.C.
1205 N 1st St., Groton 397-8204

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Road construction of Fifth Avenue West continues as they near the end of the project.

One of Groton's finest homes looking for a new family



403 E. 15th Ave.

Over 7,000 sq. ft. of living area. 10'-12' Ceilings. Six bedrooms, five baths, two kitchens, living room, dining room, study room, two family rooms, theater room, finished and heated oversized three-stall garage, irrigation system. **Reduced to \$499,900**

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Fees for some driver license applications to increase July 1

PIERRE, S.D. -- South Dakotans will see an increase in driver license application fees starting July 1.

House Bill 1041, approved by this year's Legislature, increases fees for certain categories. They are:

*** An original or renewal driver license or ID will go from \$20 to \$28;

*** A duplicate license or ID \$10 to \$15;

*** The cost of a commercial driver license \$25 to \$33; and,

*** Commercial driver license endorsement knowledge test fees \$10 to \$15.

Jane Schrank, director of the Driver Licensing Program, says the extra revenue raised will help fund the program itself.

"Our goal is to always wisely use the money raised from the fees," she says. "The average current cost to operate the program equates to \$29.75 per driver license or identification card issued. It is predicted that the new increase will keep the program solvent until Fiscal Year 2024."

Drivers are reminded that they can renew their licenses starting 180 days prior to expiration.

The Driver Licensing Program is part of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



Treeline Tree Service

**Over 30 Years
of Combined
Experience!**

TJ Sperry:

380-7915

Tyler Sperry:

216-8431

Sperry Stump Removal

Today in Weather History








June 25, 1914: An estimated F2 tornado moved east from 6 miles southeast of Isabel in Dewey County. Three small homes and two barns were destroyed. Twelve tons of hay was said to have vanished.

June 25, 1969: On the northeast side of Groton, an F2 to near F3 tornado, destroyed a large grain elevator and uprooted huge trees. Four people were hospitalized. Estimated property damage was a quarter million dollars. Also, locally heavy rains caused flash flooding in Sully and Hughes Counties. A bridge near Harrold was washed out. Some rainfall amounts include; 5.34 inches at 23N of Highmore; 4.24 at 2N of Onaka; 4.14 at 12SSW of Harrold; 3.90 at 1NW of Faulkton; and 3.73 inches at Ipswich. Unofficial reports of 6 inches fell in and around Harrold.

1957: Hurricane Audrey moved northward, slowly strengthening until the 26th. At that time, a strong upper level trough led to its acceleration and the hurricane deepened rapidly on its final approach to the Texas/Louisiana border. Audrey became the strongest hurricane on record for the month of June upon landfall, as it reached category four strength. Its acceleration was unanticipated, and despite hurricane warnings in place, 418 people perished in the storm, mainly across southwest Louisiana.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
30%	30%	20%				
Chance Thunderstorms	Chance Thunderstorms	Slight Chc Thunderstorms	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 82 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 86 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 85 °F



Chance for Storms Today, Especially West

Follow us on Social Media

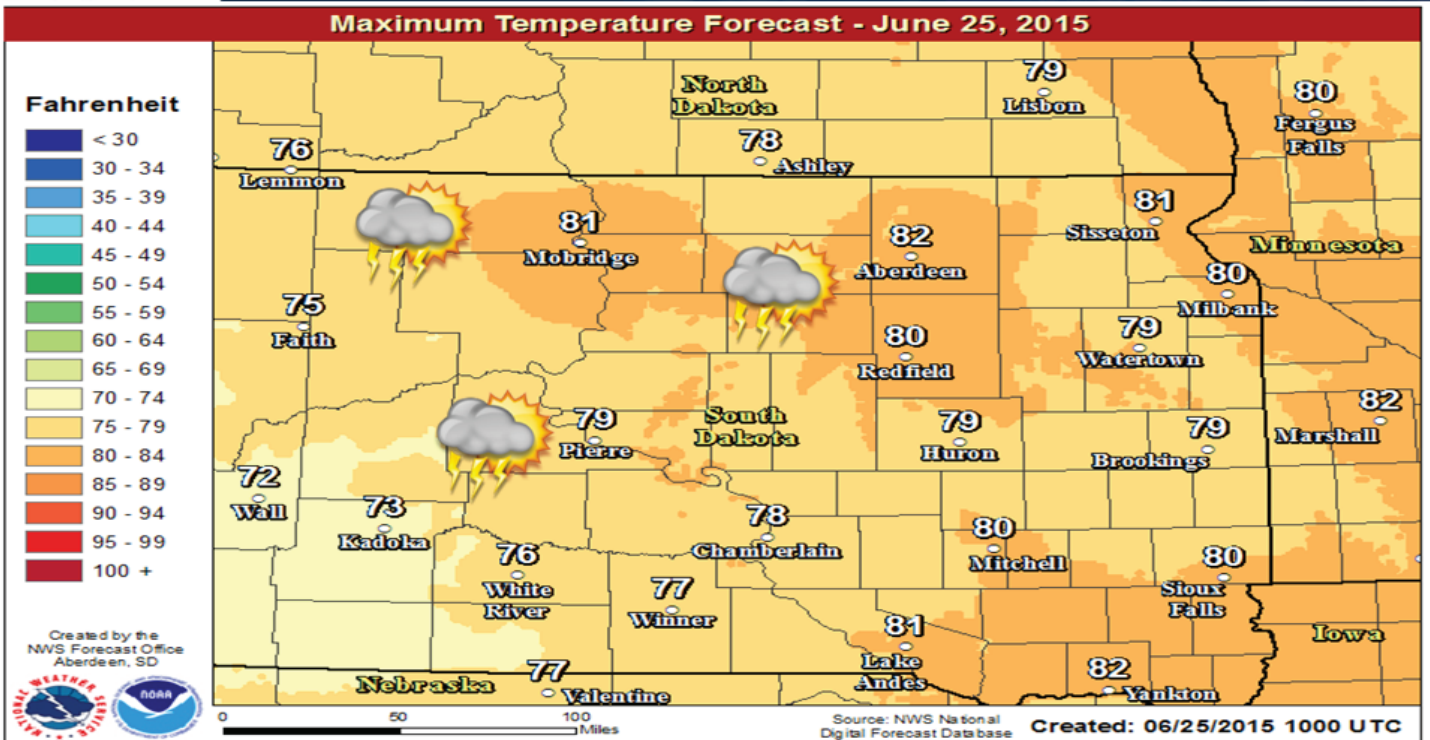
weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen



