

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 1 of 27

- 1- Kristi Peterson Bookkeeping ad
- 1- Recycling Trailers in Groton
- 1- Missing dogs
- 1- Today's Information
- 2- Rev. Snyder's Column
- 3- Skating Rink is open
- 4- Gov. Daugaard's Weekly Column
- 5- Schwan's to give to SD Destination Imagination
- 6 - Today in Weather History
- 7- Local Weather Forecast
- 8- National Weather Map
- 8- Local Weather
- 9- Daily Devotional
- 10 - News from the Associated Press

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

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.
Anniv: Jay and Jean Peterson
Birthdays: Hannah Swanson, Heath Giedt, Val Flihs.
6:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study
10:00am: Emmanuel Lutheran WELCA study leaders meet with pastor
6:30pm: GBB host Langford Area
7:00pm: City Council Meeting at Groton Community Center

Tuesday, January 5, 2016

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes, fruit, juice, milk.
School Lunch: Chicken patty sandwich, French



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

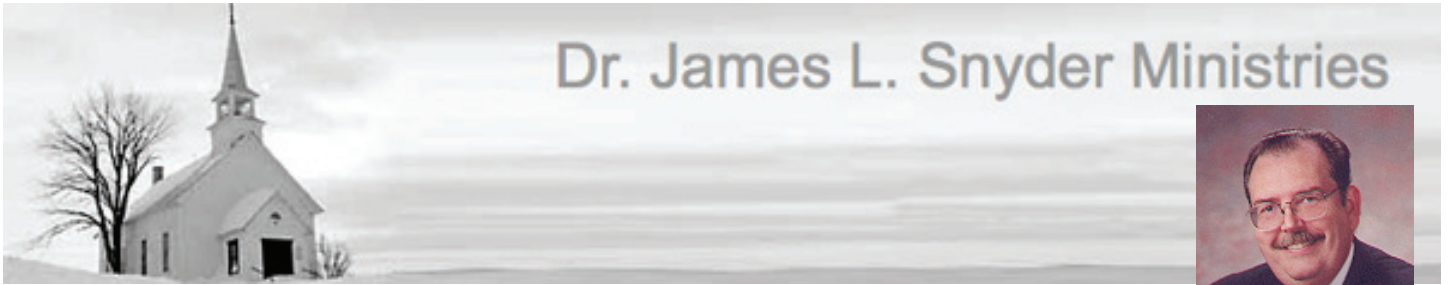
The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **Closed**

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Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 2 of 27



An Old Geezer Faces Another New Year

Dr. James L. Snyder

Here we go again, tricked into thinking it is a New Year when there is absolutely nothing new about it. It is the same ole, same ole, Déjà vu all over again. The person who invented this "New Year" ought to be sued for defamation of characterization.

I suppose everybody has their own definition of "new," but when I think of new I think of something that has not been before not the recycling is something old.

I have seen more New Years than I can remember and have concluded that it is a misnomer. The one thing I have observed through the years is that every New Year I get older. What is up with that? If I could stop the New Year, could I stop getting older? I would like to try at least!

If the New Year was actually new, I would get newer not older. This has brought me to a level of grumpiness that I'm not sure I can get over.

I do remember those times when I celebrated the New Year and it was all because I had no idea what was going on. Things were not getting new, rather they were getting old. Perhaps the newness of the New Year was just the first day of January. I can go along with that.

I have a few suggestions along this line. Instead of calling it the New Year why don't we call it the old year all over again? That would make some sense to me. I do not mind doing things over again, but I do not want to be tricked into thinking that I am doing something new.

I have a little difference with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage along this line.

I know she did not invent New Year's resolutions, but she is the biggest proponent of this idea. She suggests I come up with a list of New Year's resolutions and is quite insistent about it.

All through the year she will query me, "How are you doing with your New Year's resolutions?"

"I'm still working on them," I say to get away from that subject as quickly as possible. I am so grateful that she does not ask me which resolution I have completed because I cannot remember any of the New Year's resolutions from the last year.

However, when you come to this aspect of the New Year's resolution how many of those are actually new? In order to make peace with my wife, I always come up with a list of New Year's resolutions, which if looked into would resemble almost identically last year's New Year's resolutions. This is where writing things down can be very detrimental to a good solid marriage.

I have memorized these New Year's resolutions, or so I say. Actually, I have more to do with my memory than cluttering it up with a bunch of New Year's resolutions.

Perhaps our politicians should pass some kind of a law saying that you cannot make a New Year's resolution until the Old Year's resolutions are fully fulfilled. That would make a lot more sense to me.

Another issue I have with this New Year montage has to do with birthdays. During this New Year, I will get one year older. I object to that most vigorously. I think that is very presumptuous of this New Year to insist I get older. If it were really a New Year it would do something to help me get newer and not older.

