

# Groton Daily Independent

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**Missing one red male lab Buddy and one black female lab Lucy. Call Franne Sippel 397-7949 or Marc 397-7950.**

## Friday, January 1, 2016

No School

New Year's Day

**Anniv:** Kevin & Sharolyn Jondahl

**Birthdays:** Lauren Harrison, Patricia Larson, Stephen Duncan, Tyler Kolb.

## Saturday, January 2, 2016

**Anniv:** Jeff & Lisa Howard

**Birthdays:** Briana Nordine, Holly Walter, Kara Anderson.

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

## Sunday, January 3, 2016

**Birthdays:** Bob Walter, Caroline Graf, Jolene Siders, Tanner Waage, Vicki Podoll

9:00am: Emmanuel Lutheran School

9:00am: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass

9:00am: St. John's Lutheran Worship with Communion

9:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Fellowship

10:00am: Heaven Bound Ministries worship at Pierpont Church

10:00am: St. John's Lutheran School

10:15am: Emmanuel Lutheran worship with baptism and communion

11:00am: United Methodist Church Worship

3:00pm: JK-8th Grade Open Gym

5:00pm: 6th-12th Open Gym

## Monday, January 4, 2016

**School Breakfast:** Cereal, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

**School Lunch:** Pizza cruncher, mixed veggies, carrots and dip, fruit.

**Senior Menu:** Spaghetti with meat sauce, broccoli, garlic toast, sherbet.

**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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## **Back to Work**

**By Rep. Kristi Noem**

There's something so energizing about flipping the calendar from December to January. It's a fresh start, a new beginning, a clean slate. I'm heading back to Congress this year with a renewed optimism as well. We have a lot of work to do, but I'm hopeful we have momentum moving in our direction.

Truth be told, we're going to need every bit of that momentum we can get. 2015 concluded with a heightened sense of unease about our national security – and rightfully so. As we return, this is an issue that will need to be addressed. I firmly believe the President, as Commander in Chief, has a responsibility to put forth a comprehensive plan to defeat and destroy ISIL. Doing so is the most effective way to keep terrorism off U.S. soil. Congress also must continue to ensure our military has the tools and resources it needs to be successful, while closing any security loopholes that may exist in federal law. That is going to be at the top of my agenda in 2016.

Addressing the President's health care law will be another area of focus during the first part of 2016. Speaker Paul Ryan has already announced that the House, in coordination with the Senate, plans to place legislation on the President's desk in the coming weeks that repeals the core tenants of Obamacare, including the individual and employer mandates. This last December, thousands of South Dakotans saw their health care costs skyrocket. I have supported and will continue to support the repeal of Obamacare, but until we can achieve a full repeal, I will do what I can to incrementally lift the burden for South Dakota families.

We are also working very hard on efforts to keep the Hot Springs VA Hospital open and fully staffed and operational. In late-2015, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released an Environmental Impact Statement on a plan to close the VA facility in Hot Springs. From now until February 5, the VA will be accepting public comments. I encourage everyone impacted by this proposal to let their voice be heard. For my part, I have reached out to the VA Secretary directly, urging him not only to settle on a solution that will work for all involved – especially our veterans – but also to visit Hot Springs before making a determination about the hospital's future. Those who have served deserve nothing less.

The reality is that these topics are just the tip of the iceberg. We have a lot of work to do because our country is facing a lot of big issues today. I'm determined to find real solutions and produce the milestones that you seek and deserve.

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## GROTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

**January 4, 2016 - 7pm**  
**Groton Community Center**

- 1) Minutes
- 2) Financial Report
- 3) Bills
- 4) Department Reports – Herron, Lambertz
- 5) Recognize Employees and Volunteers
- 6) 2nd Reading Ordinance No. 703- Snow Removal
- 7) Legislative Day – Pierre – Feb 2-3
- 8) Exe Session – Legal or Personnel

### **South Dakota's Gas Price Average at \$1.96** **National Gas Price Still Hovering Near \$2 Per Gallon**

Dec. 29, 2015 – South Dakota's average price for regular gasoline today is \$1.962, according to AAA South Dakota, two cents below last week, and 13 cents lower than one month ago.

New Year's travelers in the state will be enjoying the lowest statewide average price for this date in six years.

- 12-29-15 - \$1.96 (per gallon of self-serve regular gasoline)
- 12-29-14 - \$2.20
- 12-29-13 - \$3.13
- 12-29-12 - \$3.17
- 12-29-11 - \$3.22
- 12-29-10 - \$3.04
- 12-29-09 - \$2.59

"The impact of the U.S. removing its decades-old ban on crude oil exports has narrowed the difference between West Texas International crude oil and Brent prices," said Marilyn Buskohl, spokeswoman for AAA South Dakota. "WTI lost \$1.29 on the NYMEX yesterday, closing at \$36.81. Leading into 2016, pump prices are expected to continue to slide with supply outpacing demand. "

Drivers nationwide paid the lowest averages for the Christmas holiday since 2008 The U.S. pump price average continues to hover around the \$2 benchmark, four cents below where it stood one month ago and 29 cents less than the price a year ago.

	Today	Last Week	Change	Dec. 1	Change	Last year
<b>Aberdeen</b>	\$2.036	\$2.049	-\$0.013	\$2.144	-\$0.108	\$2.187
<b>Brookings</b>	\$1.944	\$2.014	-\$0.070	\$2.124	-\$0.180	\$2.219
<b>Huron</b>	\$2.074	\$2.114	-\$0.040	\$2.032	\$0.042	\$2.189
<b>Mitchell</b>	\$1.937	\$1.971	-\$0.034	\$2.015	-\$0.078	\$2.088
<b>Pierre</b>	\$2.045	\$2.112	-\$0.067	\$2.279	-\$0.234	\$2.249
<b>Rapid City</b>	\$2.082	\$2.087	-\$0.005	\$2.275	-\$0.193	\$2.380
<b>Sioux Falls</b>	\$1.760	\$1.788	-\$0.028	\$1.878	-\$0.118	\$2.029
<b>Vermillion</b>	\$1.852	\$1.826	\$0.026	\$1.966	-\$0.114	\$2.187
<b>Watertown</b>	\$1.857	\$1.936	-\$0.079	\$2.049	-\$0.192	\$2.200
<b>Yankton</b>	\$2.021	\$2.013	\$0.008	\$2.201	-\$0.180	\$2.308
<b>South Dakota</b>	\$1.962	\$1.984	-\$0.022	\$2.113	-\$0.151	\$2.207

Gas prices typically fall during this time of year as demand for gasoline decreases, and many motorists will remember the fourth quarter of 2014 when U.S. pump averages tumbled from \$3.33 on October 1 to \$2.26 on New Year's Eve. Today, the majority of states (32) are posting averages below \$2 per gallon.



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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](http://Schwans-Cares.com)  
or call 1-855-870-7208



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## Today in Weather History

January 1, 1960: The winter storm began on New Year's Eve as a low pressure center moved from Colorado northeast to the Great Lakes. Snowfall ranged from 5 to 10 inches across central and northeast South Dakota. Strong winds on the 1st and 2nd caused low visibilities and drifted highways over affecting holiday travel. There were scattered power and telephone outages due to breakage from wind and ice. The storm winded down in the afternoon of the 2nd.

1864 - Snow, gales and severe cold hit the Midwest. It was the most bitter cold New Year's day of record with afternoon highs of 16 below zero at Chicago IL and 25 below at Minneapolis MN. (David Ludlum)

1934 - Heavy rain which began on December 30th led to flooding in the Los Angeles Basin area of California. Flooding claimed the lives of at least 45 persons. Walls of water and debris up to ten feet high were noted in some canyon areas. Rainfall totals ranged up to 16.29 inches at Azusa, with 8.26 inches reported in Downtown Los Angeles. (The Weather Channel)

1949 - A six day blizzard began over the Northern Rockies and the Great Plains. The storm produced the most adverse weather conditions in the history of the west. (David Ludlum)

1979 - The temperature at Maybell CO plunged to 60 degrees below zero to tie the state record set back in 1951 at Taylor Park. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm brought rain and snow and high winds to the Southern and Middle Atlantic Coast Region. The storm, which occurred in a period of unusually high astronomical tides, produced a tide of 9.4 feet at Myrtle Beach SC (their highest since Hurricane Hazel in 1954) which caused a total of 25 million dollars damage in South Carolina. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Arctic cold gripped the north central U.S. The morning low of 31 degrees below zero at Alamosa CO was a record for the date. Squalls in the Great Lakes Region produced 17 inches of snow at Elmira NY. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Those who woke up New Year's morning unable to see much farther than the end of their nose had a good excuse, at least in the central U.S., as dense fog prevailed from Texas to Wisconsin. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - The new year and decade began on a rather peaceful note. Snow was primarily confined to the Great Lakes Region, the Upper Ohio Valley, and the Sierra Nevada Range of California. Subzero temperature readings were confined to Minnesota and North Dakota. (National Weather Summary)

1994 - Strong winds along the eastern slopes of the Central Rockies gusted to 70 mph at Arlington WY, and gusted to 80 mph near Estes Park CO. Heavy snow in the northeast mountains of Oregon produced 14 inches at Tollgate. A series of storms the first three days of the year produced 20 inches of snow at Lowman, in the west central mountains of Idaho. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1997 - Heavy precipitation fell from December 26, 1996 to January 3, 1997 in much of the west. In the California Sierra Nevadas the Truckee River reached its highest level on record. Lake Tahoe reached its highest level since 1917. Sacramento was spared the worst of the flooding by a system of levees, although many nearby towns were not so fortunate. Numerous levee breaches and breaks occurred across the state. Approximately 16,000 residences were damaged or destroyed. State officials estimated at least \$1.6 billion in damages to private and public property.