Published on: 06/25/2015 at 5:35AM

Afternoon thunderstorms are possible once again this afternoon and evening, but mostly in the isolated to scattered variety. The best chances will be across western and central South Dakota. The threat for severe storms is rather low today, but a few stronger storms cannot be ruled out. Highs will rise into the upper 70s to low 80s across the region.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 83.3 at 4:21 PM

Low: 60.3 at 1:44 AM

High Gust: 15 at 2:36 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 106° in 1936

Record Low: 41° in 1961

Average High: 80°F

Average Low: 56°F

Average Precip in June: 3.09

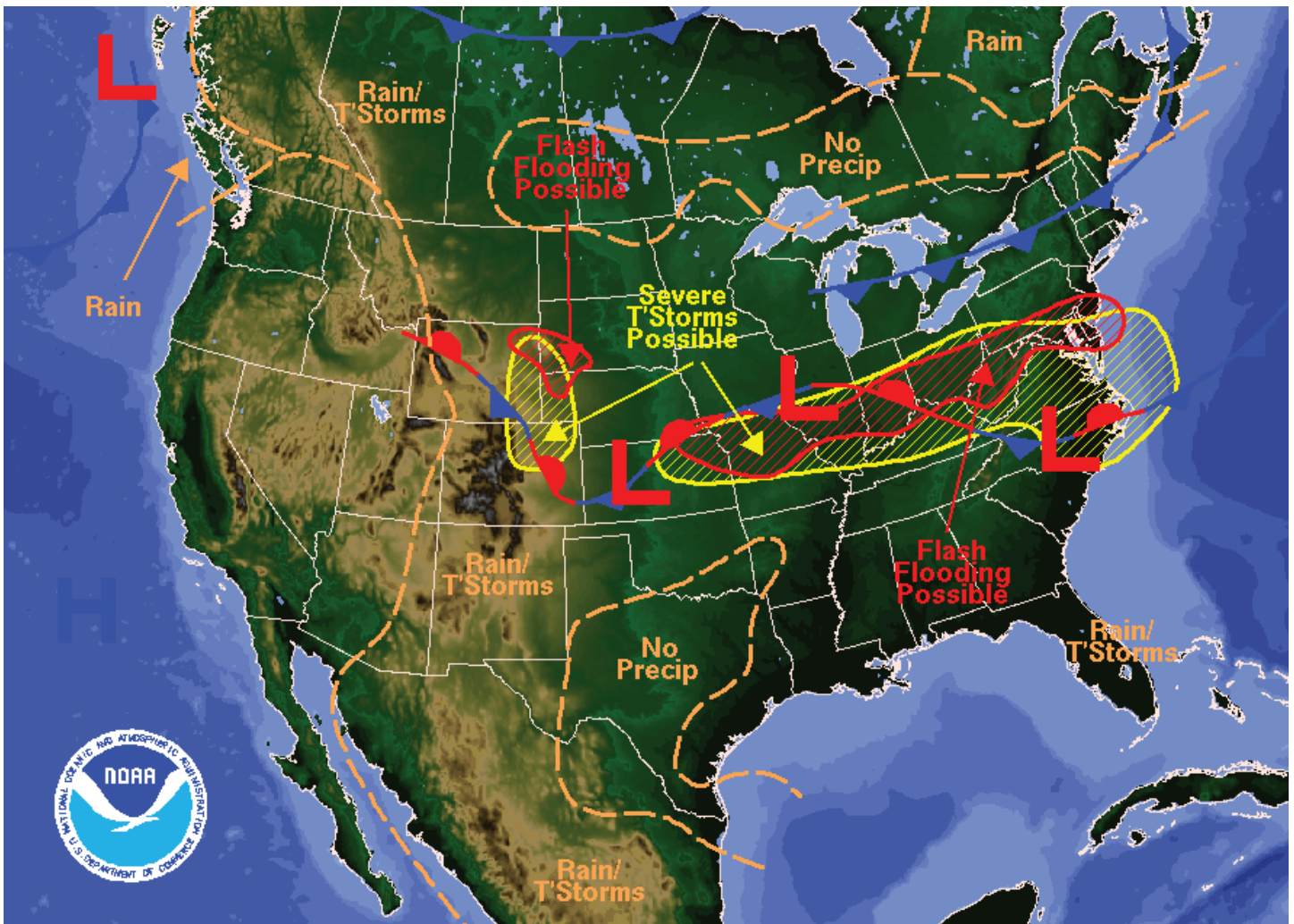
Precip to date in June: 1.58

Average Precip to date: 10.23

Precip Year to Date: 7.30

Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:46 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Jun 25, 2015, issued 4:25 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



TIME TO ASK

It was one of those days that every mother tries to avoid. First, the washing machine stopped in the middle of the spin cycle. Then she discovered that the toaster was not working. When she opened the door to the refrigerator, she discovered that it had been on defrost all night. The last straw was a raging migraine headache.

She reached down, picked up her small son, placed him on her lap, held him tightly and began to weep softly as the tears ran down her cheeks.

Without saying a word, Ronnie took the pacifier out of his mouth and placed it in hers.

Some days just seem to unravel. We awaken to a shining sun only to have dark clouds appear from nowhere and it disappears. What we thought would be a day of joy suddenly turned into a night of despair. Bad days come into each of our lives and we end up feeling alone and abandoned, overwhelmed and oppressed. Problems pile up like flakes of snow in a blizzard.

When days do not develop as we want them to, we can be grateful for the grace of God. In the midst of the most draining and demanding experiences that life has to offer, He is with us. He has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Even though God seems far away, He is always close at hand offering His help. "Ask anything in My name," He offered, "and I will do it!" It's His promise to each of us!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, how thankful we ought to be that Your power exceeds our problems. Always! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: John 14:13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

News from the Associated Press

State says West Nile virus found in mosquito in Meade County

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota State Epidemiologist Lon Kightlinger is cautioning residents to start protecting themselves against mosquitoes, after West Nile virus was found in one of the bugs in Meade County.

It's the first detection of West Nile this year. Kightlinger says "the virus is here and now being transmitted."

Since the first human case of West Nile in South Dakota in 2002, the state has documented nearly 2,200 cases and nearly 700 hospitalizations, with 32 deaths. Every county has reported a case.

People can reduce their risk of getting the virus by using insect repellent, limiting time outdoors and getting rid of standing water where mosquitoes can breed.

Veteran senator, transportation advocate to be honored

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state senator from Mitchell has been selected for induction in the South Dakota Transportation Hall of Honor.