Getting older has become very monotonous to me. I know every birthday is new, but what overrides that is I am getting older on that birthday. I am very confused about all of this. How can a new birthday make you older? Something is wrong here somewhere.

I find myself at that stage in life where I am looking for my second childhood. But the New Year keeps



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 3 of 27

insisting I keep getting older. How can I enjoy a second childhood when I have this aspect of getting older? If it is my birthday, I should be the one to determine if I am getting older or younger.

I do not want to shock anybody, but everything new is eventually getting old.

This came to me quite disappointingly when I recently put on my favorite necktie for church. My wife said, "Are you wearing that tie again? Don't you think you ought to get a new tie?"

It was my favorite tie and now I am being told it is old and needs replacing. Which brings me to the disturbing question; does everything old need to be replaced?

If that is true, I am in serious trouble.

I guess I am at the stage of life where new is not very much of attraction to me. I like the old and I am not ashamed of it.

I can appreciate what the prophet Jeremiah said. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16).

Just because something is new does not mean it is better and just because something is old does not mean it needs to be replaced. In fact, our country needs to get back to those "old paths."

The Rev. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, 1471 Pine Road, Ocala, FL 34472. Call him at 352-687-4240 or e-mail jamesnyder2@att.net. The church web site is www.whatafellowship.com.



The skating rink officially opened yesterday with the first practice for those participating in the Carnival of Silver Skates.

Rink hours are:

Monday through Thursday: 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Friday: 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Sunday: 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 4 of 27



Hugh Glass and New Beginnings

A column by Gov. Dennis Daugaard:

As we turn the page on 2015 and welcome the New Year, it's a great time to look to the future. Many of us will establish resolutions for 2016. Whether it's to spend more time with family, get the household budget under control, lose a few pounds or visit a special place, the New Year brings an opportunity for new beginnings.

On Jan. 8, Twentieth Century Fox will release a Leonardo DiCaprio movie entitled *The Revenant*. If you're wondering, a revenant is "one who has returned, as if from the dead." The film is based on the story of Hugh Glass, a trapper and adventurer whose tale of renewal has South Dakota roots.

In August of 1823, Glass and a party of fur trappers were scouting for game near the fork of the Grand River in what is today Perkins County, S.D. When he stumbled upon a grizzly bear and her two cubs, Glass was severely mauled, leaving him unconscious and near death.

Two of Glass' companions volunteered to stay until he died, to bury him properly. Before he passed away, the two men placed him in a shallow grave and left. After they had abandoned him, Glass regained consciousness. Soon after, he began crawling toward the nearest settlement: Fort Kiowa, nearly 200 miles away at the Big Bend of the Missouri River.

Glass managed to survive the harrowing trip, eventually catching up with the young men and forgiving them. His tremendous ordeal has been retold several times, most notably by the Frederick Manfred novel *Lord Grizzly*.

Last August, 192 years after Glass' ordeal, the community of Lemmon hosted the first annual Hugh Glass Rendezvous, a celebration of "mountain man" lifestyle and culture. It took place near the Shadehill Reservoir in northern Perkins County, not far from the location where Glass was mauled.

Event co-host and artist John Lopez, well-known for his unique metal sculptures, unveiled an extraordinary piece depicting Glass defending himself from the grizzly. A historic marker, located nearby, is dedicated to Glass and his epic journey. The final line reads, "Whatever the details, it was a marvelous show of stamina and courage."

The opportunity to start fresh often comes in an unexpected way. I am excited for the possibilities in 2016 and I hope you have a great year! Whatever may be your New Year's resolution, I wish you the stamina and courage of Hugh Glass. You can do it!

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 5 of 27

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



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 6 of 27

Today in Weather History

January 3, 1997: A powerful area of low pressure and deep Arctic high pressure brought almost all winter elements to central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota from the afternoon of the 3rd to the morning of the 5th. The storm first began with widespread freezing rain, especially over northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota, where significant accumulations of ice occurred on roads, trees, and power lines. Late in the evening of the 3rd, the freezing rain changed to sleet and then snow, with substantial snowfall accumulations of 6 to as much as 27 inches by late on the 4th. As the deep Arctic high pressure pushed in through the morning and afternoon of the 4th, northwest winds increased to 25 to 45 mph gusting to 55 mph creating widespread blizzard conditions, drifts up to 20 feet, and wind chills from 40 to 70 below. The heavy accumulation of ice and snow across parts of central and mainly across northeast South Dakota resulted in the roof collapse of over 150, mainly rural, buildings. The roofs collapsed onto farm machinery and livestock with a lot of the machinery damaged and a lot of livestock injured or killed. The collapse of so many buildings from snow and ice was believed to be the first in this area. On most other buildings, the snow had to be shoveled or blown off. One man was killed in west central Minnesota as he was trying to shovel snow off the roof of a building. One roof collapse near Lake Poinsett, 7 west of Esteline, killed four horses, damaged a boat, and flattened a car. A few homes during the storm were buried by the huge snow drifts. Many power outages also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota as power lines and poles were downed from the heavy ice accumulation. Some people were without power for several days in the extreme cold conditions. The cities of Miranda, Rockham, Zell, Garden City, Bryant, Vienna, Glenham, Hazel as well as other cities were without power for many hours. Some of the communities were out of power for up to 2 days.

