

Groton Daily Independent

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Tuesday, December 22

No School

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, grape juice, sour cream apple pie square, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: • Don Raines, Kristen Winther, Cameron Howard, Kelby Tracy

10:00am: United Methodist Women's Bible Study

3:30pm: BBB vs. Eureka/Bowdle at NSU Classic

6:30pm: GBB at Roncalli

Wednesday, December 23

No School

Senior Menu: Turkey and dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, broccoli, carrot bar.

Anniversaries: Jerry & Joan Johnson, Jerry & Ramona Rossow, Marc & Fran Sippel

Birthdays: Diane Lewandowski, John Padfield

7:00am: United Methodist Men's Bible Study

12:00pm: Kiwanis meets at the Community Center

6:30pm: St. John's Lutheran Christmas Program practice

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**

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Sperry Stump Removal Tyler: 605/216-8431

Over 30 Years of Combined Experience!

TJ: 605/380-7915 **TreeLine Tree Service**

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Some Kindergarten Students . . . What Christmas means to them . . .



Taryn Thompson, daughter of Mark and June Thompson, Groton, Seeing Santa Claus.

Groton Ag Partners
Hail & Crop Insurance

1202 N 1st St
Ste.#2, Groton
(605) 397-2680



Ethan Kroll son of Joel and Jessica Kroll, Groton, is grandpa and grandma coming over for Christmas

Ella Kettner daughter of Alex and Kendra Kettner, Columbia, getting presents

Gracie Pearson daughter of Lucas and Trish Pearson, Groton, Santa brings presents

Jace Johnson son of Jerry Ray and Becky Johnson, Groton, Jesus' birthday

Jack Crosby son of Evan Crosby and Cindy Leonard, Groton, getting presents and Santa goes down the chimneys and Christmas trees and Santas clothes.

Merry Christmas!

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REA HYBRIDS

408 W. 3rd Ave
Groton, SD 57445
Cell: 605.216.5907
E-mail: reawhman@yahoo.com



Groton Chamber Holiday Boxes are out & about in Groton!

This Week (thru 12/18) – Professional
Management Supply

\$25 Chamber Bucks OR Mystery Gift!

Next Week (thru 12/23) – Olde Bank
Floral 'N More

**\$25 Chamber Bucks or a Fresh Floral Christmas Bouquet

Stop by each participating business and register for \$25
Groton Chamber Bucks – or a prize supplied by the business.



Merry
Christmas

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605-380-1120

TITAN MACHINERY



Justin Hanson, Field Marketer
justin.hanson@titanmachinery.com

	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT		FTA		REBOUNDS			A	TO	BK	S	MIN
		FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP					
NO RONCALLI																	
3 Reede, Gus	*	5	16	3	9	2	4	1	5	6	0	15	2	3	0	2	32:00
4 VanOrman, Sam	*	1	5	1	3	0	0	0	3	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	16:00
21 Karst, Logan	*	3	4	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	4	7	1	1	1	1	8:00
34 Heice, Bronson	*	1	6	0	0	2	2	1	3	4	3	4	1	2	0	0	16:00
44 Sommers, Branton	*	1	4	0	2	2	2	1	4	5	3	4	3	2	0	2	32:00
5 Fiedler, Connor		4	4	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	2	8	0	3	0	0	24:00
10 Holzer, Eric		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
13 Hauge, Baily		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
20 Deutsch, Connor		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0:00
24 Gunderson, Grant		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
32 Morgan, Brady		1	2	1	2	3	4	0	1	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	32:00
TEAM REBOUNDS								0	4	4				0			
Team Totals		16	42	6	17	9	12	4	25	29	16	47	7	12	1	5	160

Total FG% - 1st:	9/23	0.391	2nd:	7/19	0.368	Game:	0.381	Deadball
3-PT FG% - 1st:	4/11	0.364	2nd:	2/6	0.333	Game:	0.353	Rebounds
Total FT% - 1st:	4/4	1.000	2nd:	5/8	0.625	Game:	0.750	(1,0)

	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT		FTA		REBOUNDS			A	TO	BK	S	MIN
		FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP					
NO GROTON AREA																	
12 Schuring, Sean	F	3	5	3	4	2	2	1	4	5	1	11	0	1	0	0	32:00
40 Lerew, Hunter	C	4	12	0	0	5	6	2	5	7	2	13	0	3	3	1	16:00
4 Shabazz, Bennett	G	0	6	0	2	0	1	0	3	3	4	0	2	6	0	2	32:00
5 Shabazz, Seric	G	2	9	1	4	4	4	1	4	5	0	9	0	1	0	1	24:00
11 Herman, Adam	G	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	16:00
20 Keith, Brandon		3	5	3	4	0	0	0	1	1	1	9	1	0	0	1	24:00
50 Severson, Aaron		1	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	16:00
TEAM REBOUNDS								0	4	4				0			
Team Totals		13	40	7	15	12	15	5	23	28	11	45	3	12	3	5	160

Total FG% - 1st:	5/21	0.238	2nd:	8/19	0.421	Game:	0.325	Deadball
3-PT FG% - 1st:	2/8	0.250	2nd:	5/7	0.714	Game:	0.467	Rebounds
Total FT% - 1st:	4/4	1.000	2nd:	8/11	0.727	Game:	0.800	(0,0)

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Roncalli	14	12	11	10	47
Groton	7	9	13	16	45



Tigers rally from 17 points down, but fall by two to Roncalli



Seric Shabazz being guarded by Roncalli's Braden Sommers.

Two last seconds shots would not fall in and the Aberdeen Roncalli Cavaliers held on to hand Groton Area its first loss of the season, 47-45. Despite the close score, most of the game was dominated by the Cavaliers. After Groton tied the game at seven, the Cavaliers jumped out to a 16-7 lead and then wen on a seven point run to take a 23-9 lead. The Cavaliers led, 14-7, at the end of the first quarter and 26-16 at half time.

Aberdeen Roncalli did not miss a shot for the

first half of the third quarter and the Tigers were one of six as the Cavaliers took a 17-point lead, 37-20. Sean Schuring hit back-to-back three-pointers at the end of the quarter and it was 37-29 going into the fourth quarter. The Cavaliers showed signs of being worn down in the fourth quarter and the Tigers were making the move. Hunter Lerew made two free throws with 51 seconds left and it was a 47-45 game. The Cavaliers missed their shot and the Tigers had 12 seconds to try and score, but two shot attempts refused the drop and Roncalli held on for the two-point win.

Hunter Lerew led the Tigers with 13 points followed by Sean Schuring with 11, Seric Shabazz and Brandon Keith each had nine and Aaron Severson added three. The Tigers made 33 percent of their field goals



Aaron Severson scored this basket to start Groton's rally.

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408 W. 3rd Ave
Groton, SD 57445

Cell: 605.216.5907

E-mail: reawhman@yahoo.com

while the Cavaliers made 38 percent. Both teams had 12 turnovers and the Cavaliers had the edge on the boards, 29-28, with Gus Reede having six rebounds for Roncalli and Lerew having seven for Groton Area. The Tigers were 12 of 15 from the line off of Roncalli's 16 team fouls. Roncalli was nine of 12 from the line off of Groton Area's 11 team fouls. Roncalli had seven assists while Groton Area had three. Lerew had three blocks for Groton Area and Logan Karst had one for Roncalli. Both teams had five steals with Bennett Shabazz having two for Groton Area and



Brandon Keith made three of four three-pointers to help keep the Tigers in the game.



Made three of four three-pointers in the second half.

Gus Reede and Branton Sommers having two each for Roncalli.

Gus Reede led the Cavaliers in scoring with 15 points followed by Connor Fiedler with eight, Logan Karst had seven, Brady Morgan six, Bronson Heice and Branton Sommes each had four and Sam VanOrman added three.

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Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling
New & Cleaning of Stockdams with our 60' reach trackhoe
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Roncalli won the junior varsity game, 54-15. Brandon Keith led the Tigers with nine points while Marshall Lane and Kade Guthmiller each had two and Johnny Doeden and Tylan Glover each had one.

Trey Diegel led Groton Area in the C game with 15 points followed by Tylan Glover and Kade Guthmiller with five each, Korbin Blackmun had four and Mitchell Koens added two points.



The Dynamics Dance Team performed at halftime of the varsity game.



Hunter Lerew led the Tigers with 13 points.

The Chili Cook-Off winners were Groton Ford with first place, Lars and Kelly Hanson with second place and Krueger Brothers with third place.

Christmas Comes Early at the Pump for U.S. Drivers – Gas Hits \$1.99

U.S. average gas price falls below \$2 per gallon for the first time since 2009.

Dec. 21, 2015 – AAA reports the average U.S. gas price dropped below \$2 per gallon this morning for the first time since March 25, 2009. Today's national average price is \$1.998 per gallon. AAA estimates that cheaper gas prices have saved Americans more than \$115 billion on gasoline so far this year, which works out to more than \$550 per licensed driver.

More than 91 million Americans plan to take advantage of cheaper gas prices to drive 50 miles or more during the upcoming holiday period. Travel by all modes of transportation should be a record, topping 100 million.

"It's all pretty simple," said Marilyn Buskohl, spokeswoman for AAA South Dakota. "Gas prices have dropped because there is more than enough oil and gasoline supplies around the world to meet current demand. In addition, gas prices generally fall through early winter because people drive and use less fuel this time of year."

Gas prices already are much cheaper than \$2 per gallon in most parts of the country. The lowest one percent of U.S. stations is selling gas for an average of \$1.59 per gallon, and more than 13,000 stations are selling gas for less than \$1.75 per gallon. The states with the cheapest averages today include: Missouri (\$1.77), Oklahoma (\$1.78), South Carolina (\$1.78), Tennessee (\$1.79) and Kansas (\$1.79). Average state and metro prices can be found on AAA's Fuel Gauge Report website, updated daily: FuelGaugeReport.AAA.com.

AAA predicts gas prices likely will remain low through January, and could drop even further if the cost of crude oil remains weak. By late winter, gas prices may rise 50 cents per gallon or more as refineries conduct maintenance in advance of the busy summer driving season.

Americans are on track this year to drive a record number of miles, largely due to lower gas prices and a stronger economy, based on early estimates by the Federal Highway Administration. Through October, which is the most recent data available, Americans have driven more than 2.63 trillion miles for the year, which is a 3.4 percent increase over the same period in 2014.

Major Inventory Reduction Sale!



Going on NOW!