The Department of Transportation says Sen. Mike Vehle will be the 84th South Dakotan to be inducted. Vehle has served in the Legislature for 11 years. The department says in his tenure, Vehle has led efforts to address the state's long-term transportation funding needs.

He has chaired the Senate Transportation Committee and, most recently, Vehle pushed in this year's legislative session to drastically increase funding for South Dakota's ailing roads and bridges.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard says he can't think of another legislator who has committed such an effort to a single issue.

Treasurer who siphoned money from tournament board sentenced

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man who has been convicted of stealing money from the basketball tournament board where he served as treasurer has been sentenced to four years of probation.

Acting U.S. Attorney Randy Seiler announced Wednesday that Leland Logg of Howes must also pay \$7,583.15 in restitution.

Logg was convicted of larceny after pleading guilty to stealing from the bank account of the Dakota Oyate Challenge Basketball Tournament Board.

As treasurer, Logg, 38, took \$7,583.00 from the organization by writing himself and others checks from the board's bank account.

Authorities say Logg used the funds to pay personal expenses.

SD Indian tribe signs contract with marijuana growing group

REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An Indian tribe in South Dakota that plans to start selling marijuana for recreational and medicinal purposes envisions its single point of sale on the reservation as a facility that will also have a bowling alley, a bar and other entertainment features.

Leaders of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe on Wednesday unveiled details of their plans to sell cannabis after signing a contract with Denver-based Monarch America Inc., which will be responsible

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for the design, construction and development of an indoor growing site that will feature a marijuana consumption lounge.

The tribe, which already operates a casino on its land, is looking at the operation as a source of revenue that would allow the community to develop housing, build an addiction treatment center and improve the local clinic, among other projects. Tribal leaders legalized the sale of marijuana on the reservation earlier this month and are estimating a monthly profit of up to \$2 million.

"When completed, this economic development project will help to create many important additional new jobs and increase economic stability for the tribe and its many members," tribal President Anthony Reider said. The growing facility alone is expected to be 10,000 square feet.

The plan for the facility's 15,000-square-foot recreational area calls for 10 bowling lanes, arcade games, gambling machines, bar and food service, as well as an outdoor patio and music venue in an existing structure adjacent to the Royal River Casino and Hotel. The tribe intends to host large-scale outdoor music festivals on tribal trust land where on-site marijuana consumption would be allowed.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley has said any changes in tribal laws won't affect any non-Indians or any nontribal lands, and therefore, non-Indians smoking marijuana on tribal lands would be breaking state law. Still, the tribe estimates thousands of people — Native and non-Native — will flock to the reservation to consume marijuana.