In Aberdeen, heavy snow blocking a furnace exhaust vent sent 3 family members to the hospital for carbon monoxide poisoning. Also, in Aberdeen, the snowmobile club, the drift busters, were called upon for the first time in several years to deliver medicine, take patients to the hospital, and carry essential workers to work and home. Emergencies were difficult to respond to, taking many hours to short distances. Throughout central and northeast South Dakota, many businesses and grocery stores were closed. Interstates 29 and 90 were both closed for a few days along with most state highways. The rest of the roads were either blocked by huge drifts or had one-lane traffic. Snow plows were called off the roads until conditions improved and when they did start to clear the roads, they worked 12 to 18 hour days. Many vehicles went into the ditch, with mainly minor injuries. Some people had to be rescued. Travelers and truckers were stranded for several days until the roads opened. When Interstate-29 was opened, there was a log jam of vehicles for 3 miles. One Watertown policeman said he has never seen a log jam as bad as this in 28 years. Area airports were closed or flights were canceled or delayed. The mail was delayed for several days, most activities were canceled or postponed, and many schools closed on the 6th. The heavy snowfall from this storm brought the widespread snowpack up to 2 to 5 feet. For the winter season so far, the area had record snowfall and record cold. Some of the snowfall amounts include, 6 inches at McLaughlin, 8 inches 22 SSW Keldron and 4 NW Onida, 9 inches at Pollock, Timber Lake, Highmore, Mobridge, and Kennebec, 10 inches at Castlewood, Clear Lake, Miller, Fort Thompson, and Clark. Snowfall amounts of 1 to over 2 feet include, 12 inches at Eureka, and Redfield, 13 inches at Selby and Aberdeen, 14 inches at Pierre and Roscoe, 15 inches at Ortonville MN, 16 inches at Mellette and Browns Valley, MN 18 inches at Faulkton and 1 ENE Stephan, 20 inches at Webster, 22 inches at Britton, 24 inches at Sisseton, 26 inches 10 NW Britton, and 27 inches at Wheaton.

1777 - An overnight freeze enabled George Washington and his troops to flank the British at Trenton, cross their lines at Princeton, and seek security in the hills of northern New Jersey. (David Ludlum)








1961 - A three day long icestorm was in progress over northern Idaho which produced an accumulation of ice eight inches thick, a U.S. record. Heavy fog, which blanketed much of northern Idaho from Grangeville to the Canadian border, deposited the ice on power and phone lines causing widespread power outages. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