-  **ALL Christmas Decor**
ALL Kids Merchandise
-  **ALL Cold Weather Head & Hand**
ALL Silk Florals
-  **ALL Everyday Home Decor**



Fresh flowers, home decor, Dark Canyon Coffee & so much more
101 N. Main St., Groton ~ 397-8650
www.oldebankfloralsd.com



S.D. 4-H Adds Miniature Heifer Division for 2016 S.D. State Fair

BROOKINGS, S.D. - The State 4-H Beef Committee added a Miniature Heifer division to the 4-H breeding beef show for the 2016 State Fair.

"In recent years, interest in miniature cattle has been gaining across the nation and in South Dakota. With the increasing popularity, South Dakota youth are looking for opportunities to exhibit their miniature cattle, however there are not many show options available," explained John Madison, SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Program Advisor and a member of the State 4-H Beef Committee.

Details

To qualify for this division, heifers must meet the standard requirements for all 4-H breeding heifers and be registered in accordance to the rules and regulations of a national miniature cattle breed association.

All breeds of miniature heifers will be shown together in 2016. If there are five or more heifers of a certain breed, the committee will separate them into their own division for future shows.

"The Beef Committee is currently researching miniature steers and will look into adding a miniature division to the market beef show in the future," said Audra Scheel, SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Program Advisor and a member of the State 4-H Beef Committee.

If you have any questions please contact the State 4-H Office at State 4-H Office at 605-688-4167 or the 4-H Beef Committee chairs; John Madison, john.madison@sdstate.edu 605-353-8436 or Audra Scheel audra.scheel@sdstate.edu 605-796-4380.

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Here is how the Schwan's fundraiser works.

Customers phone in the order or order online
They use the code. 25179

If they regularly order online they are asked if they want to contribute to a fundraiser

That is when they put the code in.

Between Dec 2 and Jan 16,

we will earn 20% of sales
If a customer orders an ecertificate-and online gift card we get \$10 for the \$25 ecertificate.

When you get an ecertificate, you can go in and purchase right away or you can print it out
if you want to give it as a gift or save it for later.

Customers are limited to one ecertificate...BUT if you use an alternate email address you can purchase more than one

If you are not a regular Schwan's customer, when you place your order they will tell you what day
And approximate (2 hour) time they plan to deliver.

You can be a one time customer and support us.

If you order online you must give them a credit card number, however you can switch payment at the door.

It took me a few fundraisers to realize that if I purchase during the first 45 days I contribute 20% and save my ecertificates for after the Jan 16 date, duh! Before that I was purchasing ecertificates and using them right away.

Our greatest income will be during this 45 day period.
After that we will earn 5% until April 16.

Schwan's
Cares™
A Fundraising Network



Support Us

*Giving back to your community
never tasted so delicious.*

Schwan's Home Delivery offers over 350 delicious foods, flash-frozen at the peak of freshness and conveniently delivered to your door. Through Schwans-Cares.com, you can order from Schwan's Home Delivery and help our organization meet its fundraising goals. When you order by **January 16th, 2016**, 20% of product and 40% of eGift Card sales will go back to the organization.

Here are two ways to support us!

Order Online:

1. Visit Schwans-Cares.com
2. Enter Campaign ID: **25179** into the search box located in the upper right hand corner then click to open campaign.
3. Click "Shop to Give" and then select either the "Buy Now" or "Shop Now" option.
4. Select team member, if applicable
5. Start shopping!

Order by Phone:

Call 1-855-870-7208 and provide Campaign ID: **25179**

Thank you for your support!

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Shop online at Schwans-Cares.com
or call 1-855-870-7208



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Today in Weather History

December 22, 1990: Strong northwest winds, combined with air temperatures below zero, created wind chills from -40 to -65 degrees over west central Minnesota early in the day on the 22nd. Air temperatures were generally in the -20 to -25 degree range, with afternoon highs around 15 below zero.

December 22, 1990: Strong northwest winds gusted to 35 miles per hour and caused near-whiteout conditions over a wide area of southwest and west central Minnesota during the late afternoon on the 21st into the early morning of the 22nd. Several car accidents ensued. A 30-year old man was killed when he lost control of his truck and slid into a ditch in the near-blizzard conditions.

1839 - The second of triple December storms hit the northeastern U.S. The storm produced 25 inches of snow at Gettysburg, PA, and gales in New England, but only produced light snow along the coast. (David Ludlum)

1961 - Holiday travel was paralyzed over extreme northeastern Kansas, and adjacent parts of Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska. The storm produced 5 to 15 inches of snow, with drifts up to ten feet high. (22nd-23rd) (The Weather Channel)

1983 - On the first day of winter 75 cities reported record low temperatures for the date, with twelve of those cities reporting record low temperatures for the month as a whole. The mercury plunged to 51 degrees below zero at Wisdom MT, and Waco TX set an all-time record low a reading of 12 above zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - The first day of winter was a relatively tranquil one for much of the nation, but heralded a winter storm in the Central Rockies. The storm produced 40 inches of snow at the top of the Pomerelle Ski Resort, south of Burley ID, the heaviest snow of record for that location. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds prevailed in the foothills of Wyoming and Colorado. Winds gusted to 123 mph southwest of Fort Collins CO, and reached 141 mph at the summit of Mount Evans. An ice storm paralyzed parts of Upper Michigan during the day. The freezing rain left roads around Marquette MI blocked by cars and semi- trucks. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A total of 137 cities across the central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Thirty-five of those cities established record lows for the month of December. Morning lows of 23 degrees below zero at Kansas City MO, 26 degrees below zero at Concordia KS, and 27 degrees below zero at Goodland KS established all-time records for those three locations. Unofficial morning lows included 50 degrees below zero at Recluse WY and 60 degrees below zero at Rochford SD. Broadus MT and Hardin MT tied for honors as the official cold spot in the nation with morning lows of 47 degrees below zero. Chinook winds at Cutbank MT helped warm the temperature 74 degrees, from a morning low of 34 degrees below zero to an afternoon high of 40 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2016 DOG LICENSES

AVAILABLE NOW!!

Licenses due by Dec. 31, 2015

Fines start after Dec. 31, 2015

Dogs CAN NOT be licensed without providing updated rabies shot information, please bring records for each dog to City Hall


Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have any dogs

Spayed or neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog


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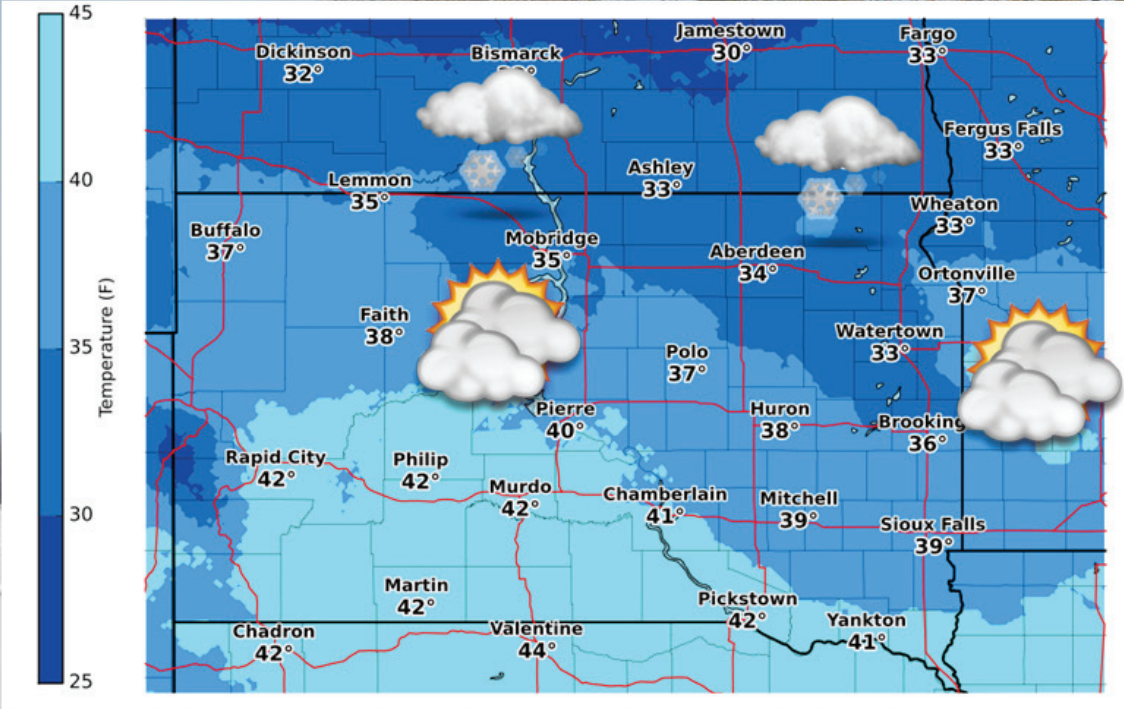
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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Christmas Day
Breezy. Patchy Fog then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Slight Chance Snow
High: 33 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 27 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 27 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 24 °F



Above Normal Temps Today






weather.gov/Aberdeen

Like
National Weather Service Aberdeen

@NWSAberdeen

Published on: 12/22/2015 at 5:37AM

An area of low pressure crossing the region today will bring breezy southerly winds, along with warmer temperatures into South Dakota and western Minnesota. Locations along the North Dakota, South Dakota border could see light snow with this system. A majority of the precipitation will fall in North Dakota.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 19.1 at 11:12 PM

Low: 14.6 at 5:11 AM

High Gust: 14 at 6:19 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 59° in 1893