Reider said traffic studies of interstate highways that the tribe considered before making its decision showed that people would travel to the reservation from Fargo, North Dakota; Omaha, Nebraska; and Rapid City, Sioux Falls and communities in between.

Under the agreement signed Wednesday, the tribe will maintain 100 percent ownership and control over the growing operation, but the company will receive a fixed percentage fee on net revenues for consulting services related to the facility and cannabis-growing advice. The agreement is for five years with two five-year renewal options.

"Our Monarch America team looks forward to utilizing its expertise to design and build a world-class grow facility in Flandreau that can serve as a case study for other federally recognized tribes looking for economic diversification opportunities and considering entering the marijuana or hemp sector," the company's CEO, Eric Hagen, said in a statement.

The prospect of pot on tribal land was made possible after the U.S. Justice Department outlined a new policy in December allowing Indian tribes, which are considered sovereign nations, to grow and sell marijuana on their lands as long as they follow the same federal conditions laid out for states that have legalized the drug.

The company expects to build the facility within the next two months. The tribe plans to begin selling the drug by Jan. 1.

Governors of 10 Western states meeting to discuss drought

RILEY SNYDER, Associated Press

INCLINE VILLAGE, Nev. (AP) — The governors of 10 Western states began a three-day meeting Wednesday in Lake Tahoe to tackle drought and other problems that don't respect state boundaries.

The Western Governors' Association, chaired by Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, will also address energy and transportation at its annual meeting.

However, any substantial policy changes on issues such as the drought or the potential endangered species listing of the sage grouse will require cooperation between historically independent Western states and the federal government.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewel addressed the governors Wednesday and took sometimes heated questions on federal policies involving the sage grouse and drought response. She said working together was preferable to surrendering control to Congress.

"We're not the enemy," she said. "We actually work collectively."

Sandoval and governors from Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, North Dakota, Alaska and Guam agreed that collectively addressing the issues with federal officials took precedence over tussles on public land control and environmental policy.

Drought is a major unifying issue for the governors, who released a new report on Wednesday detailing best practices for states to mitigate the effects of drought.

Sandoval, who launched the initiative, said addressing the extreme drought gripping California, Nevada, Arizona and other states is hugely important to the future of thirsty urban areas.

"What is certain is that this unprecedented drought is a critical issue, if not the critical issue, facing the West today," he said.

The report outlines seven themes and general recommendations for states to stretch their shrinking water supplies, including ways to more efficiently use wastewater, better track soil moisture levels, work with other states and invest in water infrastructure.

It cites several examples, including a project in the Nevada town of Primm that treats wastewater from hotels and casino and recycles it to cool a nearby power plant. The report also credits Denver Water for investing in toilet replacement rebates and other reductions, driving down water demand to 1973 levels.

Deloitte water strategy consultant Will Sarni said that businesses and governments need to make permanent adjustments to better use existing water sources, but said the problem would unify diverse groups.

"No one denies we all need water, that we all need water to grow and to thrive," he said. "Regardless of your political affiliation, or whether you're a multinational, or whether you're a government, or a nonprofit, you can align on that."

Drought isn't the only issue on the table — governors also expressed fear that a pending September decision on whether or not to place sage grouse, with large populations in Nevada and Utah, on an endangered species list, could cut back on economic development and land development throughout the West.

Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead said states needed to work together on issues like the potential sage grouse listing.

"We recognize as Western governors that one state can do a great job but if the rest of the states are struggling, then we're in danger of a listing," he said. "This is not just a listing. It's going to affect all that we do in the West."

Payday lending measure backers to gather signatures soon

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Backers of a ballot proposal that would cap money lenders' interest rates in South Dakota said Wednesday that they hope to start collecting signatures this week to get the measure before voters in 2016.

South Dakotans for Responsible Lending is pushing a measure to limit interest rates from money lenders licensed in South Dakota to 36 percent annually. Supporters must gather 13,871 signatures by Nov.

8 to put their proposal, which they say is aimed at protecting consumers from predatory lending, on the ballot next year.

But the plan has already faced resistance from the short-term lending industry, which argues that such companies are an important resource for consumers to access credit.

"I expect them to use every legal means they can to slow this down," said Republican state Rep. Steve Hickey, a key backer of the ballot measure. "Once it hits the ballot, I think they know the fate of their dubious practices."

A title loan company official unsuccessfully requested earlier this month in a court challenge that Attorney General Marty Jackley rewrite his explanation of the proposal to better inform voters of its consequences. State law requires that the attorney general provide voters explanations of proposed ballot measures, including a description of the legal consequences.

Erin Ageton, a vice president at Select Management Resources, has argued that Jackley's description doesn't tell voters that short-term lenders would be forced out of business in the state if the proposal passes.

A circuit court judge last week denied Ageton's request to have the explanation rewritten, but her attorney said in an email they will appeal to the South Dakota Supreme Court.