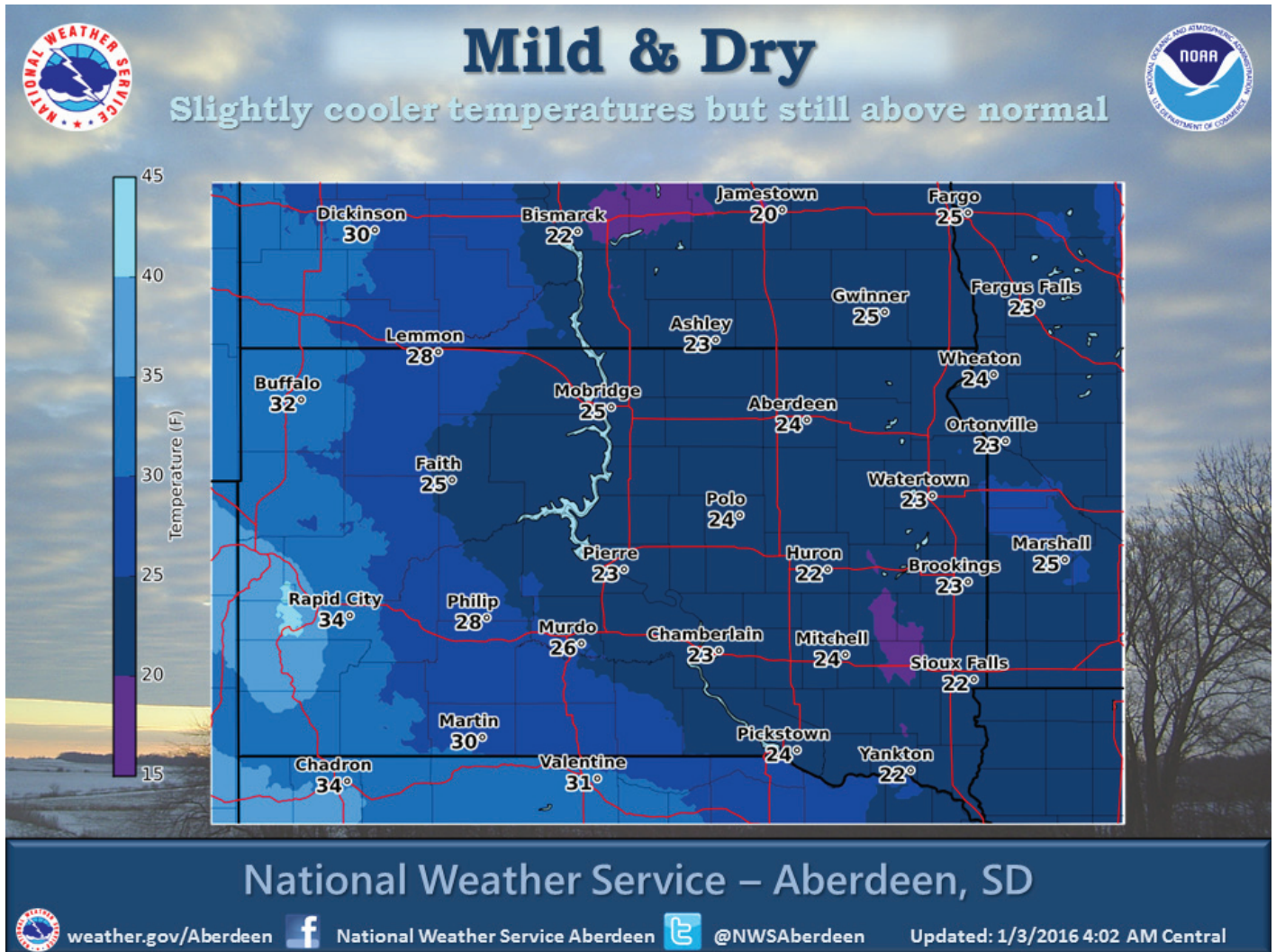
1987 - A powerful Pacific coast storm blasted the western U.S. with high winds, heavy rain and heavy snow. Winds gusted to 96 mph at Cape Blanco OR, and snowfall totals reached 20 inches in the Sierra Nevada Range of California. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - After a day of rest, "Old Man Winter" came back as a triple threat, hitting both coasts with winter storms, and blasting the central U.S. with cold arctic air. Snow and ice in the eastern U.S. caused 4.5 million dollars damage to homes and vehicles in North Carolina, the storm in the western U.S. produced two feet of snow in the Lake Tahoe area of Nevada, and temperatures in North Dakota plunged to 30 degrees below zero, with wind chill readings as cold as 95 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 7 of 27

Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 23 °F	Low: 4 °F	High: 22 °F	Low: 15 °F	High: 28 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 23 °F



Slightly cooler temperatures are expected this afternoon, however they will still be above normal for this time of the year. Winds will generally be light as high pressure settles over the region. The dry, mild conditions will persist as we move into the work week.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 8 of 27

Yesterday's Weather

High: 31.8 at 2:17 PM

Low: 9.2 at 12:58 AM

High Gust: 17 at 2:02 PM

Precip: 0.0

Today's Info

Record High: 51° in 1962

Record Low: -34° in 1912

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 2°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.06