Record Low: -28° in 1990

Average High: 24°F

Average Low: 4°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.36

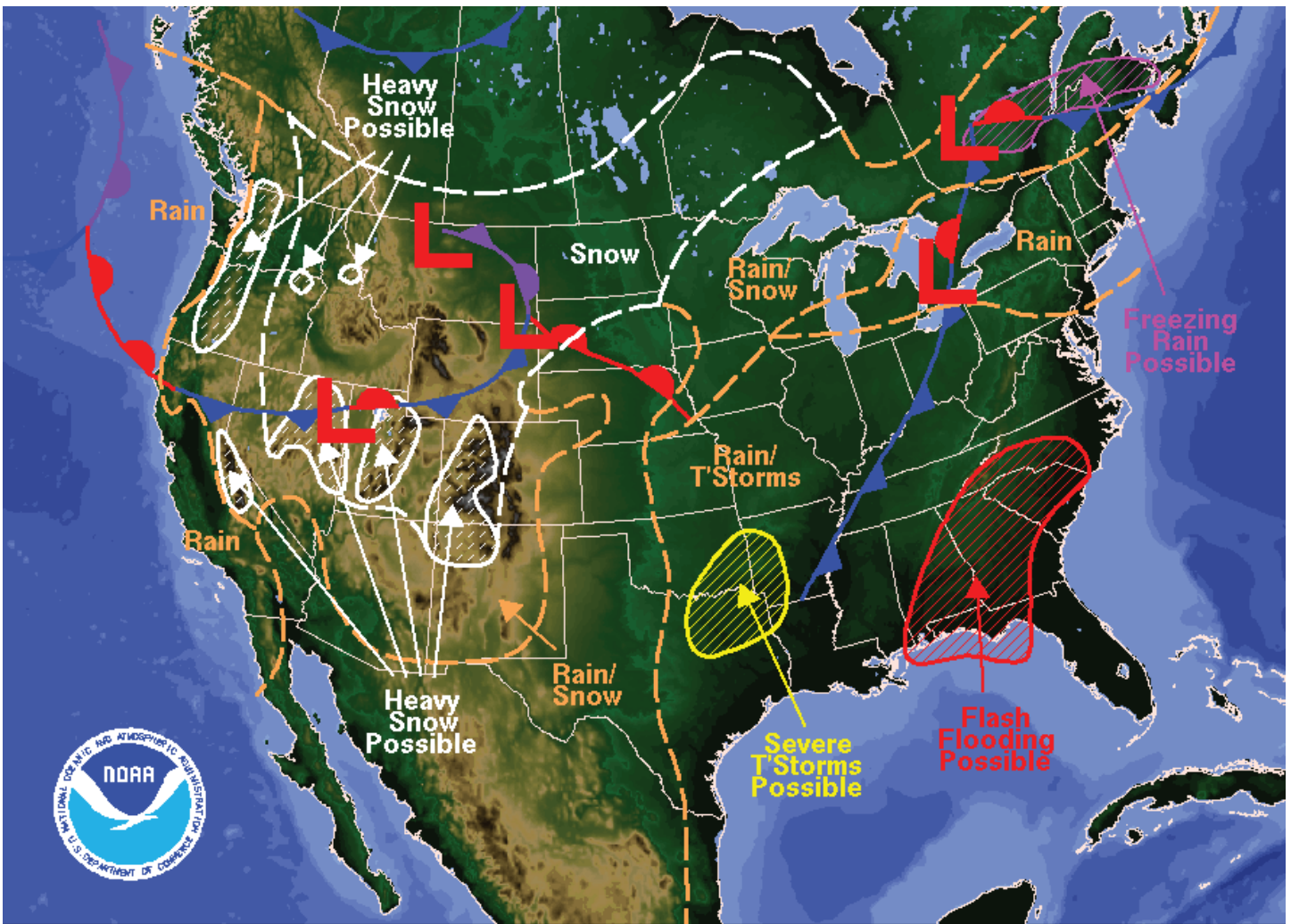
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.55

Average Precip to date: 21.56

Precip Year to Date: 20.37

Sunset Tonight: 4:53 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Tue, Dec 22, 2015, issued 4:36 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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POLITICS AND PROMISES

A boy climbed into Santa's lap and asked, "Sir, aren't you really a politician?"

"No!" he protested. "Why do you ask?"

"Well," he said, "you make more promises than you can deliver."

Promises are a big part of everyone's life. People give us their word that we can count on what they have said, that their promise "can be taken to the bank," only to forget what they said or change their mind. Most people do intend to keep their word. But then again, intentions only last, for many, until something more convenient or better comes along.

That's not the way it is with God. We have His record of faithfulness, of keeping His word throughout all of Scripture. What He declares, He does. What He promises, He delivers. What He says comes to pass.

In creation we see the absolute power of God. How reassuring for the Christian. Beginning at the beginning, from the initiation of time until today, God has never wavered on His word. God's promises are anchored in His unchanging character and steadfast love. If this were not true what assurance would we have of our salvation or the hope we have for eternal life with our Lord?

There is nothing too big for Him to manage or too small to escape His attention. We have His Word that assures us of His promise: "I have said it, I will do it."

Prayer: Father, we are grateful for Your Word that reveals Your record made and kept. How reassuring to know we have Someone we can trust with our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Isaiah 46:11 What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.

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News from the Associated Press

Capitol Christmas tree display to be open through Saturday

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Christmas trees on display at the state Capitol in Pierre will be taken down after the holiday.

The display will be open to the public through Saturday.

A 29-foot-tall Colorado blue spruce that came from Baltic is the featured tree. It was donated by Willette Reichert.

There are more than 100 other trees decking the halls of South Dakota government for the holiday season. They're decorated by businesses, civic organizations and nonprofits from around the state. This year's theme is "Christmas Around the World."

The organizations will begin taking the trees down on Sunday.

SDSU's Miller honored with 2 player of the week awards

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's State women's basketball point guard Macy Miller has been honored with two awards this week.

The sophomore from Mitchell has been named Summit League Player of the Week and College Sports Madness Summit League Mid-Major Player of the Week.

Miller averaged 16 points, 3.5 rebounds and 4 assists while shooting 66.7 percent from the field during the Jackrabbits upset win over then-No. 16 DePaul and her squad's one-point loss to Green Bay. She shot 50 percent from 3-point range and 83.3 percent from the free-throw line and recorded a 1.6 assist-to-turnover ratio.

Miller was the Summit League Player of the Week Nov. 23 and earned Mid-Major Player of the Week honors as a freshman.

Monday's Scores The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 47, Groton Area 45
Corsica/Stickney 86, Wessington Springs 47
Elk Point-Jefferson 75, Alcester-Hudson 40
Flandreau 61, Elkton-Lake Benton 54
Kadoka Area 52, Philip 51
Lennox 59, Canton 39
Madison 66, Beresford 40
Menno 51, Iroquois 18
Redfield/Doland 55, Chamberlain 40
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 64, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 56
Sioux Valley 51, Parker 39
Sisseton 73, Ortonville, Minn. 51
Warner 54, Potter County 32
Harrison Tournament
Crawford, Neb. 56, Edgemont 55

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

DeSmet 49, Colman-Egan 30
Elk Point-Jefferson 61, Alcester-Hudson 26
Elkton-Lake Benton 57, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 44
Estelline 43, Arlington 38

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Florence/Henry 73, Langford 31
Irene-Wakonda 59, Bon Homme 32
Madison 62, Beresford 49
McCook Central/Montrose 75, Tea Area 53
Menno 58, Iroquois 15
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 53, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 35
Parkston 42, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 39
Philip 67, Kadoka Area 30
Sioux Valley 52, Parker 49
Sisseton 49, Deuel 35
Vermillion 63, Sioux City, North, Iowa 57
Warner 45, Potter County 41
Waverly-South Shore 65, Northwestern 44
Webster 67, Britton-Hecla 39
Wessington Springs 49, Corsica/Stickney 38

Democrat's bid has taken back seat in family health scare

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Democrats' lone candidate for federal office said Monday that her campaign has taken a backseat as her daughter has dealt with a health scare.

U.S. House candidate Paula Hawks said she anticipates putting all of her attention back into campaigning in January. Hawks has been running to unseat three-term Republican Congresswoman Kristi Noem.

Hawks said her 15-year-old daughter found a lump in her throat in early November. She's undergoing surgery to remove the mass, which doctors believe is benign.

"It's been a scary situation for us," Hawks told The Associated Press. "Any time that somebody is going to cut into my child, I am definitely a nervous mom."

Hawks right now is the centerpiece of South Dakota Democrats' slate since the party hasn't yet named a candidate to run against Republican U.S. Sen. John Thune. He ran unopposed in 2010, but Democratic Chairwoman Ann Tornberg has said the party will field a contender.

A conservative blog has commented on the lack of activity from Hawks' campaign, which launched in August. Hawks said she intends to "do what it takes to be a competitive candidate in this race."

The Democratic state representative had raised about \$63,400 in her bid to unseat Noem as of the most recent campaign finance deadline. Noem, first elected after she beat incumbent Democrat Stephanie Hersheth Sandlin in 2010, won against her Democratic challenger in 2014 by more than 30 percentage points.

Absent a challenge, crime victim measure to go before voters

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

ST. LOUIS, S.D. (AP) — A constitutional amendment that would expand the rights of crime victims during court proceedings will likely go before voters on the 2016 ballot.

Secretary of State Shantel Krebs' office validated the measure Monday, but the certification can be challenged through Jan. 20, Krebs said. The amendment is the first in a recent wave of eight ballot measures, ranging from allowing medical marijuana to instituting nonpartisan elections, that the office has finished reviewing.

The measure is patterned after "Marsy's Law," which California voters approved in 2008 after the murder of college student Marsalee Nicholas. Nearly 80 percent of Illinois voters approved a "Marsy's Law" amendment to the state constitution in 2014.

Supporters are pushing the proposal in several states other than South Dakota, including Montana and North Dakota, said Jason Glodt, who heads Marsy's Law for South Dakota, the state-level group behind the proposed measure, which would need a simple majority of votes to pass.

Glodt has said the proposal would guarantee that victims can be present in court and that they can be heard from during all stages of criminal proceedings, including plea agreements, which otherwise might

be offered without their consultation. It would not give victims decision-making power over such agreements, he said.

The measure, known as "Constitutional Amendment S" would also guarantee for crime victims that an offender's trial would occur without unreasonable delay. And the proposal would ensure victims are first in line for restitution from an offender ahead of the government, which might pursue costs such as court fees.

Glodt said the certification shifts the focus away from signatures and marks the beginning of the "Vote yes on S" campaign.

"We're of course very pleased to hear that they have been certified, and it's very good news for our campaign and a step forward to strengthening crime victim laws in South Dakota," he said.

Zachary Norris is executive director of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, which opposed the California measure. He said that the United States has erred by relying on mass incarceration as a primary way of achieving public safety.

Krebs said the measure's supporters submitted more than 34,000 valid signatures to get it on the ballot, comfortably more than the 28,000 needed. She said she hopes to finish reviewing the remaining ballot proposals by the end of January. Several other measures are already set to go before voters in 2016.

Suspect in Sioux Falls car shooting arrested in Missouri

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — A man accused of shooting at an occupied car several times in Sioux Falls earlier this month has been arrested in Missouri.

KRCG-TV (<http://bit.ly/1Nz3Dp4>) reports police in Jefferson City, Missouri, arrested 20-year-old Sioux Falls resident Christian David Ladin-Villela on Monday. A warrant for his arrest carrying a \$500,000 bond was issued Dec. 14. He faces 10 counts of aggravated assault and discharge of a firearm at an occupied car.

The station reports Ladin-Villela surrendered after members of a SWAT team got inside the home where he was tracked down to.

Police in Sioux Falls have said nobody was hurt when Ladin-Villela shot at the car the night of Dec. 10.