1999 - A major blizzard struck portions of the Midwest on January 1-3, 1999. The storm produced 22 inches of snow in Chicago and was rated by the NWS as the second worst blizzard of the 20th century, ranking behind the blizzard in January 1967. Estimates of losses and recovery costs are between \$0.3 and \$0.4 billion with 73 dead as a result of the blizzard. (NCDC)



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Today	Tonight	New Year's Day	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Scattered Flurries	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Clear	Sunny
High: 21 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 26 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 27 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 23 °F

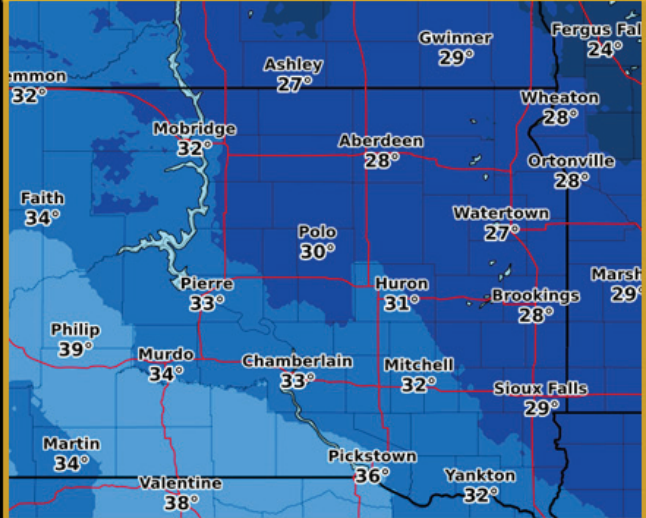


## Mild Start




# To 2016





### Today



### Weather Headlines

- 
*Today:* Gusty west winds, especially along I29 between Summit and Sisseton.
- 
*Warmer:* Temps in the mid 20s to mid 30s today & Saturday
- 
*Above Normal Temps:* Slightly cooler Sun & Mon, but still above normal through next week

[weather.gov/Aberdeen](http://weather.gov/Aberdeen)
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Published on: 01/01/2016 at 5:01AM

Gusty westerly winds will transport warmer air into the region today. Stronger winds in the Sisseton Hills region will also promote minor drifting of snow across roadways, including the stretch of I-29 between Summit and Sisseton. The warm temperatures continue through Saturday, and while a slight cool down is expected Sunday & Monday, overall temperatures will be above normal through much of next week.

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## Yesterday's Weather

**High:** 21.9 at 2:26 PM

**Low:** 7.1 at 12:32 AM

**High Gust:** 22 at 3:39 PM

Precip: 0.0

## Today's Info

**Record High:** 53° in 1998

**Record Low:** -30° in 1919

**Average High:** 22°F

**Average Low:** 2°F

**Average Precip in Dec.:** 0.52

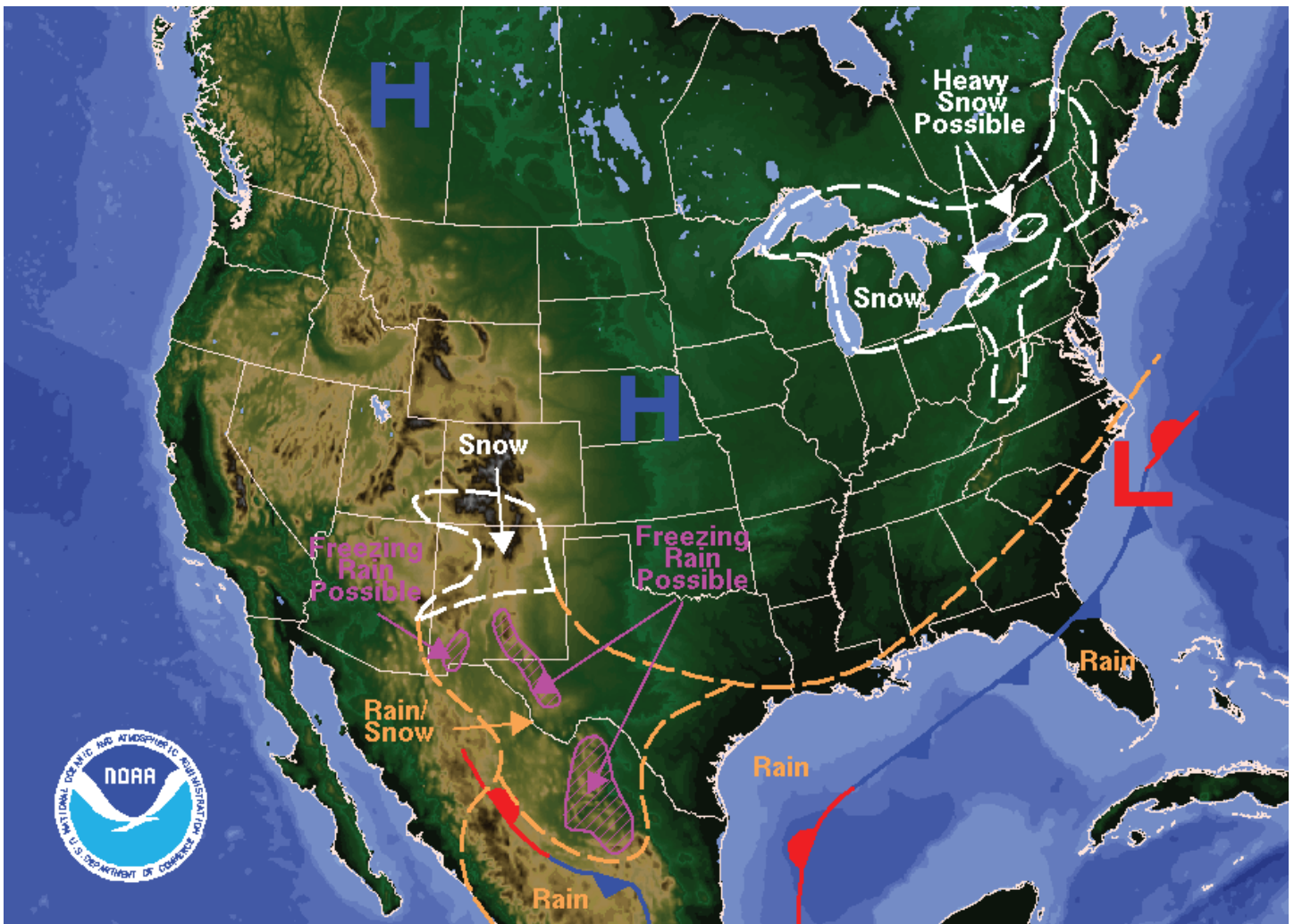
**Precip to date in Dec.:** 0.98

**Average Precip to date:** 21.72

**Precip Year to Date:** 20.80

**Sunset Tonight:** 5:00 p.m.

**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 8:13 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Jan 01, 2016, issued 3:29 AM EST  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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## YOUR BEST YEAR EVER!

God's Word is the very best guide available if we want to know what we can do to make 2016 our best year ever. Here's the plan:

**Experience God's Pardon.** As we begin our journey into another year, God provides us with an opportunity to "begin again." We read in John's lovely little letter, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us from all of our sins." Others talk of being free from the past, only God makes it possible and gives us a clean slate.

**Enjoy God's Presence.** He encourages us with these timeless words: "Fear not, for I am with you!" With His Spirit to empower us, His angels to protect us, His Word to guide us and His arms around us, we have all that we need to face every challenge knowing that the victory can be ours if we take Him at His Word.