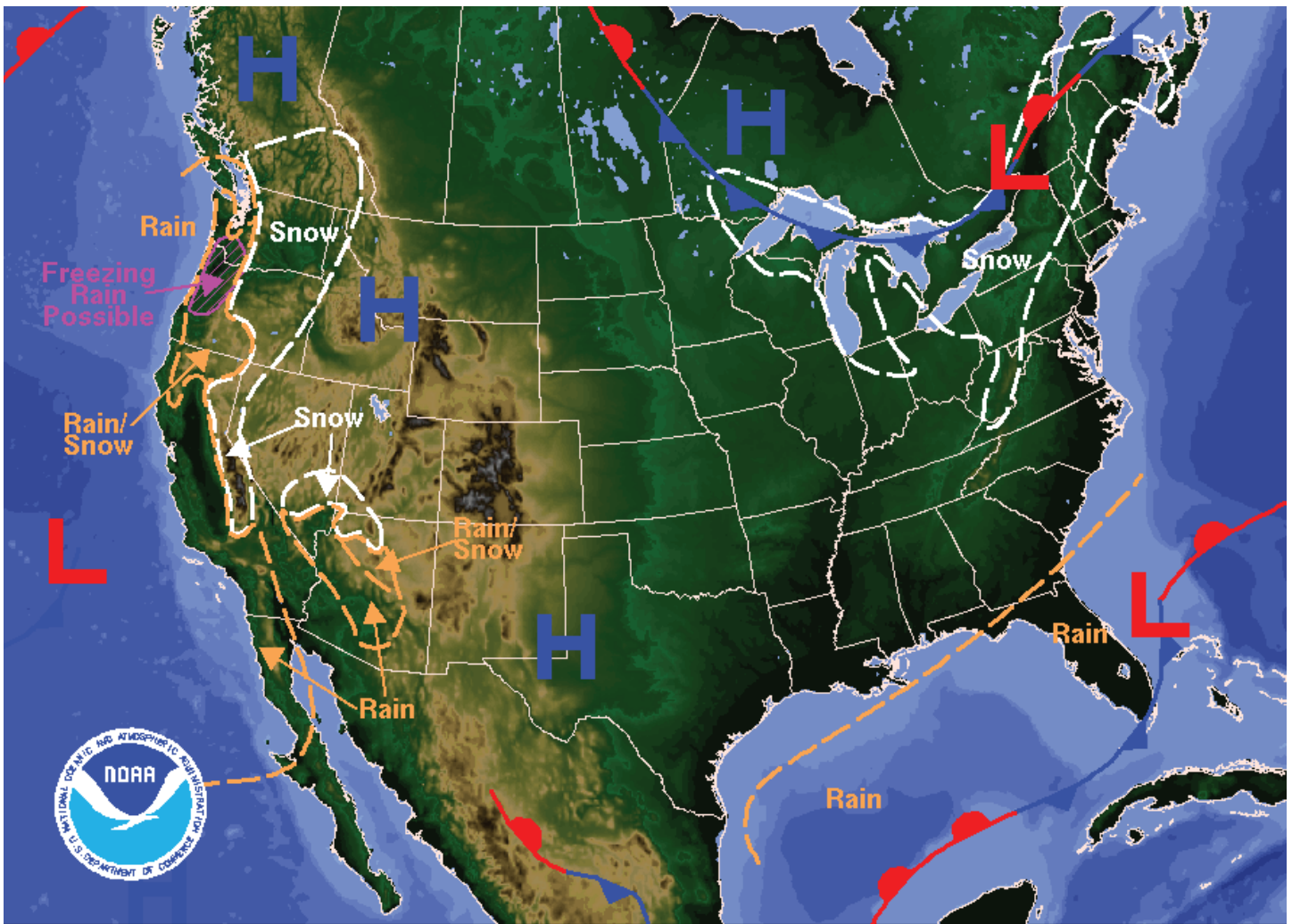
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.06

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:02 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sun, Jan 03, 2016, issued 3:46 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Santorelli based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 9 of 27



DOUBT OR DETERMINATION?

A group of mountain climbers was preparing to climb Mount Everest. As they stood at the foot of the mountain, a psychologist met with the group to interview them.

As the interview came to a conclusion, he asked one final question: "Will you make it to the top?"

Almost in unison, they responded, "I hope so."

But Jim Whitaker said in a strong voice, "I will!" He was the only one from the group to make it to the top and the first American to reach the summit.

Doubt defeats but courage conquers.

Jesus summed up this idea in just a few words. On one occasion He seemed to be chiding the disciples when He said, "What do you mean, 'If I can?' Anything is possible if a person believes!"

These words of Jesus do not mean that we can have anything we want if we just apply positive thinking. He wants us to understand that anything is possible if we believe in Him as our Overcomer. Everything is possible if we put our faith in God, work to accomplish His will in His world, and leave the results up to Him. Prayer is not wishing for our wants. It is faith, trust, patience, and persistence to accomplish His will.

Prayer: We look to You, Lord, to answer our prayers as we pray in Your name, believing in Your Word to accomplish Your will. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture for Today: Mark 9:23 Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 10 of 27

News from the  Associated Press

Wind Cave offering children Adventures in Nature program

WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK, S.D. (AP) — Children who want to learn about nature and develop skills to explore the natural world can visit Wind Cave National Park each Tuesday beginning Jan. 12.

Superintendent Vidal Dávila says the park's Adventures in Nature program at the visitor center offers children ages 3 to 12 an opportunity to experience nature and play in an active learning environment.

Programs will revolve around the Find Your Park Campaign, part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service.