It wasn't immediately clear if Ladin-Villela has an attorney. He is being held at the Cole County Jail pending extradition to South Dakota.

Deputies arrest suspect in Goodwill thrift store burglary

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Law enforcement authorities in western South Dakota have arrested the suspect in a burglary at the Goodwill thrift store in Rapid City.

Authorities say Pennington County sheriff's deputies arrested 28-year-old Rapid City resident Corey Croyle over the weekend.

Police say several items, including a safe containing an undisclosed amount of money, were taken from the store on Dec. 12. Police say a search of Croyle's home days after the burglary turned up several of the stolen items, including the safe.

An arrest warrant was issued for Croyle, and authorities say deputies found him hiding in the attic of the home Saturday. Croyle was arrested on burglary and resisting arrest charges.

It wasn't immediately clear Monday whether Croyle has an attorney.

Goodwill uses profits from the sale of used items to help needy people in the community.

Wild Card 2 ticket sold in Sturgis worth \$6,000

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — A Wild Card 2 ticket sold in Sturgis is worth \$6,000 in the latest drawing.

South Dakota lottery officials say the ticket matched all five white ball numbers but missed the Wild Card to win the game's second prize. The odds of \$6,000 playing Wild Card 2 are 1 in about 127,000.

The winning numbers in the Saturday drawing were 7, 12, 25, 28, 33 and the Wild Card was the Ace of Spades. The lucky ticket holder has 180 days to claim the prize.

Wild Card 2 is played in the Dakotas, Idaho and Montana. The jackpot is at \$235,000 for Wednesday's drawing.

Iraqi family braves perilous journey to new life in Germany

MUHAMMED MUHEISEN, Associated Press

HEIDELBERG, Germany (AP) — The Qasus do not normally cry, but this felt nothing like normal. Like hundreds of thousands before them and untold more to come, the Iraqi family had just completed a disorienting dash across Europe and found refuge in Germany.

Settling down in the city of Heidelberg, the parents comforted their four children as the reality of what they had just endured struck like a thunderclap and the tears flowed freely. They were tears of trauma, loss — and flickering hope.

"We used to have a home. A fine life. We used to have money and never needed anyone," said the mother, Bessi Qasim, who uses her father's surname. Dabbing at her eyes, the 42-year-old homemaker said her job now was to make a new home.

"I just want my children to be happy and see them growing up. I want to be able to replace the bad memories with new good ones."

Those bad memories include at least three brushes with death: with murderous invaders, the fear of drowning, a daughter's cancer.

Had they not left Iraq so quickly, the Qasus might well be dead or abducted now. They are Yazidis, a religiously distinctive ethnic group within Iraq that has been singled out for persecution by Islamic State militants, who have slain thousands, particularly in and around Sinjar, where the Qasus are from.

The Qasus escaped as IS forces seized the city on Aug. 3, 2014. All six — Bessi, husband Samir, daughters Delphine and Dunia, sons Dilshad and Dildar — climbed aboard a truck heading north for the Turkish border. They soon heard word of wholesale slaughter, rapes and kidnappings back home as thousands behind them retreated without food or water to Mount Sinjar.

"We took nothing with us. I didn't need to see IS to know how horrifying they are," said Samir, 45, who abandoned his convenience store in Sinjar. He said cousins who stayed behind have vanished.

For 15 months, the Qasus existed on the fringe of Turkish society. As a refugee, Samir was barred from working legally and said his children faced intimidation at school because of their Yazidi identity.

"We had a miserable life," said Samir, who kept his family out of Turkish refugee camps and rented an apartment, but struggled to pay bills by working illegally part-time in construction jobs. "I reached a point where I couldn't take it anymore. We had no dignity. I just wanted my children to live in a safe, peaceful place."

The smuggler in Istanbul demanded \$10,000 for the six of them to join 26 others on a cabin cruiser designed to carry perhaps a quarter that many. They left the Turkish coast before dawn on Dec. 3 bound for the island of Lesbos, the first port of EU call for nearly 400,000 asylum seekers this year. Scores have drowned as boats, typically helmed by novice refugees, are swamped or overturned.

Samir paid in part with money provided by his brother, who had already made it to Sweden. The boat appeared more substantial than the typical rigid inflatables that smugglers deploy as one-use throwaway items. That didn't stop the engine of the overloaded boat from breaking down midway, leaving the Qasus to bob helplessly on the choppy Aegean.

"I was 95 percent certain that death would take us," said Samir, who said he prayed for God to claim him and save his loved ones.

Greek rescue officials spotted their dying craft and towed them close to shore, where aid workers waded knee-deep to carry the Qasu family the final few meters into Europe. This was the moment The Associated Press met the Qasu family: struggling to remove their knotted life vests and caressing each other with shaking hands, emotions overwhelming them.

An AP photographer spent that week following the Qasus as they nimbly hopped from border to border. Their rapid progress reflects Europe's concession that German-bound asylum seekers should not be left pointlessly stranded for days outdoors in the bleak Balkans winter.

Within two days, the Qasus had traveled by midnight ferry from Lesbos to Athens and then by bus to

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Greece's northern border with Macedonia. They slept chiefly on trains, buses and benches while passing through registration centers in four Balkan countries, getting their first proper sleep in a bed in a massive tent holding hundreds of asylum seekers near the Austrian city of Salzburg on Dec. 7.

Life has been a German whirlwind since then: ID photographs and fingerprints, housing in a former development for U.S. Army families that now holds 5,500 refugee applicants, distributions of free food and clothing — and most importantly for the Qasus, the most thorough medical check in years for 13-year-old Dunia.

In February 2012, Turkish doctors performed a life-saving liver transplant on the girl, removing a cancerous section and replacing it with a liver portion donated by her mother. The liver is the only human organ able to regenerate in this way, but Dunia remains vulnerable to infections and must take daily injections to block antibodies from attacking her mother's donated tissue. Underscoring her vulnerability, she wore a surgical mask throughout December's odyssey from Turkey to Heidelberg.

"I want to be cured and grow up. I love Germany and the people here," Dunia said.

Samir said the German doctors at the Heidelberg camp "have been so kind to us. As soon as they learned about her situation, they went through all the proper procedures to check her and told us that she is fine."

Dildar, 10, now dreams of becoming a soccer star in Germany. As he kicks a ball outside with siblings Dilshad, 17, and Delphine, 18, their talk turns to the possibility of school in January and of using one of their first German words: "Danke" — thank you.

Delphine says she hopes to train to become a doctor and continue the cycle of aid to others less fortunate.

"I dream of helping people, the ones who need the most," she said.

The parents watch from a park bench, pleased to be in a land that offers a future now unimaginable where they came from.

"Iraq is destroyed, shattered into millions of pieces," Samir said. "It's no longer my home and no longer a home for my family. ... Home is where your family is safe and happy."

'Hamilton' on Broadway generates 1M tweets this year

MARK KENNEDY, AP Drama Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Another milestone has fallen thanks to the Broadway musical "Hamilton" — this time on Twitter.

The microblogging website said Tuesday there have been over 1 million tweets about the hip-hop show featuring the life of the nation's first treasury secretary.

The sheer number of tweets was fueled by a young tech-savvy cast and audience and its cross-over popularity in hip-hop circles, as well as fresh material in the form of impromptu video performances that occur periodically on the front steps of the Richard Rodgers Theatre, the Broadway home of "Hamilton."

By comparison, there were 266,000 tweets about the current Tony-winning best new musical "Fun Home" and Nielsen data found there were 323,000 tweets about the Tony Awards during this year's telecast.

Written by "In the Heights" Tony-winning creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, the musical tells the true story of Alexander Hamilton, and is told by a young African-American and Latino cast.

It's got a terrifically varied score, ranging from pop ballads to sexy R&B to rap battles, with lyrical nods to Gilbert and Sullivan, Jason Robert Brown, "South Pacific" and the Notorious B.I.G.

Twitter said the show reached a million tweets thanks to users using the groupings #HamiltonMusical, @HamiltonMusical, #Ham4Ham, #Hamiltunes and @Lin_Manuel.

"Hamilton" was a sold-out sensation earlier this year when it debuted at the Public Theater, with people paying well over 10 times the \$120 ticket price and a crush of fans seeking lottery tickets.

Celebrities like Tom Hanks, Dick Cheney and Madonna showed up. When it transferred to Broadway, it had a war chest of \$31 million and President Barack Obama came to see it.

The show, which regularly pulls in \$1.5 million a week to sold-out audiences, has won awards from the Outer Critics Circle, the New York Drama Critics' Circle and the Drama Desk, and it is a likely candidate

for Tony Awards this summer. The show's cast album became the highest debuting cast recording on the Billboard Top 200 in over 50 years.

Miranda's followers have grown, too, over the year, thanks to his accessibility, humor, wide-ranging interests and sense of fun. He had 50,000 followers last year. Now he has 162,000.

British troops deploy to Afghan province amid Taliban battle

LYNNE O'DONNELL, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Fierce battles were underway Tuesday between Afghan forces and the Taliban in southern Helmand province where the insurgents have almost completely captured a strategic district as Britain deployed military advisers to the restive area.

The development came a day after a Taliban suicide bomber killed six U.S. troops near a Kabul base — the deadliest attack on Americans in the country since August.

A British Ministry of Defense statement late Monday said that "a small number of U.K. personnel" have been deployed to Helmand "in an advisory role." The U.K. has 450 troops in Afghanistan as part of NATO's training mission.

The Afghans were also sending reinforcements to Helmand on Tuesday, officials said. Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah said the security of Helmand was a "top priority," according to his deputy spokesman Javid Faisal.

The Taliban have been getting closer to taking full control of the Sangin district for days, with most government buildings now in Taliban hands.

An official in Helmand said that only an Afghan army base in the district remained in government hands, and it was surrounded by Taliban fighters. Speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media about the operation, the official said Afghan commandos and special forces will try to "rescue those soldiers who are stuck in the base."

Helmand is important to the Taliban. The lush southern province is home to endless poppy fields and the source of much of the world's opium, which helps fund the insurgency.

Sangin has particular resonance with the British as more than 100 of their 456 fatalities in Afghanistan since the start of the war in 2001 took place in the district.

The Afghan Ministry of Interior confirmed Tuesday that British troops had arrived at Camp Shorabak, formally the U.S. Marines' Camp Leatherneck and next door to the camp that was occupied by British forces until the international combat mission ended last year.

Afghan forces "need to strengthen their capacity and improve coordination," Sediq Sediqqi, the ministry's spokesman told reporters.

He said the main reason for the length of time it took to send reinforcements to the area was because of its remoteness and, during the summer months, the punishing climate.