**Engage God's Power.** He promises that "I – the Creator and Sustainer of the universe – will strengthen you!" For every sickness He will give us His healing. For every problem He will give us His solution. For every question He will give us His answer. For every doubt He will increase our faith. And in the darkest hour He will provide us with His light to lead us.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we stand before You and the days to come in faith believing that You will honor Your words of hope and help as we trust in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

**Scripture for Today:** Isaiah 41:10 fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.



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## News from the Associated Press

### Jackley warns South Dakotans about email hacking scam

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Attorney General Marty Jackley is warning South Dakota residents about a scam that is targeting people's email accounts.

Jackley says the scammers are hacking the email accounts in an attempt to obtain personal information or money from the account holders. He says the state's Consumer Protection Division has received complaints from South Dakotans who confirmed that their email accounts had been hacked.

In one incident, the hacker used the victim's email account to communicate with the victim's bank to try to transfer money.

Jackley says anyone with an email account is vulnerable to identity theft. He says consumers need to be proactive in protecting and monitoring their email account and personal information.

He suggests frequently changing passwords and security questions, always logging out from accounts and enabling authentication features.

### Sioux Falls bicyclists to brave cold for New Year's Day Ride

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Temperatures aren't expected to reach above 25 degrees on Friday, but cyclists in Sioux Falls still plan to take to the streets.

Chad Pickard of the Spoke-N-Sport bicycle shop says the 29th annual New Year's Day Ride will help build awareness for the Center of Hope and help fund its Bike to Work Ministry program.

A police escort will lead the riders from Spoke-N-Sport to Falls Park, and the cyclists will return to the shop via the city's bike trail. Chili and hot chocolate will be served after the ride.

The ride begins at 1 p.m.

## Thursday's Scores The Associated Press

### BOYS' BASKETBALL

Lennox 72, Centerville 38  
Pine Ridge 65, Lower Brule 59  
Red Cloud 79, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 65  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 59, Rapid City Stevens 53  
Entringer Classic (Brookings)  
Castlewood 48, Deubrook 45  
Chester 59, DeSmet 52  
Colman-Egan 44, Arlington 38  
Deuel 47, Estelline 36  
Elkton-Lake Benton 47, Garretson 34  
Hamlin 62, Lake Preston 25  
Madison 61, Flandreau 38  
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 50, Dell Rapids St. Mary 36  
Sioux Valley 64, Dell Rapids 61  
Marshall Tournament (SMSU)  
Marshall, Minn. 58, Sioux Falls Lincoln 45

### GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 82, Red Cloud 72  
Pine Ridge 66, Lower Brule 29  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 59, Rapid City Stevens 53

## 25-year-old woman killed when pickup crashes near Sturgis

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a 25-year-old woman was killed when she lost control of the pickup truck she was driving on a snow-covered and icy highway two miles west of Sturgis.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol says the woman was heading east on Interstate 90 just after 9 a.m. Thursday when the truck entered the median and overturned. The patrol says the woman, who was not wearing a seat belt, was ejected from the truck and died. Her name is being withheld pending notification of relatives.

Weather conditions at the time included blowing snow.

The crash remains under investigation.

## Police: Wife charged with stabbing husband after dispute

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police in Sioux Falls say a wife is accused of stabbing her husband in the chest after an argument.

Lt. Dave McIntire says officers were called to their home just after 1 a.m. Thursday. He says the couple was having an argument over a television, and the 24-year-old woman went outside to damage the husband's car.

McIntire says that when the husband tried to stop his wife from scratching his vehicle with a knife, she stabbed him once in the chest. The 30-year-old man called police and was taken to a hospital with life-threatening injuries.

Mirna Leticia Bolvito was arrested on a charge of aggravated domestic. Attorney information for Bolvito was not immediately available.

## Texas, New Mexico producers lose more than 30K dairy cows

**BETSY BLANEY, Associated Press**

LUBBOCK, Texas (AP) — Dairy producers in West Texas and eastern New Mexico are continuing to assess how many animals died in the winter storm last weekend, but the number will probably climb to more than 30,000, an official with a dairy group said Thursday.

Texas Association of Dairymen executive director Darren Turley said an estimated 15,000 mature dairy cows died in the storm's primary impact area — from Lubbock west to Muleshoe and north to Friona which is home to half of the state's top-10 milk producing counties and produces 40 percent of the state's milk.

An agent with New Mexico State University's extension service told Turley the area around Clovis, New Mexico, lost an estimated 20,000 dairy cows.

The number of younger animals killed by Winter Storm Goliath in each state could be just as high as the mature cows, he said.

There will be less milk coming from the region for a while, Turley said,

The snow was just one part of Goliath. It was the wind that led to drifts as high as 14 feet, where many animals died. Wind will push animals into a fenced corner where they can suffocate in snow drifts.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime (storm)," Turley said. "It's a bad deal for producers."

The losses will affect production for about year, he said.

During the storm dairy employees and tanker trucks from reaching farms. Hundreds of loads of milk ready for processing were wasted. Some cows normally milked twice a day went almost two days without being milked, which dries up the cows' milk supply, Turley said.

"The ripples from that are going to depend on how fast those animals' milk production comes back," Turley said.

The Texas producers are working with state environmental officials to find ways to dispose of the carcasses. Some counties are allowing producers to put carcasses in their landfills.

Andle van der Ploeg, owner of Mid-Frisian Dairy near Clovis, said Thursday that he lost just 10 animals, but feels great sympathy for producers he knows who lost hundreds of milk cows.

"It was unbelievable," he said.

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## **SD Supreme Court questions judge's procedures during trial**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has refused to reverse the conviction of a man charged with raping three minors, but the justices questioned some of the circuit judge's procedures during the trial.

The high court said Judge Jeff Davis improperly left his 7th Circuit courtroom while the jury watched videos of two of the victims' forensic interviews in the trial of Joseph Arguello.

The justices also noted in their opinion released Thursday that Davis failed to fully and regularly admonish the jury at each recess and adjournment. The court says he gave a full admonition on the first day of trial but used phrases such as "remember the recess admonition" during subsequent recesses.

The justices say neither issue prompts a reversal.

A message left for Davis was not immediately returned.

## **Down to wire: Vikings and Packers meet for NFC North title**

**GENARO C. ARMAS, AP Sports Writer**

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Unofficially, the playoffs start on Sunday for the Minnesota Vikings and Green Bay Packers.

Sure, border state bragging rights are on the line again in the regular-season finale. Another rushing title is within the grasp of Minnesota's Adrian Peterson. Aaron Rodgers has one more shot to tune up the sluggish Green Bay offense.

This is all overshadowed, naturally, by a bigger priority for both teams: The winner claims the NFC North title and the right to host a home playoff game the following weekend.

"We haven't had the same type of stats that we've had in years past, but we've rattled off 10 wins, another playoff berth," Rodgers said. "At this point, it's all about winning games and making a run in the playoffs."

That's something the Packers (10-5) are used to doing. Even with all their issues on offense — from injuries to the inconsistencies with both the run and pass — they can still win a fifth straight division title.

The upstart Vikings (10-5) want to end that reign in the game that was switched to prime time. They're looking for their first NFC North crown since 2009.

"It would be great, but we have to go out there and prove it. We can't talk about it," quarterback Teddy Bridgewater said.

They're on a pretty good run heading into Lambeau Field, having beaten the Bears and Giants at home in their previous two games by a combined score of 87-34. Before those two games, they lost 23-20 at Arizona, the same team that blew out the Packers last weekend, 38-8.

Bridgewater has been a difference maker with a 123.2 passer rating in that three-game stretch. The Vikings have bounced back since an embarrassing 38-7 loss at home to Seattle on Dec. 6.

"Yeah, it's definitely a different team," Bridgewater said. "It's a group of guys that don't want another Seattle performance to happen again."

The Packers are also 2-1 over their last three games, but their last game might have been their "Seattle moment" after getting bullied by Arizona.

"We've got to put that one behind us," receiver James Jones said. "We're on to Minnesota and let's get on playing some football."

Other notes and things to watch about Sunday night's game:

**RUNNING MAN:** Entering Week 17, Peterson had a 64-yard edge on Tampa's Doug Martin for the league rushing lead. The Buccaneers play Carolina on Sunday afternoon, so Peterson should know how many yards, if any, he needs to win his third career rushing title.

This is not a given either; the Packers held Peterson to 45 yards on 13 carries in Green Bay's 30-13 win at Minnesota on Nov. 22.

**ON THE LINE:** Rodgers was sacked eight times last week by Arizona, with the Cardinals front overwhelming a battered Packers offensive line. All five starters were on the injury report this week, including left tackle David Bakhtiari, who missed the Cardinals game with an ankle injury.