"The people of South Dakota have the right to be informed about what they are signing and the harmful effects it will have on many in our state," Sara Frankenstein, an attorney for Ageton, said in an email. "Unfortunately, the current language falls short of providing this information and we will be appealing this ruling to the Supreme Court."

Jackley has said he has provided the public with a fair and accurate explanation of the proposal.

Steve Hildebrand, a Democratic strategist who worked on President Barack Obama's first presidential campaign, is a key backer of the interest rate cap measure. Hildebrand said he anticipates the payday lending industry will put a significant amount of money and effort into defeating the plan.

Hildebrand said his coffeehouse received an unexpected visit on Tuesday from Rod Aycox, a Georgia man whom public records list as the head of Select Management Resources. Hildebrand said Aycox traveled from Georgia to try to convince him not to pursue the measure capping interest rates.

Aycox didn't return multiple requests for comment.

"I don't know why honestly they would want to waste their time meeting with us because there's really nothing that's going to change our mind," Hildebrand said.

SD man accused of creating false checks gets 10 years

BELLE FOURCHE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man at the center of an identity theft case has been ordered to spend 10 years in prison.

Authorities accuse 43-year-old Gregory Harrison of creating false checks, stealing people's identities and using the payroll accounts of businesses in the Rapid City area for his own benefit.

Attorney General Marty Jackley says Harrison was sentenced Wednesday on charges of aggravated grand theft and forgery.

The Belle Fourche man has also been ordered to pay more than \$13,000 in restitution.

Harrison's attorney could not immediately be reached to comment on the case.

AG: Woman whose body was found in river drowned, had wounds

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley says a woman whose body was found in the Missouri River in southeastern South Dakota died from drowning with contributing

circumstances.

Jackley on Wednesday released additional information about the autopsy of 29-year-old Alicia Hummel, of Sioux City, Iowa.

Hummel was found dead June 1 in Vermillion near the Myron Grove boat launch, which also is known as the Highline Area in Clay County.

Jackley says the contributing circumstances in Hummel's drowning were an incision wound to the neck and blunt force injuries to the head. Toxicology reports were negative for any alcohol or controlled substances.

Clay County authorities continue to investigate Hummel's death as a homicide. Individuals with any information are asked to contact the sheriff's office at 605-677-7100.

Fee for new, renewal of driver's license going up by \$8

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota residents wanting to get a new driver's license or renew their existing one will have to pay \$8 more starting July 1.

The cost of a new or renewal license is going from \$20 to \$28. Other licensing fees are also increasing.

The fee for duplicate licenses will increase from \$10 to \$15, while commercial driver's licenses will jump from \$25 to \$33.

Jane Schrank is the director of the state's Driver Licensing Program. She says the extra revenue that the fees will bring in will help fund the program, which in average currently equates to \$29.75 per driver's license.

Schrank says the state believes the fee increases will keep the licensing program solvent until the 2024 fiscal year.

Lawmakers approved the fee increases during this year's session.

Deer crashes into Brookings church, causes damage inside

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — A church in Brookings suffered an undetermined amount of damage when a deer crashed through a window.

Animal control officers were called to St. Thomas More Catholic Church about 5 p.m. Tuesday. A male whitetail had broken through a window just as Mass was beginning and was causing damage in the church as it was trying to get out.

Officers were able to get the animal back outside but had to euthanize it due to its injuries.

Heavy rains lead to flooding problems in Rapid City

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Heavy rains in Rapid City flooded some streets and cut off access to some homes.

A rising Rapid Creek forced the closure of some roads Wednesday morning, and emergency officials were helping evacuate some residents in the area.

Most low-lying areas of the city's bike path were underwater, along with a parking lot at Sioux Park. Areas around Founders Park and Memorial Park also had high water.

There were no immediate reports of any people in danger from the flooding, but KOTA-TV reports that a dog was caught in floodwaters and pulled downstream.

The National Weather Service issued a flood warning for western Pennington County Wednesday morning, after 1-2 inches of rain fell over the central Black Hills.

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. WHO IS THE LATEST PERSON ARRESTED IN PRISON BREAK

Prison guard Gene Palmer, who delivered frozen meat with tools hidden inside to two inmates before they escaped, faces arraignment.

2. SLAIN PASTOR'S LEGACY LIVES ON

Parishioners of Emanuel African Methodist Church vow to carry on the work of Clementa Pinckney in the Charleston community.

3. HOW MASSACRE IS SHAPING WIDER CONVERSATION

The debate over the Confederate flag in South Carolina prompts a new look at Confederate statues in the U.S. Capitol.

4. ISLAMIC STATE GROUP STORMS SYRIAN CITY

The militants storm government-held neighborhoods in the predominantly Kurdish northeastern city of Hassakeh, capturing several areas of the city.

5. WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FOES

Obama overcomes an embarrassing defeat on trade and maneuvers his way back to a rare victory under a Republican-controlled Congress.

6. WHAT CONSERVATIONISTS ARE CALLING A GAME-CHANGER

A pledge by a Chinese official to stop the ivory trade in his country may help curb the slaughter of elephants.

7. WATCHDOG BLAMES IRS WORKERS

Investigators say mistakes by employees may have led to the loss of thousands of emails related to the tax agency's tea party scandal.