"Taking on the responsibility for security from NATO and other international troops was a huge challenge for us," Sediqqi said, speaking of the Afghan troops who now shoulder full responsibility for the country's security.

The commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, U.S. Army Gen. John F. Campbell said recently that the Afghan forces were still challenged by practical issues such as logistics, and by lagging confidence.

"There are some places in Helmand they do think the Taliban are 10 feet tall, that they are better trained, they got better weapons," Campbell told The Associated Press in an interview earlier this month. "It is a confidence thing."

But the Afghan forces, he said, "will continue to get better. The United States army has been around for 240 years, the Afghan army seven or eight years."

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the Monday suicide attack on U.S. troops that killed six near Afghanistan's Bagram airport. Two U.S. troops and an Afghan were also wounded when the bomber rammed an explosives-laden motorcycle into a joint NATO-Afghan patrol.

The soldiers were targeted as they moved through a village near Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. military

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facility in Afghanistan with about 14,000 personnel, NATO and Afghan officials said.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul issued a statement of condolences Tuesday to the families of the dead "as they face such heartbreaking news during the holiday season."

In New York, Police Commissioner William Bratton said Monday that a New York City police detective, Joseph Lemm, was one of the six American killed in the attack.

Lemm was a 15-year-old veteran of the New York Police Department and worked in the Bronx Warrant Squad. Bratton says Lemm served in the U.S. National Guard and, while a member of the police force, he had been deployed twice to Afghanistan and once to Iraq. He leaves behind a wife and three children.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter in statement called the attack "a painful reminder of the dangers our troops face every day in Afghanistan."

It was the deadliest attack on foreign troops in four months. On Aug. 22, three American contractors with the Resolute Support base were killed in a suicide attack in Kabul. On Aug. 7 and 8, Kabul was the scene of three insurgent attacks within 24 hours that left at least 35 people dead. One of the attacks, on a U.S. special operations forces base outside Kabul, killed one U.S soldier and eight Afghan civilian contractors.

Final curtain coming down on LA's giant Hollywood junkyard

JOHN ROGERS, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It's not just a junkyard — or even a really big junkyard — but a living, breathing monument to Los Angeles pop culture. And now it's headed for the dustbin of history itself.

For 54 years, Aadlen Brothers Auto Wrecking, in a moonscaped, god-forsaken-looking section of the San Fernando Valley, has collected far more than thousands of burned-out, smashed-up, rusted automobiles on its sprawling dirt and asphalt lot.

It's also taken in just about every type of movie and TV prop imaginable while serving as the site of more than 200 Hollywood film shoots.

The last surviving "Bruce" the shark, made from the mold for the 1975 Steven Spielberg film "Jaws," resides there, swimming ominously near an entrance. With its huge mouth agape, it appears ready to devour anyone foolish enough to try to sneak off the lot with, say, a pilfered power train from a '32 Ford.

Nearby is the giant boom box Usher danced on for the 1997 video "My Way." (It's actually a 53-foot-long big-rig trailer painted to look like the '80s-era music machine. But viewed from a nearby freeway it appears eerily authentic.

Now everything must go, says Nathan Adlen, owner of this hybrid junkyard-Hollywood backlot that's been in his family since 1961 when this part of the valley was mainly a warren of sand-and-gravel quarries and garbage dumps.

By New Year's Eve, he promises, it will be 26 acres of bare land surrounded largely by warehouses and car-repair places as he contemplates what to do next with the property.

"You need to make money to survive and it's gotten harder to make money in the junk business," the affable 60-year-old says as he walks past thousands of automobiles piled four and five high, each destined for the giant car-crushing machine that will noisily squash them into scrap metal.

The Chinese aren't buying that scrap like they once did, he explains, causing the price to plummet while his minimum-wage and insurance costs continue to rise.

More than 200 movies, TV shows, commercials, video games and music videos have been filmed at Aadlen Brothers over the years.

But Adlen says that Hollywood cash isn't enough these days to subsidize a business that for decades was also the go-to place for seemingly every shade-tree mechanic in the San Fernando Valley looking to dress up his ride with a cheap turbocharger, a shiny grill or chrome wheels pulled off everything from wrecked Rolls-Royces to VW bugs.

"My father and I, we would roam around that place forever," recalls Tommy Gelinis, curator of the San Fernando Valley Relics Museum, who customized his first car, a 1968 Dodge Dart, with used parts from Aadlen Brothers.

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"But it wasn't just a junkyard," Gelinas continues. "It was an adventure because there was so much stuff, old cars, movie memorabilia."

The yard began showing up in films in 1967, when a scene shot at its trailer office made it into the movie "In Cold Blood."

"It's only six seconds in the movie," Adlen recalls with a chuckle, but those seconds were enough to make the company's founding Adlen brothers realize they had a future in show business. (After starting the business, Adlen's father and uncle added the extra A to the name to get it listed first in the phone book.)

Over the years, the lot has appeared briefly in "The Hangover," "The Fall Guy," "The A-Team," "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" and countless other shows. Just last month a "Supergirl" episode had the Girl of Steel battling the villain Reactron near the car-crushing machine.

Soon there will be nothing left to film.

The "RoboCop 3" car has already headed out the door, followed by two of the armored vehicles from the film "Universal Soldier." (Up close, they look more like giant trash trucks.)

Adlen, who is selling most pieces and offering some to museums, isn't sure what he'll do with the shark, with its famous pedigree.

For years it was known in Hollywood that there were three sharks built for the film, all destroyed afterward. But there was a persistent rumor, apocryphal some thought, that a fourth one made from the same mold resided in a junkyard somewhere. It never appeared in the movie but had been the star of the Universal Studios theme park tour.

Five years ago, National Public Radio senior editor Cory Turner, a "Jaws" fan, dragged the shark's builder and designer out to Aadlen Brothers, where they confirmed that shark was the real deal.

Adlen still remembers the day it arrived. His late father was buying old cars from Universal Studios to strip for parts when he was asked: "By the way, you interested in this?"

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. BRITISH TROOPS DEPLOY TO AFGHAN PROVINCE AMID TALIBAN BATTLE

The development comes a day after a suicide bomber killed six U.S. troops near a Kabul base — the deadliest attack on Americans in the country since August.

2. MIGRANT ARRIVALS INTO EUROPE REPORTEDLY TOP 1 MILLION IN 2015

The International Organization for Migration, which announced the figure, says the symbolic milestone marks more than a four-fold increase from last year.

3. SUSPECT IN VEGAS CRASH HAD OVERCOME ADVERSITY

Lakeisha Holloway had a rough childhood that included a period of homelessness but had become an award-winning high school graduate and caring mother.

4. NO INDICTMENT IN SANDRA BLAND JAIL DEATH

A grand jury decides that neither sheriff's officials nor jailers committed a crime in the treatment of the black woman who died in a Texas county prison last summer.

5. WHAT POSES INCREASING THREAT TO AMERICAN POWER GRID

Many utilities across the U.S. must balance customer costs with the need for upgrades to confront the growing number of extreme weather events, The AP learns.

6. WHO CALLS CLINTON A 'LIAR'

Donald Trump demands an apology from his leading Democratic opponent after she said the GOP presidential front-runner had become the Islamic State's "best recruiter."

7. SUPPORT FOR LEGAL ABORTION AT HIGHEST LEVEL IN 2 YEARS

Nearly six in 10 Americans — 58 percent — now think abortion should be legal in most or all cases, according to an AP-GfK poll.

8. SPACEX LAUNCHES ROCKET 6 MONTHS AFTER ACCIDENT

"Welcome back, baby!" Elon Musk tweets after touchdown.

9. WHY FORMER ULTRA-ORTHODOX JEWS SUE THE STATE

Dozens of young Israelis who left the county's insular community are claiming they were denied a basic education and left lagging far behind their secular counterparts.

10. WORLD CUP VOTES SPARKED PROBES WHICH DOWNED BLATTER, PLATINI

The fallout from FIFA's decision to send the World Cup to Russia and Qatar brings down the FIFA president and the head of UEFA but not the hosts themselves.

AP photographer walks refugee road, forges bond with family

MUHAMMED MUHEISEN, Associated Press

I never imagined that I would grow so close, and so quickly, to perfect strangers. But the Qasu family will live in my hearts for the rest of my days.

My professional goal since November has been to befriend a newly arrived refugee family in Lesbos and accompany them the rest of the way to their European sanctuary. I failed twice: one journey cut short by a mother's sudden choice for privacy, the second sabotaged by the pitch-dark chaos of a crowded Macedonian border crossing at 3 in the morning.

Third time proved the charm. At dawn on Dec. 3, I set out along the dirt track on Lesbos' northern coast facing Turkey and spotted an approaching boat. Wading into the water to capture images of rescue workers pulling people from the craft, I turned back toward shore, and my heart stopped. There stood a husband and wife, clasping their children and weeping. I imagined, for a moment, my own mother and father.

I photographed them from a distance, approached and asked the father in Arabic: Are you OK? Where are you from?

"I am a Yazidi from Iraq and we are alive but terrified," said the man I soon came to know as Samir.

He and wife Bessi didn't hesitate a second in welcoming me alongside to document their effort to reach Germany. I asked if they had a working cell phone and he provided me a Turkish number. Immediately my apprehensions swelled that this phone would stop working inside Europe and I would lose another family midway.

I often had to move at least one step ahead of the Qasus, because officials at most border crossings and boarding points for refugee transportation links bar journalists from tagging along. I'd wait for hours on the far side of the next best-guess destination.

Samir made clear he didn't want to lose me. Just before they boarded their ferry to the Greek mainland, I asked him: Do you trust me?

"I already consider you one of us," he said. "The fact that I see you around us every step of the way tells me you care."

When, some 36 hours later, I spotted the Qasus sitting around a fire warming themselves from the morning cold on the Greek side of the Macedonian border, I was heartened to see how pleased they were to see me, too.

Throughout the Balkans, I had to shadow their train-and-bus journey remotely by car and pray that the Turkish mobile would keep working. They caught sporadic sleep on each link, while I just kept driving.

Reconnecting at each transit point proved a Kafkaesque nightmare at times: The Qasus literally did not know where they were, sometimes not even what country they were in. Each stop was a bewildering experience for them, each reunion a minor miracle for me. Reflecting on it now makes me smile, because I still have no clue how we made it. But in the process, as I used my own experience of each country and crossing to explain to them what might lie ahead, I became a valued part of their journey.

As we walked together on a bridge connecting Salzburg, Austria, to the German border town of Freilassing, Samir approached and whispered in my ear: "Please don't abandon us."

I won't.