Right tackle Bryan Bulaga did return to practice after leaving the Arizona game with his own ankle injury. Fullback John Kuhn, a trusted blocker, has been playing more of late.

The Vikings are tied for ninth in the league with 38 sacks, nine coming in the last two games.

**BALANCING ACT:** The Packers are at their best when there is balance on offense. It was the formula for their most impressive win of the second half of the season, the 17-point victory in Minnesota when they ran and passed 34 times each.

Running back Eddie Lacy has averaged 107 yards rushing on 23 carries in five career games against Minnesota. His bullish style seems perfectly suited for cold-weather football, as long as the offensive line is healthy enough to create rushing lanes.

**JUST FOR KICKS:** Vikings-Packers have all the makings of a down-to-the wire game, which means it might come down to the kickers. There will be a pair of good ones playing Sunday night in Minnesota's Blair Walsh and Green Bay's Mason Crosby.

Walsh was the NFC special teams player of the week after going 5 for 5 on field goals last week. Crosby has hit 84 percent of his field goals this season, including 4 of 5 from 50 yards or longer.

**TOTAL RECALL:** The Vikings under second-year coach Mike Zimmer aren't used to this kind of late-season pressure. The Packers thrive in these situations, having won the previous two NFC North times with final-game wins over Chicago (2013) and Detroit (2014).

## Game biologist says pheasants available for season's finale

**DIRK LAMMERS, Associated Press**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's top pheasant biologist says hunters should still find plenty of roosters in fields this weekend as the state wraps up its 2015 pheasant hunting season.

Travis Runia, upland game biologist with the Game, Fish and Parks Department, said officials won't have harvest numbers until April or May, but hunters have been reporting better luck this year and GF&P expects the harvest to surpass last year's.

South Dakota's pheasant season, which opened Oct. 17, comes to a close on Sunday.

"This last weekend can be really good hunting, with the birds kind of grouped up in the heavier cover such as cattails," Runia said. "And the weather doesn't look too bad for hunting."

Brood counts in 2015 estimated a 42 percent jump in the number of birds for the season. The pheasants-per-mile index came in at 3.8, up from 2.68 in 2014 and 1.52 in 2013. This 2015 index is similar to 2011, when hunters bagged 1.56 million birds.

Although the eastern Sioux Falls area has been bombarded with snow in recent weeks, the state's prime pheasant country from Aberdeen through Huron down to Mitchell is having a somewhat typical winter, Runia said. Mild winters with minimal snow cover help pheasants find nesting ground to reproduce.

"We typically see the winter survival of pheasants higher when the ground's brown versus when the ground is white," Runia said.

After dealing with severe drought through much of 2013, South Dakota appears to be in good shape for moisture heading into 2016. The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook from the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center shows no areas of concern in the state through March 31. The latest U.S. Drought Monitor shows just a handful of areas in South Dakota listed for "abnormally dry" conditions.

"Being that we're not in a drought, we'd expect a little bit taller residual grass going into spring, which would be favorable for pheasants," Runia said.

Pheasant numbers tend to fluctuate year to year based on weather, but adequate habitat is also important.

National conservation group Pheasants Forever in 2014 opened a regional headquarters office in the South Dakota city of Brookings to address substantial habitat losses and land use changes over the years that have resulted in a dramatic decline in pheasant numbers.

## Obama says he'll meet with attorney general on gun options

KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — President Barack Obama will meet Monday with Attorney General Loretta Lynch to discuss executive actions he could take to make it harder for “a dangerous few” to get their hands on guns.

Obama said on his weekly radio address that he gets so many letters from parents, teachers and children about the “epidemic of gun violence” that he can’t “sit around and do nothing.”

“The gun lobby is loud and well organized in its defense of effortlessly available guns for anyone,” Obama said. “The rest of us are going to have to be just as passionate and well organized in our defense of our kids.”

Obama recently directed staff at the White House to look into potential executive actions, such as expanding background checks.

Currently, federally licensed firearms dealers are required to seek background checks on potential firearm purchasers. But advocacy groups say some of the people who sell firearms at gun shows are not federally licensed, increasing the chance of sales to customers prohibited by law from purchasing guns.

A source familiar with the administration’s efforts said Obama is expected to take executive action next week that would set a “reasonable threshold” for when sellers have to seek a background check. That person didn’t know whether it would be based on the number of guns sold or revenue generated through gun sales.

The source, a member of a gun control advocacy group, was not authorized to discuss details before the announcement and spoke on condition of anonymity. White House officials won’t confirm the timing.

Obama is in Hawaii for his annual holiday vacation with his family.

In his efforts to work around a Congress that has often been politically gridlocked, Obama has made aggressive use of executive power, particularly on immigration. It has been an increasingly effective and politically accepted presidential tool. And while legal scholars are divided on whether Obama has accelerated or merely continued a drift of power toward the executive branch, there’s little debate that he’s paved a path for his successor.

Depending on who succeeds him, many Obama backers could rue the day they cheered his “pen-and-phone” campaign to get past Republican opposition in Congress. The unilateral steps he took to raise environmental standards and ease the threat of deportation for millions of immigrants in the U.S. illegally may serve as precedent for moves they won’t cheer.

The National Rifle Association opposes expanded background check systems. The organization’s Institute for Legislative Action says studies have shown that people sent to state prison because of gun crimes typically get guns through theft, the black market or family and friends.

Also, many purchases by criminals are made from straw purchasers who pass background checks. “No amount of background checks can stop these criminals,” says the group’s website.

Obama has consistently expressed frustration after mass shootings, saying it shouldn’t be so easy for somebody who wants to inflict harm on other people to get his or her hands on a gun.

Going into his final year in office, Obama said his New Year’s resolution is to move forward on unfinished business.

“That’s especially true for one piece of unfinished business, that’s our epidemic of gun violence,” Obama said in his weekly address.

He said a bipartisan bill from three years ago requiring background checks for virtually everyone had huge support, including among a majority of NRA households. But the Senate blocked it.

He said tens of thousands of Americans have since died as a result of gun violence.

“Each time, we’re told that commonsense reforms like background checks might not have stopped the last massacre, or the one before that, so we shouldn’t do anything,” he said. “We know that we can’t stop every act of violence. But what if we tried to stop even one?”

## Despite fears and huge Dubai fire, New Year revelry rolls on

**SYLVIE CORBET, Associated Press**  
**KRISTEN GELINEAU, Associated Press**  
**JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press**

On a New Year's Eve haunted by fears of terrorism, a spectacular fire in one of Dubai's tall towers captured the world's attention. With few exceptions, the celebrations rolled on, and while fire still raged, the Dubai Media office declared on Twitter: "New Year celebrations in Dubai will continue as scheduled."

As 2015 drew to a close, many people were bidding a weary and wary adieu to a year marred by attacks that left nations reeling and nerves rattled.

In Bangkok, site of a deadly bombing months ago, police flanked partygoers. In Paris, residents recovering from their city's own deadly attacks enjoyed scaled-back celebrations. And in Munich, police warned of the threat of a terror attack.

A look at how people around the world welcomed the new year:

### UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In the megacity of Dubai, a fire broke out two hours before midnight in The Address hotel, in the area where a massive fireworks display was being prepared.

The five-star hotel is near the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. At least one person suffered a heart attack from the smoke and over-crowding during evacuation, and 14 suffered minor injuries.

Organizers said the Burj Khalifa had been fitted with 400,000 LED lights and 1.6 tons of fireworks would be used in the display.

Burning debris rained down from The Address building as fire trucks raced to the scene. It was unclear what caused the fire, which ran up the 63-story building. The Address has 626 luxury apartments and 196 hotel rooms, according to Skyscraper Center, which tracks skyscrapers.

### FRANCE

The French are still recovering from the Nov. 13 attacks that left 130 people dead in Paris, and authorities prepared for a possible worst-case scenario on New Year's Eve. About 60,000 police officers and troops were deployed across the country, and revelers said that made them feel safer.

French President Francois Hollande used his traditional New Year's Eve speech to warn that the terrorist threat is still at its "highest level."

"2015 has been a year of suffering and resistance," he said. "Let's make 2016 a year of courage and hope."

Paris canceled its usual fireworks display in favor of a 5-minute video performance at the Arc de Triomphe just before midnight, relayed on screens along the Champs Elysee, where people chanted.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo said the show was aimed at "sending the world the message that Paris is standing, proud of its lifestyle and living together."

### THAILAND

Less than six months after a pipe bomb killed 20 people at the Erawan Shrine in Bangkok, tens of thousands of people rang in the new year at the intersection with live music and a countdown.

Up to 5,000 police officers were in the area, with explosive ordnance disposal experts sweeping the area ahead of time.