8. OBAMA SCOLDS HECKLER IN WHITE HOUSE

At a gay pride event in the East Room, the president fires back at a protester for being disrespectful in "my house." OBAMA-GAY MARRIAGE

9. WHAT MAY SPUR INCREASED TRAVEL THIS 4TH OF JULY

A stronger economy, rising consumer confidence and cheap gasoline will likely have Americans traveling in bigger numbers. `

10. WAIT NEARLY OVER FOR NBA HOPEFULS

Karl-Anthony Towns, Jahlil Okafor and D'Angelo Russell are expected to go 1-2-3 in the NBA draft.

AP News in Brief

Prison guard who gave frozen meat to 2 New York inmates before their escape to be arraigned

PLATTSBURGH, N.Y. (AP) — A maximum-security prison guard who delivered frozen meat with tools hidden inside to two inmates before they escaped will be arraigned on charges of promoting prison contraband and other offenses.

But a lawyer for correction officer Gene Palmer says his client had no knowledge any contraband was inside the meat.

"He did pass the hamburger meat. He shouldn't have done it. He apologized for it," said defense lawyer Andrew Brockway on Wednesday night. He insisted Palmer didn't know the inmates were trying to escape.

Palmer worked at the Clinton County Correctional Facility in upstate Dannemora, where inmates David Sweat and Richard Matt were reported missing on June 6.

He was being held on \$25,000 bail Wednesday night after he appeared before a judge in Plattsburgh to face charges of promoting prison contraband, tampering with physical evidence and official misconduct.

Historic church returns to space where 9 slain as pastor's body heads back to Charleston

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — The site of a massacre a week ago, the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church is being reclaimed by parishioners who are pledging to remember the loved ones they lost in a shooting rampage while carrying on the work of the beloved pastor who was slain beside them.

Only hours before the body of state senator and pastor Clementa Pinckney was to be returned to the historic black church one last time for his wake, members of his flock and non-church members alike packed into the church's basement to attend Wednesday night Bible study. It was the very same thing that was taking place a week ago before Pinckney and eight parishioners were gunned down in what authorities are investigating as a hate crime.

"Because of our faith, we've shown up once more again to declare that Jesus lives and because he lives, we can face tomorrow," interim pastor Norvel Goff told a multiracial crowd that swayed, clapped and sang in the same room where the shooting occurred. Among the worshippers were several family members of one of the victims, Myra Thompson.

"It is a powerful testimony that they are able to come," Goff said of Thompson's relatives, who were applauded by others in the audience.

The first funerals of some of those slain were to begin Thursday at nearby churches in North Charleston, with a viewing for Pinckney inside Emanuel on Thursday evening. President Barack Obama will deliver the eulogy at Pinckney's funeral Friday at a nearby college arena.

Amid debate on Confederate flag, lawmakers take new look at Confederate statues in US Capitol

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alexander H. Stephens, onetime vice president of the Confederacy, sits memorialized in stone, right leg crossed over left, staring sternly into the distance as summer-clad tourists mill about him in the U.S. Capitol's Statuary Hall. Solemn and cold, he looks like he could sit there for eternity.

But the renewed debate about symbols of the Confederacy in the wake of the horrific shooting at a black church in Charleston, South Carolina, raises new questions about whether he will.

The move in South Carolina to remove the Confederate flag from the statehouse grounds is prompting members of Congress to take a new look at Confederate images that surround them every day, including statues of Stephens, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and a number of other Confederate leaders or fighters.

"I want to see it go. I want to see it go," Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., a leader during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, said of the statue of Stephens, who also served as Georgia's governor.

"Young children, school children, walk by these statues, and those of us who serve in the Congress, we have to get our own house in order," Lewis said. "We have to have a cleansing in this place."

Islamic State group attacks northeastern Syrian city of Hassakeh, capturing parts of it

BEIRUT (AP) — Islamic State militants in Syria stormed government-held neighborhoods in the predominantly Kurdish northeastern city of Hassakeh on Thursday morning, capturing several areas of the city, officials and state media said.

The attack came after the Islamic State group suffered several setbacks in northern Syria against Kurdish forces over the past weeks. The city of Hassakeh is divided between Bashar Assad's forces and Kurdish fighters.

Redur Khalil, a spokesman for the Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG, said IS militants attacked government-held neighborhoods on the southern edge of Hassakeh, and captured some areas.

Syrian state TV reported intense clashes inside Hassakeh's southern neighborhood of Nashawi. According to the report, IS fighters killed several people they captured in the city, including the head of a military housing institution. It said the militants sustained many casualties, including the commander of the group who is a foreign fighter.

IS tried to storm the city earlier this month and reached its southern outskirts before facing strong resistance from Syrian government troops who pushed them away.

With a little help from his foes: Obama rescues his trade agenda thanks to GOP assistance

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two weeks after his own Democratic Party handed him an embarrassing defeat on trade, President Barack Obama maneuvered his way back to victory, salvaging a key piece of his second-term legacy with the extraordinary help of the very Republican leaders he once accused of obstruction.