After gathering my own emotions, I explained to Samir that I will never forget them; they are not just a story I am covering. They are part of my life, and I am proud to share their experience with the world.

Trump calls Clinton a 'liar' over video claim

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrat Hillary Clinton says Republican Donald Trump has become recruiting fodder for Islamic extremists, and Trump calls her a liar, in what could be a preview of the 2016 general election campaign for president.

Trump said Monday that Clinton lied when she said during a Democratic Party debate that the Islamic State group used videos of his comments about Muslims to recruit militants.

The Republican presidential front-runner also took to Twitter to demand an apology from his leading Democratic opponent.

"She's a liar!" Trump told more than 6,000 people at a rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan on Monday evening. He also said Clinton was "crooked" and "not a president."

During Saturday's faceoff among Democrats, Clinton said Trump had become the Islamic State's "best recruiter" and said, "They are going to people showing videos of Donald Trump insulting Islam and Muslims in order to recruit more radical jihadists."

There was no evidence to back the claim, and a spokeswoman later said, "She didn't have a particular video in mind."

Still, Clinton campaign spokesman Brian Fallon, asked Monday by MSNBC if Clinton would apologize to Trump, insisted, "Hell no."

During his rally Monday at Grand Rapids' DeltaPlex Arena, Trump used crude language to portray Clinton as someone who constantly loses, citing her race against Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination in 2008.

"She was favored to win and she got schlanged, she lost," he said.

He also mocked Clinton for returning to the debate late following a commercial break. "I thought she quit, I thought she gave up," Trump joked.

He later seemed to acknowledge reports that she got delayed waiting to use a restroom: "I know where she went. It's disgusting, I don't want to talk about it."

Trump argued that he is the last person Clinton wants to run against in a general election.

"Ask Jeb Bush if he enjoys running against me," he said of the former Florida governor who has been struggling to gain traction despite a massive early fundraising advantage.

"Ask Lindsey Graham, did he enjoy running against Trump?" he said of the South Carolina senator who on Monday announced his departure from the race.

Trump also defended the kind words he's been exchanging with Russian President Vladimir Putin, brushing off criticism that he has been too kind to the Russian president.

"That's like a good thing, not a bad thing," he insisted. "Wouldn't it be nice if we could get along like with people?"

And he made clear that he is opposed to the killing of journalists, after appearing to brush off concerns about Putin's record on a Sunday morning news show.

"I don't like that, I'm totally against that," said Trump. "By the way, I hate some of these people ... and some of them are such lying, disgusting people, it's true. But I would never kill. And anybody that does I think would be despicable."

Indian paramilitary plane crashes, killing all 10 aboard

NEW DELHI (AP) — A small Indian paramilitary plane crashed just outside New Delhi's main airport on Tuesday, killing all 10 people on board, officials said.

An inquiry has been ordered to determine the cause of the crash of the Super King plane belonging to India's Border Security Force, Junior Aviation Minister Mahesh Sharma told reporters.

The plane crashed into the boundary wall at the airport and landed in a small body of water, said A.K. Sharma, director of Delhi Fire Services. Part of the plane was submerged under water, he said.

At least 15 fire engines were at the site of the crash trying to extricate the wreckage.

The plane was heading from New Delhi to the eastern city of Ranchi. It was carrying eight engineers

and two pilots.

Few other details were immediately available.

A state-by-state look at renewable energy requirements

The Associated Press

Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have requirements that utilities get a certain amount of their electricity from renewable sources. Nine additional states have goals for renewable energy, while a dozen others have no targets. A state-by-state look at renewable energy policies.

ALABAMA

No renewable energy standard.

ALASKA

A bill passed in 2010 sets a goal, but not a requirement, for Alaska to receive half its electricity from renewable and alternative energy sources by 2025.

ARIZONA

Public utilities must get 6 percent of their electricity from renewable sources in 2016, gradually rising annually to 15 percent by 2025.

ARKANSAS

No renewable energy standard.

CALIFORNIA

Utilities must get one-third of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020. That requirement rises to 40 percent by 2024, 45 percent by 2027 and half of all electricity by 2030.

COLORADO

Utility companies currently must get 20 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources, rising to 30 percent by 2020. The standards are lower for electric cooperatives and municipal suppliers, topping out at 10 or 20 percent by 2020 depending on their size.

CONNECTICUT

Utilities must get 21 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources in 2016, gradually rising annually to 27 percent by 2020.

DELAWARE

Utilities must derive 13 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources this year, gradually rising annually until reaching 25 percent in 2025.

FLORIDA

No renewable energy standard.

GEORGIA

No renewable energy standard.

HAWAII

Utility companies must provide 15 percent of their electricity from renewable sources this year. That requirement rises to 30 percent in 2020, 40 percent in 2030 and 70 percent in 2040. By 2045, all electricity must come from renewable sources.

IDAHO

No renewable energy standard.

ILLINOIS

Utilities are required to get at least 10 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources this year, gradually rising annually to 25 percent by 2025.

INDIANA

Public utilities can receive regulatory approval for larger earnings if they agree to obtain at least 10 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2025. As much as 30 percent of that target can come from clean-burning coal facilities, nuclear power and natural gas generators that displace coal-fired plants.

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IOWA

The state adopted the nation's first renewable energy law in 1983, requiring investor-owned utilities to have 105 megawatts of generating capacity from renewable sources. Utilities have far exceeded that threshold.

KANSAS

A state law had required at least 20 percent of a utility's peak demand for electricity to come from renewable sources by 2020. But an amendment passed this year made that a voluntary goal.

KENTUCKY

No renewable energy standard.

LOUISIANA

No renewable energy standard.

MAINE

At least 40 percent of total retail electricity sales must come from renewable energy sources by 2017.

MARYLAND

Utilities must comply with a gradually increasing standard that requires at least 20 percent of electricity to come from renewable sources by 2022.

MASSACHUSETTS

Utilities must derive 11 percent of their electricity from renewable sources in 2016, gradually rising to 15 percent by 2020 and growing by an additional 1 percent annually thereafter.

MICHIGAN

Utilities must get 10 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources as of this year.

MINNESOTA

Most utilities must provide 17 percent of their electricity from renewable sources in 2016, rising to 21.5 percent in 2020 and 26.5 percent in 2025. The state's largest utility faces a higher standard of 25 percent from renewable sources by 2016 and 31.5 percent by 2020.

MISSISSIPPI

No renewable energy standard.

MISSOURI

Investor-owned utilities currently must get 5 percent of their electricity from renewable sources, rising to 10 percent in 2018 and 15 percent beginning in 2021.

MONTANA

Public utilities must get at least 15 percent of their electricity from renewable sources as of this year.

NEBRASKA

No renewable energy standard.

NEVADA

Utilities currently must derive 20 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources. That requirement rises to 22 percent in 2020 and 25 percent in 2025.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Utilities must get 16.7 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources in 2016, gradually rising annually to 24.8 percent in 2025.

NEW JERSEY

Utilities must get more than 20 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020.

NEW MEXICO

Public utilities currently must provide at least 15 percent of their electricity from renewable sources, rising to 20 percent by 2020. Rural electric cooperatives face a lesser standard of 5 percent renewable sources this year, rising to 10 percent by 2020.

NEW YORK

Utilities must get 29 percent of their electricity from renewable sources as of this year. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has set a goal of renewable sources comprising half of all electricity by 2030.

NORTH CAROLINA

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Utilities currently must provide 6 percent of their electricity from renewable sources, rising to 10 percent in 2018. For investor-owned utilities, that rises to 12.5 percent in 2021.

NORTH DAKOTA

State law sets a voluntary goal of supplying 10 percent of electricity from renewable sources by this year.

OHIO

A state law had required utilities to get 25 percent of their electricity from alternative sources by 2025, with half of that coming from renewable sources and half from improved technologies such as clean-burning coal or nuclear facilities. But a 2014 law put a hold on the gradual implementation of those standards, meaning the renewable energy portion of that requirement will remain at 2.5 percent in 2016.

OKLAHOMA

State law sets a goal, but not a requirement, for 15 percent of electrical generating capacity to come from renewable sources as of this year.

OREGON

Large utilities currently must get 15 percent of their electricity from renewable sources, rising to 20 percent in 2020 and 25 percent in 2025. Smaller utilities face a renewable requirement of either 10 percent or 5 percent by 2025, depending on their size.

PENNSYLVANIA

Utilities currently must get 13.7 percent of their electricity from renewable sources, gradually rising annually to 18 percent by 2021. A portion of that can come from clean-burning coal facilities.

RHODE ISLAND

The state Public Utilities Commission delayed a scheduled increase this year in its renewable energy standards, citing a potentially inadequate supply. That held the requirement at 8.5 percent — instead of 10 percent — of electricity coming from renewable sources.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Utilities may choose to participate in an energy program that includes at least 2 percent of their electricity coming from in-state renewable energy facilities by 2021.

SOUTH DAKOTA

State law sets a voluntary goal of 10 percent of electricity coming from renewable sources and conservation efforts as of this year.

TENNESSEE

No renewable energy standard.

TEXAS

In 1999, the state set a target of having 5,880 megawatts of generating capacity from renewable energy by this year, with a goal of 10,000 megawatts by 2025. That long-range goal already has been exceeded.

UTAH

State law sets a target for utilities to provide about 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2025, if it is cost-effective to do so.

VERMONT

A law enacted this year converted Vermont's renewable energy targets to requirements, meaning utilities will have to get 55 percent of their electricity from renewable sources in 2017. That will rise periodically until it reaches 75 percent in 2032.

VIRGINIA

Investor-owned utilities have a voluntary 2016 state goal for their renewable energy to equal 7 percent of their electricity sales in 2007. That goal rises to 12 percent in 2022 and 15 percent in 2025.

WASHINGTON

Large utilities must obtain at least 9 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2016 and 15 percent by 2020.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Utilities must provide an amount of electricity from renewable sources that increases each year, reaching 20 percent in 2020.

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WEST VIRGINIA

Lawmakers this year repealed a 2009 law that had set a goal for large investor-owned utilities to get 10 percent of their electricity from renewable sources in 2015 and 25 percent by 2025. The repealed law had included certain coal and natural gas facilities in its description of renewable sources.

WISCONSIN

State law sets a target of 10 percent of all electricity coming from renewable sources this year. Requirements vary for each utility, but the amount of renewable energy must be at least 6 percentage points above its 2001-2003 average.

WYOMING

No renewable energy standard.

Renewable energy efforts stymied by transmission roadblocks

DAVID A. LIEB, Associated Press

EDITOR'S NOTE _ Part a yearlong effort by The Associated Press and the Associated Press Media Editors, examining the state of America's infrastructure.