### MALAYSIA

Security was beefed up in Malaysia's biggest city, Kuala Lumpur, where fireworks greeted the new year at a historic square and at the Petronas Twin Towers, one of the world's tallest buildings.

### PHILIPPINES

Concern in the Philippines on New Year's Eve focused on the use of illegal fireworks, which last year injured more than 850 people. Shopping malls and cities organized fireworks displays to discourage people



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from lighting their own firecrackers.

An annual procession of the Black Nazarene, a black wooden statue of Jesus Christ, was held a day earlier than usual Thursday to prevent injuries from mounds of trash and unexploded firecrackers that litter Manila's streets after New Year's revelries.

## JAPAN

New Year's Eve is Japan's biggest holiday, and millions of people crammed into trains to flee the cities for their hometowns to slurp down bowls of noodles, symbolizing longevity, while watching the annual "Red and White" song competition on television. As midnight approached, families bundled up for visits to neighborhood temples, where the ritual ringing of huge bronze bells reverberated through the chill.

Tokyo was on special alert for security issues, with posters in subways and other public spaces warning people to keep their eyes open for suspicious packages or activities.

## KOREAS

South Koreans marked New Year's Eve with traditional bell ringing ceremonies, fireworks and outdoor music and dance performances. One celebration was organized at a town near the border with rival North Korea to watch one of the ceremonies and wish for peaceful Korean unification.

## VATICAN CITY

In the final hours of 2015, Pope Francis encouraged humanity to hang on to recollections of good deeds so that gestures of goodness can be seen triumphing over evil.

Francis presided over a year's end prayer service Thursday evening in St. Peter's Basilica, where he mused about how people are sometimes driven by "insatiable thirst for power and by gratuitous violence." He said it was impossible to forget "so many days marked by violence, by death, by the unspeakable suffering of so many innocents."

## NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand, the first nation with a sizable population to celebrate the New Year, counted down the seconds to midnight with a giant digital clock on Auckland's landmark Sky Tower. Horns blared and crowds cheered as the tower was lit up with fireworks, with colors shifting from green to red to white.

## AUSTRALIA

Simultaneous fireworks displays erupted along Sydney's famed harbor, where people crowded onto balconies, into waterside parks and onto boats as they jockeyed for the best view, clinking glasses and whooping with joy as the first pyrotechnics exploded.

More than 1 million people had been expected to watch the glittery display, featuring a multicolored fireworks waterfall cascading off the Sydney Harbour Bridge and effects in the shapes of butterflies, octopuses and flowers.

## CHINA

An official New Year's Eve celebration was staged near Beijing's Forbidden City with performances and fireworks, and one of China's most popular TV stations broadcast a gala from the National Stadium, known to most as the iconic Bird's Nest.

For safety reasons, Shanghai closed subway stations near the scenic waterfront Bund, mindful of a stampede last New Year's Eve that killed 36 people and blemished the image of China's most prosperous metropolis.

## GAZA STRIP

Gaza's Islamist Hamas rulers banned New Year celebrations in the Palestinian coastal enclave. Police

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spokesman Ayman Batniji said hotels and restaurants were allowed to hold parties a day earlier or a day later.

"Celebrating the new year contradicts the instructions of Islamic religion," Batniji said. "It's a Western custom that we don't accept in Gaza."

## EGYPT

In Cairo, people put aside fears of the growing number of militant attacks throughout the country to celebrate the new year. Engineering graduate Mohamed Youssef, whose military service begins in a few months, attended a house party.

"It doesn't matter if they deploy me to Sinai or throw me in the western desert," he said. "I don't care if I lose a leg or my life. Tonight, we drink and dance!"

At the Giza Pyramids, hundreds of people gathered for a fireworks and lighting display at the stroke of midnight.

## KENYA

Police in Kenya, which has been repeatedly attacked by al-Shabaab militants from neighboring Somalia, urged vigilance as many people prepared to celebrate the new year in hotels and watch midnight fireworks displays. Unauthorized fireworks were banned as safety hazards "in view of the elevated threat of terrorism," police said.

## GERMANY

Rainy weather dampened the New Year celebrations in Berlin, where security was tighter than in previous years. Several hundred thousand people still turned out for several minutes of fireworks at the Brandenburg Gate, wishing each other "Froehes neues Jahr" and expressing their hopes for a peaceful 2016.

In Munich, police warned about an hour before the New Year of a "serious, imminent threat" of a terror attack. Despite the call by police for people to stay away from crowds, thousands of people were still on the streets to meet the new year with fireworks.

## BRITAIN

Major celebrations marked by fireworks spectacles were planned in London, Edinburgh and other big cities despite a terror threat judged to be severe. Police advised revelers not to go to the fireworks displays without tickets and to be ready to have their belongings searched.

## BRAZIL

Rio de Janeiro kicked off its Olympic year with a fiesta on Copacabana Beach attended by more than 2 million people, according to police estimates. Brazil's most popular New Year's Eve show was illuminated by 24 tons of fireworks fired off over almost 16 minutes. To celebrate Rio's hosting of the 2016 Summer Games in August, the soundtrack for revelers included music from previous Olympics and songs paying homage to samba on its 100th anniversary.

Rio authorities said they weren't as worried about terrorism as other cities. Police used two monitoring trucks to follow suspicious movements during the party. That equipment also will be used in security operations during the Olympics.

## NEW YORK

Around 1 million people converged on Times Square for the annual New Year's Eve celebration. An 11,875-pound Waterford crystal ball descended as revelers counted down to 2016 before sharing hugs and their first kisses of the year under a blanket of confetti.

The glitzy party included musical acts including Demi Lovato, Nick Jonas and Carrie Underwood.

This year's festivities were attended by nearly 6,000 police officers, including members of a specialized counterterrorism unit.

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## LAS VEGAS

The already illuminated Las Vegas Strip greeted 2016 with an extra glittery glow from fireworks exploding on cue atop several casino rooftops.

New Year's Eve was expected to pack in 332,000 people on the Las Vegas Strip and downtown's Fremont Street bundling up for the chilly occasion.

New Year's Eve is worth an estimated \$228 million to the destination, and its 149,086 hotel rooms were almost fully booked, according to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

It's worth quadruple a regular night of tips for 36-year-old Mike Powell who dressed in a glittery Elvis jumpsuit to pose for photos and collect tips with two other Elvises and a man dressed as a "Hangover" movie character.

## CHICAGO

In the Windy City, a 70-foot, six-point star, modeled after those on the city's flag, ascended a hotel tower to bring in the new year. The inaugural "Chi-Town Rising" event in Chicago's downtown also featured musical performances from headliners Chicago and American Authors.

## ST. LOUIS

Ballpark Village was hosting the city's only ball drop at its second annual NYE Live! Event. It provided access to five different venues, a midnight toast, live music and confetti.

## MANHATTAN, KANSAS

About 10,000 people were expected in a town known as the Little Apple for a ball-drop event modeled after the one in New York's Times Square. The celebration in Manhattan was to culminate with the lowering of a ball from atop a bookstore.

## OMAHA, NEBRASKA

A New Year's Eve Fireworks Spectacular was expected to draw more than 30,000 people to a downtown park. The show was choreographed with a musical score.

## HOUSTON

Streets in the city's downtown theater district closed to traffic as the city threw a New Year's Eve bash with fireworks and entertainment.

## OKLAHOMA CITY

Revelers planned to ring in 2016 with music, fireworks and the raising of an illuminated ball during Opening Night 2016 in downtown Oklahoma City. Magical acts and ice sculpture demonstrations also were being presented at different venues in Oklahoma's largest city.

## 'Affluenza' teen may delay deportation with human rights law

**EMILY SCHMALL, Associated Press**

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Lawyers for a Texas teen who cited "affluenza" as a defense in a deadly drunken-driving wreck may be attempting to stall his deportation to the United States by claiming that Mexican authorities violated his human rights, according to legal experts.

Ethan Couch, 18, won a delay in his deportation based on a constitutional appeal in Mexico that could lead to a trial process that could last weeks or even months.

Any flaw in the process of his detention by Mexican immigration authorities can be considered a violation of due process and of his human rights, San Antonio attorney Javier Lopez de Obeso, who is licensed to practice in Mexico, said Thursday.



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"If the immigration authorities didn't act properly, he can find a way to stay in Mexico for more time," said Lopez.

If the judge considering the appeal decides there was a mistake made in the process of detaining Couch, he could be released, and authorities would have to re-arrest him, Lopez said.

Treaties between the U.S. and Mexico say that Mexican authorities have to respect Couch's warrant in the U.S., so unless he files for asylum, he will not be able to stay in Mexico indefinitely, said Aldo Salazar, a Texas attorney also licensed to practice in Mexico.