Children will be grouped according to their age, allowing them opportunities to explore hands-on activities with their peers. Topics vary each week but will always include activities, crafts and a hike exploring the day's concept.

The program runs through April 5.

Saturday's Scores The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 61, Harrisburg 48
Belle Fourche 67, Lemmon 49
Beresford 53, Irene-Wakonda 49
Brandon Valley 58, Mitchell 43
Burke/South Central 66, Jones County 29
Casper Natrona, Wyo. 57, Rapid City Central 50
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 74, Todd County 65
Clark/Willow Lake 44, Tri-Valley 38
Colome 72, Wessington Springs 44
Hanson 37, McCook Central/Montrose 33
Harding County 72, Heart River, N.D. 61
James Valley Christian 80, Herreid/Selby Area 62
Kimball/White Lake 64, Iroquois 39
Menno 61, Freeman Academy 43
Parkston 57, Winner 51
Pierre 56, Yankton 53
Red Cloud 74, Hot Springs 40
Rosholt 49, Fairmount-Campbell-Tintah, N.D. 47
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 59, Hitchcock-Tulare 34
Stanley County 64, New Underwood 30
Sully Buttes 54, Mobridge-Pollock 51, 2OT
Tea Area 68, Worthington, Minn. 42
Timber Lake 56, Philip 41
Sanford Classic
Vermillion 45, Warner 58
Chester 69, Elkton-Lake Benton 51
West Lyon, Inwood, Iowa 61, Canistota 57, OT
Wolsey Big Bo Classic
Wolsey-Wessington 45, Potter County 29

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 11 of 27

Aberdeen Central 50, Harrisburg 39
Avon 55, Alcester-Hudson 15
Brandon Valley 58, Mitchell 43
Casper Natrona, Wyo. 65, Rapid City Central 48
Castlewood 46, Flandreau 41
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 60, Todd County 51
DeSmet 32, Waubay/Summit 31
Fairmount-Campbell-Tintah, N.D. 74, Rosholt 28
Florence/Henry 46, Arlington 31
Ipswich 54, Highmore-Harrold 42
Jones County 45, Burke/South Central 42
Lead-Deadwood 58, Bennett County 13
Lemmon 40, Belle Fourche 31
Lennox 67, Platte-Geddes 44
Lyman 63, Gregory 33
Menno 36, Freeman Academy 31
New Underwood 34, Stanley County 23
Philip 38, Timber Lake 36
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 56, Hitchcock-Tulare 49
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 64, Watertown 35
Spearfish 63, Custer 45
Sully Buttes 58, Kimball/White Lake 17
Yankton 68, Pierre 42

Couple pulled over for speeding before birth of baby

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Minnesota couple pulled over for speeding on their way to a South Dakota hospital is celebrating the birth of their New Year's Day baby.

Ryan and Whitney Barthel were in the midst of their trek from Bellingham, Minnesota, to Sioux Falls when they were flagged by a police officer.

"We live 2½ hours away, so I had to deal with his maniac driving. Getting pulled over, with 2-minute-apart contractions," Whitney Barthel told KELO-TV. They didn't get a ticket, and were able to continue their journey.

The couple's fourth son, Charles Augustus Barthel, was born at 8:14 a.m. Friday at Avera Hospital. It was the first baby born at the hospital in 2016.

It had already been a stressful time for the family. Whitney Barthel said she planned to have the baby by Cesarean section on Dec. 24, but a test revealed that his lungs weren't fully developed and she'd have to wait. Later that evening, her grandfather died.

Barthel said she was glad to make it to her grandfather's funeral Wednesday and wished she could have told him that he was having another grandson. "That was hard, knowing that he wouldn't get to know that the baby was here," she told the Sioux Falls Argus Leader. "I know he'd be happy."

The Barthels said they were glad that their son could be born on the first day of the new year, although Whitney joked that she had hoped he would be born in 2015 to "get him onto this year's taxes."

Ryan Barthel said the family's drive home from the hospital would be much slower than the drive there.

Federal suspect shot and killed in Sioux Falls parking lot

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a federal marshal shot and killed a man after a confrontation in a Sioux Falls parking lot.

Sioux Falls police spokesman Sam Clemens says federal authorities were preparing to arrest a 36-year-old man in the Lewis Drug parking lot about 1:30 p.m. Saturday when the suspect produced a handgun. Clemens says the suspect was shot once. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 12 of 27

Clemens says the suspect was wanted on a federal warrant and authorities were informed ahead of time that he was likely carrying a weapon. The suspect has not been identified but authorities do not believe he is a local resident.

Lewis Drug was shut down while police surrounded the parking lot. No other injuries were reported. The FBI is investigating the case.