MOBERLY, Mo. (AP) — Mike McKeown opens the back door of his Missouri farm house and is met with a chilly gust. "Stupid wind," he mutters.

Today, the winds that blow through his corn and soybean farm have become more than just an irritant. The homestead in northern Missouri, which his family has owned for nearly 70 years, sits smack in the path of a proposed high-voltage line that would carry renewable energy from the wind-whipped plains of western Kansas to power-thirsty cities farther east. And McKeown doesn't like that.

Due partly to the intense opposition from local property owners, Missouri regulators have blocked the 780-mile-long Grain Belt Express power line from being built. In doing so, they have highlighted one of the toughest challenges facing the nation as it tries to shift toward a greater reliance on renewable energy.

Converting the wind and sun into electricity is increasingly affordable, but it can be difficult to get that electricity from distant plains and deserts to the places where it's needed. The reasons range from technical to regulatory.

"Transmission is the biggest long-term barrier for wind energy development," said Rob Gramlich, senior vice president of government and public affairs for the American Wind Energy Association. "That's because the best wind resources are often in remote areas on farms and ranches that are far from population centers."

To get the power from one point to another means crossing not only through hundreds of farm fields and backyards but also through multiple states with different regulatory requirements. Public lands that are subject to numerous environmental restrictions offer yet another obstacle.

Further complicating the transmission puzzle: The nation's electric grid was designed primarily to serve particular states and regions, not necessarily to move electricity from one part of the U.S. to an entirely different area.

There also are technical challenges. To ensure a steady supply of electricity, there often must be some way to store excess energy generated from strong winds and prolonged sunshine and to supplement the downtimes with other sources such as gas-fired generators.

While wind power is the fastest-growing source of new energy in the U.S., it still accounted for just 4.4 percent of the nation's electricity in 2014, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Solar power contributed just 0.4 percent.

President Barack Obama's administration has encouraged the development of more wind and solar energy while imposing stricter limits on pollution from coal-fired power plants, part of his strategy to reduce the amount of heat-trapping carbon in the atmosphere. An international climate agreement announced earlier this month calls for nearly 200 countries to collectively slash carbon emissions in the decades ahead to slow the pace of global warming.

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States also have been pressing utilities to generate power from cleaner sources. California is among 29 states that have adopted renewable energy requirements. In the nation's most populous state, with the world's eighth-largest economy, utilities must get half their energy from renewable sources by 2030. Vermont has set a 75 percent renewable energy standard by 2032.

Yet government regulations also have impeded the development of large-scale renewable energy projects. Clean Line Energy Partners, the Houston-based firm behind the Grain Belt Express, had a route rejected in Arkansas. Twice, Iowa denied its requests to decide upfront — before it begins acquiring easements — whether a proposed line leading to the outskirts of Chicago is in the public interest.

Other transmission lines for renewable energy also have experienced delays and denials:

—Arizona utility regulators rejected a request by Southern California Edison in 2007 to build a 270-mile line carrying power from a site west of Phoenix to Palm Springs, California. Utility company officials said it could have prompted development of new solar power in the desert, but Arizona regulators cited concerns that California's increased power draw could have led to higher rates for Arizonans.

—In January, after a more than six-year review, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management approved a right of way across federal land for the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project, a 515-mile line carrying wind power and solar power from central New Mexico to Arizona. But New Mexico's land commissioner has since slowed down the review for another permit needed for the \$2 billion project. SunZia also has a permit request pending in Arizona.

—Eight years after filing a right of way application with the Bureau of Land Management, organizers of the TransWest Express power line still are awaiting a decision on a 730-mile route that would carry electricity to the southwestern U.S. from a proposed 1,000-turbine wind farm in Wyoming.

TransWest Express president and chief executive Bill Miller originally hoped construction would begin in 2012. That goal already had been pushed back when the Obama administration in October 2011 picked the project as one of seven electrical lines nationally for review under a new "Rapid Response Team for Transmission."

But the federal approval process has been far from rapid.

"It's glacial in its pace," Miller said.

Lucas Lucero, the acting chief of the renewable energy office in the Bureau of Land Management, said federal officials have "been making steady progress" and could decide on the TransWest Express in early 2016. But he acknowledged such projects "definitely take time" to review and "have a number of challenges."

Chief among them is coordinating efforts among dozens of federal, state, county and tribal entities that have a stake in the power lines. Federal officials also have analyzed numerous alternate routes — considering the potential effect on wildlife habitat, culturally significant areas and the concerns of private landowners.

The nation's renewable energy goals potentially could be achieved more quickly if a single federal agency were given jurisdiction over interstate transmission lines. But Lucero said it's important that local officials have a say.

Many state laws were drafted to ensure consumers get the best possible service and rates from local electric monopolies. As Clean Line discovered, it can be difficult to prove the benefit for local residents of a commercial line carrying power primarily to other places.

The Arkansas Public Service Commission ruled in 2011 that Clean Line didn't qualify as a "public utility" under state law and thus could not build its Plains & Eastern transmission line carrying wind power from the Oklahoma Panhandle to Tennessee to be fed to the southeastern U.S.

Clean Line hasn't given up. It's now seeking approval for its Arkansas route from the U.S. Department of Energy, which has authority to approve new transmission lines in certain states where it already sells hydroelectric power from federally run dams. Arkansas' two U.S. senators are fighting back by holding up the confirmation of an Obama appointee to the Energy Department.

While rejecting Clean Line's Grain Belt Express earlier this year, the Missouri Public Service Commission looked primarily at whether the power line would benefit its home state, rather than the nation as a whole. The line would end near the Illinois-Indiana border, connecting to an existing grid extending all the way

to the East Coast.

Although Clean Line pledged to make a portion of its power available to Missouri, state regulators determined it was not needed to meet local demand nor the state's renewable energy requirements. Regulators also cited the burden on Missouri landowners, noting that most of the 7,200 comments it received were opposed to the project.

Now Clean Line is regrouping for another try in Missouri.

The project has placed McKeown in opposition to his friend and neighbor Wayne Wilcox, a county official who views power lines crossing his cornfields as important to both the local and national economy.

"We sit at a critical place," Wilcox said, pointing out that the Clean Line poles would cross his property near an existing transmission line from a coal-fired power plant, two oil pipelines and a natural gas pipeline.

But McKeown hasn't been persuaded by the six-figure contract he could sign with Clean Line, nor the potential benefit to residents several states to the east.

"I think (wind energy) is fine," he said. But "it doesn't make sense to me to have to transport it halfway across the United States. We're smarter than that."

Regime change debate creates unusual 2016 alliances

JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's 2016 presidential candidates are split on promoting regime change in the Middle East, but not along the usual party lines.

GOP contenders Donald Trump, Ted Cruz and Rand Paul are finding common cause with Democrats Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley in suggesting it's better to keep authoritarian leaders — including Syria's Bashar Assad — in power as a bulwark against extremism. Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton is aligned with Republican contenders Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush and Chris Christie in casting Assad's ouster as key to defeating the Islamic State.

The divide reflects a nation still grappling with its role in the world after President George W. Bush's eight years in office, when regime change was at the center of U.S. foreign policy, and trying to decide how best to combat the rising threat posed by IS. The twisted alliances among the candidates raise the prospect of a political role-reversal in the general election, in which the Democratic nominee could be more hawkish than the Republican.

Cruz is among the most vocal in challenging the idea that the U.S. should depose dictators — or support others' efforts to do so — to fight extremists in the Muslim world.

"We need to learn from history," Cruz said in last week's Republican debate. "Obama, Clinton and far too many Republicans want to topple Assad." The Syrian president is a "bad man," he added, but so too was Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, whom the U.S. helped overthrow in 2011. And Cruz noted that Gadhafi and former Egyptian strongman Hosni Mubarak assisted the U.S. "in fighting terrorists."

Sanders, the independent senator from Vermont, echoed that sentiment in Saturday's Democratic debate, saying it is "relatively easy for a powerful nation like America to overthrow a dictator." What is very hard, he said, is "to predict the unintended consequences and the turmoil and the instability that follows after you overthrow that dictator."

Much of the campaign discussion centers on Assad, who has presided over a nearly five-year civil war that's left at least 250,000 thousand people dead, spurred the worst refugee crisis in Europe since World War II and created a vacuum allowing Islamic State militants to seize territory throughout Syria and neighboring Iraq.

To some candidates in both parties, those are reasons enough to help groups on the ground in Syria remove the country's embattled leader from power.

Rubio, in an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation" Sunday, said the argument that the U.S. has no vested interest in Assad is wrong.

"Why are there hundreds of thousands of refugees destabilizing Europe, tens of thousands trying to come to America?" asked Rubio, a Florida senator.

He also defends the bombing campaign, authorized by President Barack Obama, which enabled Libyan

rebel forces to oust Gadhafi. Clinton, Obama's secretary of state at the time, was a leading proponent of the effort.

"If we had not joined with our European partners and our Arab partners to assist the people in Libya, you would be looking at Syria," Clinton said over the weekend, glossing over the North African country's own, volatile post-war reality replete with attacks and assassinations, rival militias competing for power and its own expanding IS threat.

Given Syria's current state, Clinton said the U.S. can't simply choose between defeating IS or Assad.

"The reason we are in the mess we're in, that ISIS has the territory it has, is because of Assad," said Clinton, using an acronym for the Islamic State.

The debate underscores how far the United States has moved since the Bush administration blended the promotion of American-style democracy with military campaigns, starting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many in the Middle East viewed the post-9/11 effort with animosity; after thousands of U.S. lives and hundreds of billions of dollars lost, most Americans eventually rejected it.

Obama has fulfilled a promise to not use large-scale ground operations to seek regime change. While he has called for autocrats to leave power in Egypt, Libya and Syria, his interventions in each case were limited.

Egypt's Mubarak was pushed from power at the height of the 2011 Arab Spring movement, which saw pro-democracy protests sprout throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Obama's public pressure on Mubarak built momentum for his departure, but the U.S. wasn't directly involved in orchestrating his exit.

In Libya, however, Obama joined NATO and Arab allies in a campaign that gave rebels cover to fight Gadhafi's forces, ultimately leading to his killing.

The U.S. initially cast Libya as a victory for democracy. Its troubles since contributed to Obama's aversion to taking similarly aggressive action against Assad, whom the U.S. leader first called on to leave in August 2011.

Instead, Obama has pursued diplomacy. Previous rounds have gone nowhere, though last week's U.N. Security Council resolution setting up talks between Assad's government and the opposition offered some new hope.

"When you have an authoritarian leader that is killing hundreds of thousands of his own people, the notion that we would just stand by and say nothing is contrary to who we are," Obama said last week.