"Asylum is granted to those who can prove a well-founded fear of persecution. I'm not sure 'affluenza' would qualify," said immigration attorney Nicolas Chavez.

Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson has said he believes Couch and his mother fled to Mexico in late November after a video surfaced that appears to show Couch at a party where people were drinking, which would be a violation of his probation. The mother and son were arrested Monday after using a phone to order pizza delivery that was traced to a condominium complex in the Mexican resort city of Puerto Vallarta.

Couch, who was 16 at the time of the crash and was tried in juvenile court, received 10 years' probation for driving drunk and crashing into a disabled SUV parked on the side of the road in 2013. The collision killed four people and injured several others, including passengers in his truck. He pleaded guilty to four counts of intoxication manslaughter and two counts of intoxication assault causing serious bodily injury.

During the sentencing phase of his trial, a defense expert argued that Couch's wealthy parents had coddled him into a sense of irresponsibility — a condition the expert termed "affluenza." The condition is not recognized as a medical diagnosis by the American Psychiatric Association, and its invocation drew ridicule.

Judge Jean Boyd sentenced Couch to probation over the objections of prosecutors who asked for 20 years' detention. Couch's attorneys argued probation would be more effective than detention because Couch could have been eligible for release in as few as two years.

Whether Couch's "affluenza" claims had an impact on Boyd is unclear. Boyd, whose term on the bench ended in 2014, did not return phone messages this week from The Associated Press.

Had Couch been tried as an adult, he could have 20 years in prison for intoxication manslaughter, which is typically classified as a second-degree felony.

"We think it's important that juveniles are treated differently. The issue is what's in the best interest of the child," said John Convery, president-elect of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association.

Couch's mother, Tonya Couch, 48, was returned to the United States early Thursday after her deportation from Mexico. She has been charged in Tarrant County with hindering an apprehension, a felony charge that carries a two- to 10-year prison sentence, and is being held on a \$1 million bond.

Ethan Couch was transferred Thursday to a Mexico City immigration detention center in one of the capital's poorest areas where he will likely spend weeks, if not months, as he appeals deportation.

A Mexican immigration official said the affluent young man will have no special privileges at the Agujas immigration detention center, where detainees sleep in common areas and use concrete basins to hand-wash clothes.

"Is there a chance that Ethan Couch could be successful in staying in Mexico? Yes, but I think it is delaying the inevitable," said Dallas attorney Peter Schulte, who specializes in juvenile law.

Tarrant County District Attorney Sharen Wilson has said she plans to ask a judge to transfer Couch's case to adult court, where he could get up to 120 days in an adult jail, followed by 10 years of probation. If he violates probation again, he could face up to 10 years in prison per death, Wilson said.

A probation violation hearing is set for Jan. 19.

## Newly released emails reveal coordination after teen's death

**MICHAEL TARM, Associated Press**

**TAMMY WEBBER, Associated Press**

**SOPHIA TAREEN, Associated Press**

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago mayor's office, police and the body that investigates police shootings closely coordinated their response in the months after a white officer fatally shot a black teenager in 2014, emails released Thursday revealed.

The messages clearly indicate that advisers to Mayor Rahm Emanuel knew within months that the case could be politically explosive.

Thousands of emails were released in response to open-records requests from The Associated Press and other media regarding 17-year-old Laquan McDonald, who was killed in October 2014 after being shot 16 times. Few communications from Emanuel's staff mention him directly — though several refer to him by the acronym "MRE."

A video of the officer shooting McDonald — which was not made public until more than a year later, on Nov. 24 — led to protests and repeated calls for Emanuel to resign. The officer has been charged with murder and pleaded not guilty this week at his arraignment.

Emanuel has denied ever seeing the video prior to its release, a contention many activists have said they do not believe. The emails do not appear to contradict Emanuel's claim, though they show how City Hall grew increasingly concerned that the video could pose a major public-relations problem.

In early December 2014, Scott Ando, head of the Independent Police Review Authority — publicly touted by the mayor as uniquely independent in its probes of police shootings — singled out the case. He sent an email to the mayor's deputy chief of staff, Janey Rountree, with a link to a website that raised questions about police accounts of the shooting.

Emanuel spokesman Adam Collins sent a flurry of emails about media inquiries into video of the shooting. His subject line on a Dec. 10, 2014, email to fellow Emanuel staffers included the headline in one Chicago newspaper: "If Chicago police have video of teen shooting, let's see it: advocates."

The risk that a publicly released video could blow up not just locally but also nationally was made by lawyers from McDonald's family, who reached out to the city about a settlement in early 2015, just over a month before Emanuel's re-election.

Although none of the correspondence directly addressed Emanuel, in a letter on March 6 — after the family's lawyers saw the video — attorney Jeffrey J. Neslund told city lawyers that the footage would reflect badly on the city.

"I submit the graphic dash cam video will have a powerful impact on any jury and the Chicago community as a whole," he wrote. "This case will undoubtedly bring a microscope of national attention to the shooting itself as well as the city's pattern, practice and procedures in rubber-stamping fatal police shootings of African Americans as 'justified.'"

He demanded \$16 million. The two sides eventually settled on \$5 million, a deal approved by the city council shortly after Emanuel won a second term.

Though the Independent Police Review Authority, or IPRA, is supposed to maintain a distance from police and the mayor's office, a March 11 email from Ando asks about forwarding witness interview transcripts to the law department "for their use in settlement negotiations with" the McDonald family.

In May, Collins cautioned IPRA spokesman Larry Merritt to "tread lightly" when a reporter asked for an IPRA interview about the case.

"Can anyone do an interview? I think we need to accept some of these opportunities," Merritt wrote in a May 26 email to top Emanuel aides and Ando. "These stories are getting done with or without us."

Collins responded: "I completely agree that we need to engage more, but if their focus is on specifics (sic) investigations we should tread very lightly. This is about Laquan McDonald and we should not do interviews about open investigations."

Also in May, Collins complained to colleagues that IPRA did not follow his recommendation on how to respond to a TV station about McDonald.

Days before the video's release, Collins wrote to police and law department representatives urging them

to speak with "one voice" on the topic.

Emanuel and Chicago police have been under heavy scrutiny since the city, under court order, released the squad-car video. McDonald, who was carrying a folded 3-inch knife, is seen veering away from officer Jason Van Dyke in the video before the officer starts firing.

Months before the video was made public, Emanuel's administration was well aware of growing outrage about the case. In a late July email exchange, top Emanuel aides worried about the perception of a cover-up and noted recent news stories.

"As you might imagine, the timing and details discussed in the Sun-Times article and growing interest in the McDonald incident has not worked in our favor, and is helping to 'stir the pot,'" Emanuel aide Vance Henry wrote.

By October, Henry noted organizing by community groups around the McDonald case and the fatal shooting of 22-year-old Rekia Boyd by another Chicago officer. He suggested in an Oct. 11 email that officials would be "smart to act timely and strategically" in both cases.

The release of the video forced the resignation of Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy and led to an ongoing civil rights investigation of the entire Chicago Police Department by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The city released the emails less than a week after police fatally shot two other people: 55-year-old Bettie Jones, who authorities said was killed accidentally, and 19-year-old Quintonio LeGrier, who police said was being "combative." Both were black.

## 10 Things to Know for Friday The Associated Press

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

### 1. WHERE'S THE PARTY?

Crowds pack New York's Times Square before the midnight New Year's ball drop, while revelers around the world bid a weary and wary adieu to a year marred by attacks that left nations reeling and nerves rattled.

### 2. IMMINENT TERROR THREAT FEARED IN GERMANY

Police in Munich said they have "serious information" about an attack by Islamist extremists on New Year's Eve, and asked partygoers to avoid big outdoor gatherings.

### 3. BLAZE IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES LIGHTS UP SKYLINE

One of Dubai's luxury hotels became a towering inferno and injured more than a dozen, while a massive fireworks display went on nearby at the world's tallest building.

### 4. BELGIANS ON EDGE AMID FEARS OF ATTACKS

Belgian police arrested a 10th person in connection with last month's Paris bloodbath, while six more suspects were detained over a plot for new attacks in Brussels.

### 5. BILL COSBY FIGHTS BACK

The 78-year-old comedian's lawyers went on the attack, calling the sexual assault charges against him a flawed and politically motivated case that won't hold up in court.

### 6. WHO'S JAILED IN L.A.

The mother of a fugitive Texas teen known for using an "affluenza" defense in a fatal drunken-driving accident will likely remain jailed for several days in Los Angeles after being deported from Mexico.

### 7. FOILED PLOT IN ROCHESTER

An ex-convict seeking to prove he was worthy of joining the Islamic State by carrying out a New Year's Eve attack at a bar was snared in an FBI sting involving three paid informants.