Wednesday's 60-38 vote in the Senate to strengthen Obama's trade negotiating position sets the stage for Obama's real prize: conclusion of a 12-nation Pacific rim trade pact that is crucial to his effort to expand U.S. influence in Asia. Trade experts believe Obama's negotiators could conclude that deal by early fall and that Congress, after a period of public review, could vote on it by year's end.

To get there, Obama needed legislation giving him authority to negotiate trade deals under fast-track measures that give Congress the right to approve or reject international economic agreements, but not change or delay them. The House passed the legislation last week.

That Republicans agreed to give such authority to a president they believe has already exceeded his powers was as remarkable as Obama's decision to push his trade agenda against all-out opposition from labor and his party's liberal base.

In the process Obama has left erstwhile allies seething. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka echoed the sentiment of many Democrats when he declared in a letter to lawmakers Wednesday that Obama seemed more intent on getting negotiating authority than in securing tougher trade enforcement and currency provisions and a better assistance package for dislocated workers.

At gay pride reception, Obama scolds heckler: 'You're in my house'

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama took on a heckler head-on at a gay pride month reception at the White House Wednesday, scolding the protester for being disrespectful in "my house."

The heckler had interrupted Obama's remarks by protesting the detention and deportation of gay, lesbian and transgender immigrants.

The president responded, "Hold on a second." When the heckler persisted, Obama, flashing an exas-

perated look, countered, "OK, you know what?" Wagging his finger and shaking his head, Obama said, "No, no, no, no, no," repeating the word more than a dozen times.

As the heckler continued to talk over him, Obama took it up a notch.

"Hey. Listen. You're in my house," he said to laughter and woos from the crowd. "You know what? It's not respectful when you get invited to somebody. You're not going to get a good response from me by interrupting me like this. I'm sorry. I'm sorry ... Shame on you, you shouldn't be doing this."

Defense in Colorado theater shooting will open with focus on gunman's mental illness

DENVER (AP) — Attorneys for Colorado theater shooter James Holmes begin presenting their case Thursday by trying to show he was legally insane when he opened fire on a packed movie premiere, killing 12 people and wounding 70.

Defense witnesses will offer a less emotional and more clinical assessment of Holmes after two months of often-gruesome testimony from prosecution witnesses, including many visibly wounded victims.

Without the scores of victims on their side, Holmes' defense plans to present its evidence in less than a quarter of the time taken by prosecutors. Their goal is not only to keep Holmes out of prison, but also to keep him alive. Legal experts say the coming days may be defense attorneys' best chance to convince jurors he should not be executed, even if they decide he should be convicted.

"What the defense is going to try to do is say, 'This would have never happened but for the intervention in this guy's life of very serious mental illness,'" said George H. Kendall, who has handled other high-profile death-penalty cases. "While the harms have been overwhelming, there's just no way to disassociate all that carnage from the fact that his control system is all screwed up."

Two state psychiatrists who examined Holmes in the months and years after the shooting concluded he was sane. But defense attorneys say Holmes suffered schizophrenia and was in the grips of a psychotic episode so severe it rendered him unable to tell right from wrong — Colorado's standard for an insanity verdict.

China pledge to end ivory trade delights conservationists, who want to know when it will occur

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Conservationists hail it as a possible game-changer in the struggle to curb the slaughter of elephants: an unexpected pledge by a senior Chinese official to stop the ivory trade in a country whose vast, increasingly affluent consumer market drives elephant poaching across Africa.

Now they are waiting in suspense for China to outline how and when it would ban an industry that criminal syndicates use as cover for their illicit business in tusks.

The ban could happen in 2017 when a legal stockpile of ivory in China is possibly depleted, predicted Zhou Fei, head of the China office of TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring organization. He said he is encouraged by the political will of China's top leadership to combat poaching that, by some estimates, has killed more than 100,000 African elephants in the past several years and prompted governments to publicly destroy confiscated ivory in major cities, including New York City last week.

The May 29 comment by Zhao Shucong, head of China's State Forestry Administration, came at a Beijing event in which 1,455 pounds (660 kilograms) of ivory were crushed, rendering tusks, carved statues and other ornaments useless for sale.

"Under the legal framework of CITES and domestic laws and regulations, we will strictly control ivory

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processing and trade until the commercial processing and sale of ivory and its products are eventually halted," Zhao said in an English-language translation of his speech that was provided by his office.

With more jobs, a stronger economy and gas sub \$3, America will be getting mobile this holiday

NEW YORK (AP) — A stronger economy, rising consumer confidence and cheap gasoline will likely have Americans traveling in big numbers this Independence Day.

An estimated 41.9 million people will travel 50 miles or more from home during the holiday weekend, up 0.7 percent from last year and the most since 2007, right before the recession, according to travel agency and car lobbying group AAA.

As usual, the vast majority of travelers will be using their cars: about 85 percent. Gas currently costs \$2.78 a gallon, down 88 cents from the same time last year. That means a family driving 200 miles on highways will save about \$7.30 for their holiday gas this year.

AAA defines the holiday period as July 1 through July 5. But Americans, in general, are already driving more.

The Federal Highway Administration this week announced that Americans drove 987.8 billion miles for the first four months of the year, topping the previous record — 965.5 billion — set in 2007. The government said that the nation's driving has increased steadily for 14 consecutive months.