But when asked whether Assad might still be in office when Obama leaves the White House in January 2017, the U.S. president sidestepped the question.

Small town Iowa students get Clinton to visit school

CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Using a savvy social media campaign, in-person pleas and pithy T-shirts, three Iowa high school students have successfully lobbied Hillary Clinton to visit their small town.

Clinton will appear Tuesday in Keota, a town of about a thousand people in southeast Iowa. The holiday season event caps a lengthy effort by Megan Adam, Abby Schulte and Kylea Tinnes, who sought to get Clinton to visit their school as a project for their sociology class.

The students' success shows their gumption and ambition, as well as the power of living in the leadoff caucus state, where presidential voting will begin Feb. 1.

"It's been amazing," said Adam, 17. "There's just three of us in the class. We're from a town in the middle of nowhere. That we can accomplish this."

Charged with doing a project to improve their community, state and nation, the girls sought to bring presidential candidates to Keota to talk about small towns. Republican Rick Santorum came first at their request and Democrat Martin O'Malley has also visited, but the focus has largely been on Clinton.

They dubbed the campaign "Keota Hopes For Hillary," creating a Twitter account to boost support. Local Clinton organizers helped out and in October the students donned matching shirts and hit the Democratic Jefferson-Jackson dinner in Des Moines where they invited Clinton on the rope line. Shortly after that, the teens attended a Clinton town hall in Coralville, where Adam asked a question and noted their group.

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"I'm coming. I'm coming to Keota. I am coming," Clinton said, later adding, "Anybody who can organize such a really well-planned effort to get me to visit, I think you deserve it."

The young people, attending a high school with about 80 students, want Clinton to address the problems facing rural schools in a time of declining population and limited funding. They stressed that the project was bipartisan — Adam plans to caucus as a Republican, while Schulte, 17, and Tinnes, 16, have been volunteering for Clinton. They hope to get some more Republicans to visit in January.

At events, the girls have been wearing T-shirts that say "Get Hillary To Visit Keota High School in Keota, IA." They've had new shirts printed for Tuesday, including one for Clinton. On the back, hers says "Madame President."

"My whole entire life, my mom and dad said you girls can do anything boys can do," Schulte said. "It's going to be so awesome when the glass ceiling breaks."

The students will introduce Clinton at the event. On top of that, Keota social studies teacher Schuyler Snakenberg said that when it comes to the sociology class, they are all "going to have an A."

Extreme weather poses increasing threat to US power grid

HOLBROOK MOHR, Associated Press

GARANACE BURKE, Associated Press

EDITOR'S NOTE _ Part a yearlong effort by The Associated Press and the Associated Press Media Editors, examining the state of America's infrastructure.

WAVELAND, Miss. (AP) — When Hurricane Katrina's punishing storm surge plowed ashore, it swamped seven of Coast Electric Power Association's substations, vital to powering thousands of Mississippi homes and businesses. The facilities have long since been repaired, but a decade after the storm they remain at the same elevation, and just as vulnerable to catastrophic hurricanes.

Such storms are a growing threat. An Associated Press analysis of industry data found that severe weather is the leading cause of major outages on the nation's power grid. The number of weather-related power outages has climbed over the last decade, with the greatest spikes in 2008 and 2011, according to the AP analysis and independent studies.

That leaves Coast Electric and other utilities across the country balancing customer costs with the need for improvements to counter the rising number of violent storms, floods and droughts threatening the U.S. power grid.

Katrina pummeled the Mississippi coast in August 2005, knocking out power to Coast Electric's entire coverage area.

Facing sweltering summer heat and \$110 million in damage, the small nonprofit cooperative focused on restoring power quickly, said vice president of engineering Scott Brown. The substations that flooded were repaired to pre-storm conditions — at the time, it would have been impractical to raise them or move them elsewhere.

"We're only a few feet above sea level right here," Brown said during a recent visit to a substation in the coastal town of Waveland.

Coast Electric made some major improvements post-Katrina, like elevating a new substation 18 feet above sea level. But raising the old substations that flooded would cost Coast's 68,160 customers millions of dollars, Brown said.

Several thousand companies own and manage the equipment that makes up the U.S. power grid, from small municipal utilities and cooperatives like Coast Electric to large investor-owned companies like New York's Consolidated Edison.

When Hurricane Irene hit the Northeast in 2011, it marked the first time that more than 200,000 Con Ed customers lost power from a storm. Superstorm Sandy struck 14 months later, followed by a devastating Nor'easter, leaving 1.1 million customers in the dark.

"It was clear to us that weather patterns were changing fundamentally. Severe weather events were

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becoming more frequent and devastating," Allan Drury, a Con Ed spokesman, said in an email.

Con Ed is spending \$1 billion to harden its system.

There are funds available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help utilities rebuild after catastrophes. The Mississippi cooperative received about \$100 million in FEMA public assistance grants, but the money allowed it only to repair the flooded substations to pre-storm conditions.

FEMA offered more funds that could have been used to raise the flooded substations, but the co-op did not apply — cost effectiveness assessments and environmental considerations would have taken too much time, Brown said, and delayed getting the lights back on.

Once the work began, Coast Electric could not change the terms of the grant, Brown said. So the seven substations swamped by Katrina remain at the same elevation.

Utilities in other parts of the country face different challenges.

Last year, regulators in drought-stricken California ordered the state's investor-owned utilities to set priorities for inspecting and removing dead and sick trees near their power lines, warning that "climate change has facilitated and exacerbated numerous wildfires" that have damaged and threatened their facilities. Utilities could ask the California Public Utilities Commission for additional funds to address wildfire threats, regulators said.

But after a wildfire killed two people, destroyed 475 homes and scorched 70,000 acres in the Sierra Nevada foothills in September, homeowners and their attorneys are asking whether San Francisco-based Pacific Gas & Electric Co. did enough to clear dry trees flanking its power lines.

Barry Anderson, a PG&E vice president, acknowledged in mid-September that the fire could have been sparked when a pine tree "may have contacted" a PG&E line.

More than 50 victims have sued PG&E and its tree-trimming contractors for property damage. One suit blames the companies for the death of an 82-year-old man.

PG&E spokesman Joe Molica said the company had spent \$260 million to prepare for extreme weather and drought.

State fire officials are still investigating the cause of the blaze.

Nationally, fragmented data collection makes it difficult to gauge whether utilities have adequately hardened their systems against more extreme weather. Many companies are not required to provide regulators with data related to how often outages occur or how long they last.

AP largely adopted the methodology used by independent research organization Climate Central to chart the latest growth in the number of weather-related outages. Climate Central's previous study, spanning 2003 to 2012, found weather-related outages were becoming much more frequent.

Today in History The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 22, the 356th day of 2015. There are nine days left in the year. This is the first full day of winter.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 22, 1965, "Doctor Zhivago," David Lean's epic film adaptation of the Boris Pasternak novel starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie, had its world premiere in New York.

On this date:

In 1775, Esek Hopkins was appointed the commander-in-chief of the Continental Navy.

In 1894, French army officer Alfred Dreyfus was convicted of treason in a court-martial that triggered worldwide charges of anti-Semitism. (Dreyfus was eventually vindicated.)

In 1910, a fire lasting more than 26 hours broke out at the Chicago Union Stock Yards; 21 firefighters were killed in the collapse of a burning building.

In 1937, the first, center tube of the Lincoln Tunnel connecting New York City and New Jersey beneath the Hudson River was opened to traffic. (The second tube opened in 1945, the third in 1957.)

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In 1940, author Nathanael West, 37, and his wife, Eileen McKenney, 27, were killed in a car crash in El Centro, California, while en route to the funeral of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who had died the day before.

In 1944, during the World War II Battle of the Bulge, U.S. Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe rejected a German demand for surrender, writing "Nuts!" in his official reply.

In 1968, Julie Nixon married David Eisenhower in a private ceremony in New York.

In 1977, three dozen people were killed when a 250-foot-high grain elevator at the Continental Grain Company plant in Westwego, Louisiana, exploded.

In 1989, Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu (chow-SHES'-koo), the last of Eastern Europe's hard-line Communist rulers, was toppled from power in a popular uprising. Playwright Samuel Beckett died in Paris at age 83.

In 1990, 21 sailors returning from shore leave to the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga drowned off Haifa when the Israeli ferry they were traveling on capsized. Lech Walesa (lek vah-WEN'-sah) took the oath of office as Poland's first popularly elected president.

In 1995, actress Butterfly McQueen, who'd played the scatterbrained slave Prissy in "Gone with the Wind," died in Augusta, Georgia, at age 84.

In 2001, Richard C. Reid, a passenger on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami, tried to ignite explosives in his shoes, but was subdued by flight attendants and fellow passengers. (Reid is serving a life sentence in federal prison.)

Ten years ago: Congress completed work on a one-month extension of the Patriot Act and sent it to President George W. Bush. New York transit workers ended their three-day strike without a new contract. Astronomers announced the discovery of two more rings encircling the planet Uranus.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama signed a law allowing gays for the first time in history to serve openly in America's military, repealing the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. The Senate ratified the New START treaty with Russia capping nuclear warheads for both nations and restarting on-site weapons inspections. Auburn's Cam Newton was named AP Player of the Year. "The Lone Ranger" announcer Fred Foy died in Woburn, Massachusetts, at age 89.

One year ago: North Korea experienced sweeping Internet outages for hours before coming back online; the White House and the State Department refused to say whether the U.S. government was responsible. Singer Joe Cocker, 70, died in Crawford, Colorado. Actress Christine Cavanaugh, the voice of "Babe" the pig, died in Cedar City, Utah, at age 51.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Hector Elizondo is 79. Country singer Red Steagall is 77. Former World Bank Group President Paul Wolfowitz is 72. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Steve Carlton is 71. Former ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer is 70. Rock singer-musician Rick Nielsen (Cheap Trick) is 67. Rock singer-musician Michael Bacon is 67. Baseball All-Star Steve Garvey is 67. Golfer Jan Stephenson is 64. Actress BernNadette Stanis is 62. Rapper Luther "Luke" Campbell is 55. Country singer-musician Chuck Mead is 55. Actor Ralph Fiennes is 53. Actress Lauralee Bell is 47. Country singer Lori McKenna is 47. Actress Dina Meyer is 47. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, is 45. Actress Heather Donahue is 42. Actor Chris Carmack is 35. Actor Logan Huffman is 26. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jordin Sparks is 26. Pop singer Meghan Trainor is 22.

Thought for Today: "Winter is not a season, it's an occupation." - Sinclair Lewis, American author (1885-1951).