Motorcycle driver dies in collision with SUV at intersection

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man was killed when the motorcycle he was driving collided with a sports utility vehicle at a Rapid City intersection.

Authorities identified the victim as 45-year-old Bryan Rick, of Hill City. The accident happened just before 3 p.m. Friday.

The Highway Patrol says the SUV driver was southbound on state Highway 44. He had stopped at a stop sign before colliding with the Rick on the eastbound motorcycle.

Rick was pronounced dead at the scene. He was not wearing a helmet.

Man dies in one-vehicle accident near Wessington Springs

WESSINGTON SPRINGS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol says a 76-year-old man was killed in a one-vehicle accident near Wessington Springs.

Dwane Parker, of Redfield, died when the vehicle he was driving went off a road and into a ditch Thursday night. Parker was pronounced dead at the scene.

It's not known whether Parker died from a medical condition or from injuries sustained in the crash. The patrol says Parker went through a stop sign before the accident.

Packers DT Raji upgraded to probable for Vikings game

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Defensive tackle B.J. Raji has been upgraded to probable for Green Bay's game against the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday night.

The move gives the Packers hope that they'll have one of their top run-stuffers available to contain NFL leading rusher Adrian Peterson.

Raji missed last week's loss against Arizona with a concussion.

The Packers also upgraded linebacker Mike Neal to probable after Saturday's practice. Neal has been bothered by a sore hip.

But Green Bay could be without cornerback Sam Shields for a third straight game because of a concussion. Shields was downgraded to doubtful.

Two other key players remain questionable for the Packers: left tackle David Bakhtiari has an ankle injury, while defensive tackle Mike Daniels has a groin injury.

The Latest: UN rights chief slams Saudi mass execution

The Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — The latest developments after Saudi Arabia executes a prominent opposition Shiite cleric convicted of terrorism charges, sparking anger in Iran and among Shiites across the region (All times local).

1:40 p.m.

The U.N.'s top human rights official has strongly criticized Saudi Arabia for executing 47 people in a single day.

Zeid Raad al-Hussein says the execution Saturday was "a very disturbing development indeed, particularly as some of those sentenced to death were accused of non-violent crimes."

He says international law only permits the death penalty in cases where the crimes committed are considered "most serious" and human rights bodies have consistently defined those as being "being restricted

to murder and other forms of intentional killing.”

In a statement Sunday, he questioned whether due process had been observed during the trials of those executed, all of whom were convicted of terrorism charges.

Those executed included prominent Shiite opposition figure Nimr Al-Nimr, three other Shiite dissidents and a number of al-Qaida militants.

Israel indicts Jewish extremists in deadly arson attack

ARON HELLER, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel on Sunday indicted two Jewish extremists suspected in a July arson attack on a Palestinian home that killed a toddler and his parents — a case that has been unsolved for months and helped fuel the current wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

The long-awaited indictment follows months of investigations into a web of Jewish extremists operating in the West Bank. The indictment named Amiram Ben-Uliel, a 21-year-old West Bank settler, as the main suspect in the attack. A minor was charged as an accessory.

Yinon Reuveni, 20, and another minor were charged for other violence against Palestinians. All four were charged with belonging to a terrorist organization.

The arson attack in the West Bank village of Duma killed 18-month-old Ali Dawabsheh, while his mother, Riham, and father, Saad, later died of their wounds. Ali's 4-year-old brother Ahmad survived.

The firebombing, carried out at night while the family slept, sparked soul-searching among Israelis.

It was condemned across the Israeli political spectrum and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged “zero tolerance” in the fight to bring the assailants to justice. Israel has authorized a series of steps, including holding several suspects without charge — a tactic typically used against Palestinian militants — to crack the case.

But critics have said that similar, albeit not deadly, attacks have festered for years with little action by the government. And for months, Palestinians watched angrily as the case remained unsolved, intensifying a feeling of skewed justice in the occupied territory, where suspected Palestinian militants are prosecuted under a separate system of military law that gives them few rights. The arson also touched on Palestinian fears of extremist Jewish settlers, who have attacked Palestinian property with impunity.

Palestinians cite the Duma incident as a factor in a three-month wave of attacks and clashes roiling the region, saying they are frustrated by years of unchecked settler violence.

Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers over the past three and a half months have killed 21 Israelis, mostly in stabbings, shootings and car-ramming attacks. That figure does not include the two Israelis killed Friday by an Arab man in a shooting attack on a Tel Aviv restaurant, as the motive for the attack hasn't officially been determined yet.

During that time, at least 131 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, 90 of them identified by Israel as assailants. The rest died in clashes with security forces.

Israel says the violence is being fanned by a Palestinian campaign of incitement. The Palestinians say it is rooted in frustrations stemming from nearly five decades of Israeli occupation.