### 8. FLOODWATERS RECEDE IN MIDWEST

But hundreds of homes are damaged, with residents yet unable to return, and getting through St. Louis by car, boat or train is difficult.

### 9. THE ORANGE BOWL WINNER IS ...

The Clemson Tigers will play for the national title after rolling past Oklahoma 37-17, and the nation's lone unbeaten team will next face either Alabama or Michigan State for the championship.

### 10. WHAT MADE 2015 AN \$11 BILLION YEAR FOR MOVIES

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"Star Wars" kicked 2015 over the record-setting goal line this week, but the quality of films and the theatrical experience also helped.

## Texas, New Mexico producers lose more than 30K dairy cows

**BETSY BLANEY, Associated Press**

LUBBOCK, Texas (AP) — Dairy producers in West Texas and eastern New Mexico are continuing to assess how many animals died in the winter storm last weekend, but the number will probably climb to more than 30,000, an official with a dairy group said Thursday.

Texas Association of Dairymen executive director Darren Turley said an estimated 15,000 mature dairy cows died in the storm's primary impact area — from Lubbock west to Muleshoe and north to Friona which is home to half of the state's top-10 milk producing counties and produces 40 percent of the state's milk.

An agent with New Mexico State University's extension service told Turley the area around Clovis, New Mexico, lost an estimated 20,000 dairy cows.

The number of younger animals killed by Winter Storm Goliath in each state could be just as high as the mature cows, he said.

There will be less milk coming from the region for a while, Turley said,

The snow was just one part of Goliath. It was the wind that led to drifts as high as 14 feet, where many animals died. Wind will push animals into a fenced corner where they can suffocate in snow drifts.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime (storm)," Turley said. "It's a bad deal for producers."

The losses will affect production for about year, he said.

During the storm dairy employees and tanker trucks from reaching farms. Hundreds of loads of milk ready for processing were wasted. Some cows normally milked twice a day went almost two days without being milked, which dries up the cows' milk supply, Turley said.

"The ripples from that are going to depend on how fast those animals' milk production comes back," Turley said.

The Texas producers are working with state environmental officials to find ways to dispose of the carcasses. Some counties are allowing producers to put carcasses in their landfills.

Andle van der Ploeg, owner of Mid-Frisian Dairy near Clovis, said Thursday that he lost just 10 animals, but feels great sympathy for producers he knows who lost hundreds of milk cows.

"It was unbelievable," he said.

## Gadgets around us will keep getting smarter, like it or not

**ANICK JESDANUN, AP Technology Writers**

**DAVID HAMILTON, AP Technology Writers**

Our cars, our homes, our appliances and even our toys: Things around us are going to keep getting smarter. In 2016, we'll entrust even more of our lives and their intimate details to machines — not to mention the companies that run them.

Are we ready for that?

You might, for instance, like the idea of turning on your TV with a spoken command — no more fumbling for the remote! But for that to work, the TV needs to be listening all the time, even when you're not watching. And even when you're discussing something extremely personal, or engaged in some other activity to which you'd rather not invite eavesdroppers.

How much should you worry? Maybe your TV never records any of your casual conversations. Or maybe its manufacturer is recording all that, but just to find ways to make the TV better at understanding what you want it to do. Or maybe it retains everything it hears for some other hidden purpose.

You may never know for sure. At best, you can hope the company keeps its promises on privacy. More important, you have to trust that its computer systems are really secure, or those promises are suddenly worthless. That part is increasingly difficult to guarantee — or believe — as hacking becomes routine.

And here's the chief quandary: Every technological benefit comes with a cost in the form of a threat



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to privacy. Yet not paying that price has its own cost: an inability to participate in some of technology's greater achievements.

Because smart gadgets thrive on data — data about you and your habits, data about what large numbers of people do or say or appear to want in particular situations — it's difficult not to share pretty much everything with them. Doing otherwise would be like turning off your phone's location services, which disables many of its most useful features.

The consequences aren't restricted to phones and TVs:

— Kids will be able to talk to more toys and get personalized, computer-generated responses. Does the "don't talk to strangers" rule apply if the stranger is the Hello Barbie talking doll or Dino, the dinosaur powered by IBM's Watson artificial-intelligence system?

— Cars will work with GPS technology and sensors in parking meters, roads and home appliances to help route you around traffic and turn on your living-room lights as you approach the driveway. But that can also generate a detailed record of your whereabouts.

— Thermostats from Nest and others will get smarter at conserving energy when you're away. Potential burglars might find that information handy.

— Home security cameras are getting cheaper and more plentiful, but they're sometimes insecure themselves, especially if you set them up clumsily. There's already a website devoted to showing video from cameras with no passwords. Though they are mostly outdoor or business cameras, one was trained on a baby's crib, and another in a living room.

— Wearable health devices will track your heart rate, fitness levels and more — and share achievements with friends and family. But slacking off may carry a heavier cost than those extra holiday pounds, particularly if your insurance company yanks discounts for meeting fitness goals.

— Software from Google and Facebook will get even more refined to help you cut through the noise. That's great if Facebook is showing you posts from friends you already interact the most with, but will a long-lost friend's plea for help go unanswered because you don't see it?

The pending onslaught of privacy trade-offs might seem trivial when it comes to a talking — and listening — Barbie. But maybe it's less so when your phone knows enough about you to remind you it's time to leave for an important interview (if the alternative would be losing a shot at that job) or your smart home can really tell you if you turned off the oven before leaving for an international trip.

"The encroachments on our privacy are often self-inflicted in the sense that we will accept the trade-off one bit at a time," says John Palfrey, co-author of "Interop: The Promise and Perils of Highly Interconnected Systems.

And these trade-offs can be quite subtle. Technological advances typically offer immediate, tangible benefits that, once you've put enough of them together, can indeed revolutionize daily life. Can you imagine living your life without a smartphone? A few years from now, you might goggle at the thought of managing your day without constant advice from Siri or "OK Google."

As for the risks, they'll tend to be diffuse, abstract and often difficult to ascertain even if you're paying attention — and most people won't. In a study released Wednesday, the Pew Research Center says about half of American adults have no confidence that they understand what's being done with their data, and about a third are discouraged by the amount of effort needed to get that understanding.

In short, convenience usually wins. Shiny new things are inherently attractive, and it takes a while for some of us to get uneasy about the extent to which we may be enabling our own surveillance.

Humans have made this bargain with technology for some time. When cameras were invented, legal scholars debated how far you can go snapping pictures of people in public. That's no longer an issue — although the camera on a drone in your backyard is.

Over time, manufacturers will get better at putting in safeguards, and consumers will get better at setting boundaries and taking charge.

For instance, this holiday season's Hello Barbie talking toy won't listen in until your kid presses its belt buckle. Though it does store conversations between kids and their dolls to improve speech-recognition technology, its maker says there's little personal information tied to those conversations — no first or last

names, no ages, no gender.

"We don't need that information," said Martin Reddy, co-founder and chief technical officer of ToyTalk, which developed Hello Barbie with Mattel. "We don't want that information. It just makes it more difficult on our end."

Of course, kids might simply tell their toys personal details about themselves. ToyTalk employees who review such conversations to improve the technology are trained to immediately delete anything sensitive, but they aren't charged with actively monitoring stored discussions.

Step One in managing interactions with our newly smart digital companions comes down to simple attentiveness. Parents, for instance, can be actively involved in what their kids are doing — in this case, by taking the time to review and delete conversations from ToyTalk's website.

Step Two might be learning to say no. Many services ask for birth dates, phone numbers and even income levels just because they can — and few people resist. If enough people rise up, companies will stop. There's precedent: Enough people fed up with online ads have turned to ad blockers, such that websites are taking steps to make ads less annoying.

There will always be a trade-off, but the balance can always shift.

## Social media, upgraded theaters help drive \$11 billion year

**LINDSEY BAHR, AP Film Writer**

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It takes more than "Star Wars" to make an \$11 billion year.

Disney and J.J. Abrams pushed 2015 over the mark days before its conclusion, but many factors helped make the year the biggest of all time — including social media and better theatrical experiences — which helped draw audiences away from their home entertainment centers and into the multiplex.

In 2014, "The Interview" was released in theaters and online at the same time, and this year saw streaming service Netflix enter theatrical feature territory with "Beasts of No Nation" and "The Ridiculous 6," both of which played in theaters and online simultaneously, alarming exhibitors. Yet attendance at the movies was up around four percent for the year, according to Jeff Goldstein, Warner Bros.' executive vice president of domestic distribution.

It didn't hurt that 2015 started off with some significant momentum from "American Sniper," had the "Jurassic World" juggernaut in the summer, and then ended on the enormous high note of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," which on Wednesday became Disney's biggest domestic earner in just 13 days of release.