Wait nearly over: Okafor, other top players get their answers Thursday in NBA draft

NEW YORK (AP) — Jahlil Okafor's wait is almost over.

The NBA draft is Thursday night, and the Duke big man will be one of the top picks. He said Wednesday he wished he already knew his destination.

"I'd be able to sleep better at night if I did. I have no idea," he said. "It's been a long process, a lot of fun, but I'm ready for it to be over with so I'll know where I'm going to be playing."

He's had it much easier than many fellow draft candidates. He worked out for just Minnesota and the Los Angeles Lakers, who own the top two selections.

But Okafor and fellow center Karl-Anthony Towns of Kentucky were on TV so much that there wasn't much left for them to show teams, anyway. Even while finishing up his pro season in Spain, Latvian forward Kristaps Porzingis was able to evaluate them.

Today in History The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, June 25, the 176th day of 2015. There are 189 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 25, 1950, war broke out in Korea as forces from the communist North invaded the South.

On this date:

In 1788, Virginia ratified the U.S. Constitution.

In 1876, Lt. Col. Colonel George A. Custer and his 7th Cavalry were wiped out by Sioux and Cheyenne Indians in the Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana.

In 1910, President William Howard Taft signed the White-Slave Traffic Act, more popularly known as the Mann Act, which made it illegal to transport women across state lines for "immoral" purposes.

In 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was enacted.

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In 1943, Congress passed, over President Franklin D. Roosevelt's veto, the Smith-Connally Anti-Strike Act, which allowed the federal government to seize and operate privately owned war plants facing labor strikes.

In 1959, spree killer Charles Starkweather, 20, was put to death in Nebraska's electric chair. Eamon de Valera was inaugurated as president of Ireland.

In 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that recitation of a state-sponsored prayer in New York State public schools was unconstitutional.

In 1975, the government of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency aimed at cracking down on political opponents. (The state of emergency was lifted in March 1977.)

In 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that male-only draft registration was constitutional.

In 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court, in its first "right-to-die" decision, ruled that family members could be barred from ending the lives of persistently comatose relatives who had not made their wishes known conclusively. African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela met with President George H.W. Bush at the White House.

In 1995, Warren Burger, the 15th chief justice of the United States, died in Washington at age 87.

In 2009, death claimed Michael Jackson, the "King of Pop," in Los Angeles at age 50 and actress Farrah Fawcett in Santa Monica, California, at age 62.

Ten years ago: Hardline Tehran mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (mahk-MOOD' ah-muh-DEE'-neh-zhadh) was declared the winner of Iran's presidential runoff election. The NAACP selected retired Verizon executive Bruce S. Gordon to be its new president (however, Gordon abruptly resigned in March 2007). Stage and screen actor John Fiedler, 80, died in Englewood, New Jersey.

Five years ago: Group of Eight leaders, including President Barack Obama, began meeting in Huntsville, Ontario, Canada. BP said its effort to drill a relief well through 2 1/2 miles of rock to stop the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was on target for completion by mid-August. Edwin Jackson threw the fourth no-hitter of the season, leading the Arizona Diamondbacks to a 1-0 victory over his former team, the Tampa Bay Rays.

One year ago: In an emphatic defense of privacy in the digital age, a unanimous Supreme Court ruled that police generally may not search the cellphones of people they arrest without first getting search warrants. Tim Lincecum pitched his second no-hitter against the San Diego Padres in less than a year, allowing only one runner and leading the San Francisco Giants to a 4-0 win. The NFL agreed to remove a \$675 million cap on damages from thousands of concussion-related claims after a federal judge questioned whether there would be enough money to cover as many as 20,000 retired players.

Today's Birthdays: Actress June Lockhart is 90. Civil rights activist James Meredith is 82. Rhythm-and-blues singer Eddie Floyd is 78. Actress Barbara Montgomery is 76. Actress Mary Beth Peil (peel) is 75. Basketball Hall-of-Famer Willis Reed is 73. Singer Carly Simon is 70. Rock musician Ian McDonald (Foreigner; King Crimson) is 69. Actor-comedian Jimmie Walker is 68. Actor-director Michael Lembeck is 67. TV personality Phyllis George is 66. Rock singer Tim Finn is 63. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor is 61. Rock musician David Paich (Toto) is 61. Actor Michael Sabatino is 60. Celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain is 59. Actor-writer-director Ricky Gervais (jer-VAYZ') is 54. Actor John Benjamin Hickey is 52. Rock singer George Michael is 52. Actress Erica Gimpel is 51. Retired NBA All-Star Dikembe Mutombo (dih-KEHM'-bay moo-TAHM'-boh) is 49. Rapper-producer Richie Rich is 48. Rapper Candyman is 47. Contemporary Christian musician Sean Kelly (Sixpence None the Richer) is 44. Actress Angela Kinsey is 44. Rock musician Mike Kroeger (KROO'-gur) (Nickelback) is 43. Rock musician Mario Calire is 41. Actress Linda Cardellini is 40. Actress Busy Philipps is 36.

Thought for Today: "A straight line is the shortest in morals as in mathematics." - Maria Edgeworth, Anglo-Irish novelist (1767-1849).