"It's like kicking the winning field goal at the end of the game. That's what 'Star Wars' did," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for box office tracker Rentrak.

The overall slate didn't look very different from years past, with 688 new releases. There were the near annual installments of franchises that continue to rake in the money ("Furious 7," "Avengers: Age of Ultron," "Spectre," "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 2," "Mission: Impossible — Rogue Nation"). And there were properties resurrected from years ago, some of which worked ("Jurassic World," "Star Wars: The Force Awakens") and some that didn't ("Fantastic Four," "Terminator Genisys"). There were franchise starters that hit ("Fifty Shades of Grey") and some that were dead on arrival ("The Man From U.N.C.L.E."). There were ambitious original ideas that succeeded ("Inside Out"), while others crashed and burned ("Tomorrowland," "Crimson Peak," "Jupiter Ascending"). Live action fairy tales flew ("Cinderella") and floundered ("Pan"). And there were the smaller investments that paid off big ("Pitch Perfect 2," "Creed," "Straight Outta Compton," "Trainwreck").

Universal, which ranked fifth in 2014, skyrocketed to become the top studio of 2015, thanks to enormous hits like "Jurassic World," "Furious 7," "Fifty Shades of Grey," "Minions" and "Pitch Perfect 2."

According to Nick Carpou, Universal's president of domestic distribution, the studio found success in scattering its diverse offerings throughout the year, finding audiences that might be underserved in certain months and translating that into big returns.

Social media also mattered more in the past year. Carpou, his industry counterparts and various box office analysts agreed that social buzz could make or break a movie almost immediately.

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"I think that's how 'Jurassic World' started the weekend looking like a big success and ended the weekend breaking all records," said Carpou. "That's people telling people."

Disney, which ranked second, followed a very different strategy, focusing on 15 new releases (to Universal's 26) from their various brands, whether homegrown or acquired, like Lucasfilm, Marvel, Pixar and live-action reboots of their animated classics.

In third place, despite successes like "American Sniper," Warner Bros. struggled a bit more with some higher profile flops, such as "Pan."

"It's all about content. We've always known that. If it's something the public wants to see, they're going to come out," said Goldstein.

Fox, with big successes such as "The Martian" and missteps like "Fantastic Four," came in fourth, while Sony, which did well with "Spectre" and "Hotel Transylvania 2," placed fifth. Sony's smaller labels helped, too, with films like "War Room" and "The Perfect Guy."

Beyond the appeal of individual movies, exhibitors were also wising up to consumer demands. The days of sticky floored venues with small seats and smaller screens may never go away completely, but audiences have more options now in screen size, visual and audio quality, reserved luxury seating, and even gourmet food service, all of which usually means higher ticket prices.

"We're giving them choices and we're giving them choices at every price point. It's like when you buy an airline ticket," said Goldstein.

Erik Davis, managing editor of ticketing site Fandango.com, says this improved theatrical experience is becoming a big draw for people.

"I definitely think the more comfortable theaters are making it, the more people are inclined to go to the movies," Davis said.

The boutique chain Cinépolis boasts a full bar, leather reclining seats and in-theater dining with wait staff. Cinépolis currently operates in Southern California and Florida, with plans to expand to Texas, Virginia, Connecticut and Ohio in 2017. Meanwhile, bigger chains are clamoring to compete with these so-called "diamond theaters."

Technology, too, is being upgraded across the country from Dolby Atmos sound systems to IMAX screens, giving audiences a specific reason to seek out big movies in theaters.

Release dates in 2015 were particularly well-spaced, said Greg Foster, CEO of IMAX Entertainment. This allowed for multi-week runs of some of the year's biggest movies on the pricier IMAX screens.

"People who love movies love IMAX," said Foster. "We've carved out a position as the place that avid moviegoers see big tent pole blockbuster films."

But the 2015 celebration just makes everyone more focused on the year ahead.

"2015 is not the one-hit wonder of box office years," said Dergarabedian.

## AP Poll: Islamic State conflict voted top news story of 2015

DAVID CRARY, AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The far-flung attacks claimed by Islamic State militants and the intensifying global effort to crush them added up to a grim, gripping yearlong saga that was voted the top news story of 2015, according to The Associated Press' annual poll of U.S. editors and news directors.

The No. 2 story was the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that led to legalization of same-sex marriage in all 50 states. But several of the other stories among the Top 10 reflected the impact of the Islamic State, while another group of major stories related to the series of mass shootings in the United States.

Among the 100 voters casting ballots, first-place votes were spread among 17 different stories. The Islamic State entry received 37 first-place votes and same-sex marriage 13. The No. 3 story — the deadly attacks in Paris in January and November — received 14 first-place votes.

A year ago, the top story in AP's poll was the police killings of unarmed blacks in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere — and the investigations and protests that ensued. In this year's poll, a similar entry, with more instances of blacks dying in encounters with police, placed fifth.

The first AP top-stories poll was conducted in 1936, when editors chose the abdication of Britain's King

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Edward VIII.

Here are 2015's top 10 stories, in order:

1: ISLAMIC STATE: A multinational coalition intensified ground and air attacks against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria, including expanded roles for Western European countries worried about IS-backed terrorism. For its part, IS sought to demonstrate an expansive reach by its operatives and supporters, claiming to have carried out or inspired the bombing of a Russian airliner, attacks in Beirut and Paris, and the deadly shooting in San Bernardino, California.

2: GAY MARRIAGE: Fifteen years after Vermont pioneered civil unions for same-sex couples, the Supreme Court issued a ruling in June enabling them to marry in all 50 states. Gay-rights activists heralded it as their movement's biggest breakthrough, but there were flashes of disapproval. A county clerk in Kentucky, Kim Davis, spent a few days in jail after refusing to issue marriage licenses to gay couples in her jurisdiction.

3: PARIS ATTACKS: The first attack came just a week into the new year. Two brothers who called themselves members of al-Qaida barged into the offices of the satiric newspaper Charlie Hebdo, and later attacked a Jewish market, gunning down 17 people in all. Nov. 13 brought a far deadlier onslaught: Eight Islamic State militants killed 130 people in coordinated assaults around Paris. Targets included restaurants, bars and an indoor rock concert.

4: MASS SHOOTINGS: Throughout the year, mass shootings brought grief to communities across the U.S. and deepened frustration over the failure to curtail them. There were 14 victims in San Bernardino. Nine blacks were killed by a white gunman at a Charleston, South Carolina, church; a professor and eight students died at an Oregon community college. In Chattanooga, four Marines and a sailor were killed by a Kuwaiti-born engineer; three people, including a policeman, were shot dead at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado.

5: BLACK DEATHS IN ENCOUNTERS WITH POLICE: In Baltimore, riots broke out after the death of Freddie Gray, a black man loaded into a van by police officers. In Chicago, Tulsa and North Charleston, South Carolina, fatal police shootings of black men prompted resignations and criminal charges. The incidents gave fuel to the Black Lives Matter campaign, and prompted several investigations of policing practices.

6: TERRORISM WORRIES: Fears about terrorism in the U.S. surged after a married couple in California — described by investigators as radicalized Muslims — carried out the attack in San Bernardino that killed 14 people. The rampage inflamed an already intense debate over whether to accommodate refugees from Syria, and prompted Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump to call for a ban on Muslims coming to the U.S.

7: US ELECTION CAMPAIGN: A large and varied field of Republicans launched bids for the presidency, with billionaire Donald Trump moving out to an early lead in the polls and remaining there despite a series of polarizing statements. He helped attract record audiences for the GOP's televised debates. In the Democratic race, Bernie Sanders surprised many with a strong challenge of Hillary Clinton, but she remained the solid front-runner.

8: CLIMATE CHANGE: Negotiators from nearly 200 countries reached a first-of-its kind agreement in Paris on curbing greenhouse gas emissions. Many questions remain over enforcement and implementation of the accord. But elated supporters hailed it as a critical step toward averting the grim scenario of unchecked global warming.

9: CHARLESTON CHURCH SHOOTING: A Bible study session at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, suddenly turned into carnage when a white gunman opened fire, killing nine blacks, including the pastor. The alleged killer's affinity for the Confederate flag sparked debate over the role of Civil War symbols in today's South. In less than a month, the flag was removed from the South Carolina State House grounds.

10: EUROPE'S MIGRANT CRISIS: Fleeing war and hardship, more than 1 million migrants and refugees flooded into Europe during the year, overwhelming national border guards and reception facilities. Hundreds are believed to have drowned; 71 others were found dead in an abandoned truck in Austria. The 28-nation European Union struggled to come up with an effective, unified response.