Israel's Shin Bet security service said Sunday that the suspects admitted to carrying out the Duma attack, saying it was in retaliation for the killing of an Israeli settler by Palestinians a month earlier. It said all the suspects were part of a group of extremists that had carried out a series of attacks over the years in a religiously inspired campaign to undermine the government and sow fear among non-Jews.

The indictment said Ben-Uliel admitted to spraying graffiti on the Dawabsheh family home and then tossing a firebomb through a bedroom window before fleeing the scene. Ben-Uliel's parents said they believe in his innocence and that he was tortured during interrogation.

Nasser Dawabsheh, Saad's brother, said the indictments were not enough.

“It's clear the Israeli institutions are not serious,” he said. “It's clear there was an organization behind this crime, even the media knows that. And the government was not serious in preventing it and is not serious in pursuing the killers.”

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 14 of 27

Jewish extremists have for years vandalized or set fire to Palestinian property, as well as mosques, churches, the offices of dovish Israeli groups and even Israeli military bases. The so-called "price tag" attacks seek to exact a cost for Israeli steps seen as favoring the Palestinians.

The extremists are part of a movement known as the "hilltop youth," a leaderless group of young people who set up unauthorized outposts, usually clusters of trailers, on West Bank hilltops — land the Palestinians claim for their hoped-for state. A lawyer for one of the suspects says his client gave a forced confession after interrogators deprived him of sleep and tied him upside down by his feet.

Hong Kong unsettled by case of 5 missing booksellers

KELVIN CHAN, Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong pro-democracy lawmakers said Sunday that they will press the government for answers after a fifth employee of a publisher specializing in books critical of mainland China's leadership went missing.

Lawmaker Albert Ho said the city was "shocked and appalled" by the disappearance of Lee Bo. Like the four others who have disappeared in recent months, Lee is associated with publisher Mighty Current.

While there's been no official word on what happened to the five missing people, Ho told reporters that it appears their disappearances are linked to the publisher's books.

"From the available information surrounding the disappearance of Mr. Lee Bo and his partners earlier, we have strong reason to believe that Mr. Lee Bo was probably kidnapped and then smuggled back to the mainland for political investigation," Ho said.

It's not uncommon in mainland China for company executives and dissidents to be detained for lengthy periods by the authorities or vanish without anyone claiming responsibility, but the disappearances are unprecedented in Hong Kong and have shocked the city's publishing industry.

A few dozen protesters marched to Beijing's Liaison Office on Sunday to demand information about Lee, Mighty Current's chief editor. Lee, 65, is also one of the company's major shareholders, the South China Morning Post reported.

The company's co-owner, Gui Minhai, is also among those missing, as are three staff members.

Mighty Current and its Causeway Bay Bookstore are known for gossipy titles about Chinese political scandals and other sensitive issues popular with visiting tourists from the mainland.

Books by Mighty Current are banned on the mainland but are available in Hong Kong, which enjoys freedom of the press and other civil liberties unseen on the mainland because of its status as a specially administered region of China. However, the disappearances highlight growing concern that Beijing is moving to tighten its grip on the former British colony as President Xi Jinping moves to clamp down on dissent.

Hong Kong Acting Secretary for Security John Lee told reporters that police were "actively" investigating the case and would widen the scope of their probe.

The Hong Kong-Macau Affairs Office, which is under China's State Council, could not be reached Sunday for comment.

Lee went missing Wednesday evening and was last seen leaving his company's warehouse, according to local media reports.

His wife told the Cable TV news channel in a report broadcast Saturday that she received a phone call from him the night he disappeared. She said he told her then that he was "assisting an investigation" and alluded to the earlier disappearances, but was not more specific.

The number indicated the call came from Shenzhen, the mainland Chinese city next door to Hong Kong, the report said.

Obama returns from Hawaii saying he's 'fired up' for 2016

KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — President Barack Obama is returning to the rancor of the nation's capital after two weeks of fun and sun in his native Hawaii, saying he's "fired up" for his final year in office and ready to tackle unfinished business.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 15 of 27

At the top of Obama's priority list is executive action that is expected to expand when background checks are required for gun purchases. Obama is meeting with Attorney General Loretta Lynch on Monday to discuss a three-month review of what actions he could take to help reduce gun violence.

The actions, which are staunchly opposed by Republicans and likely to spark a legal fight, underscore Obama's desire to keep up an aggressive agenda in 2016, even as the public's attention shifts to the presidential election.

Obama spent much of his vacation out of the public eye, playing golf with friends and dining out on the island of Oahu with his family. He also worked on his final State of the Union address, scheduled for Jan. 12.

The address to Congress is a high-profile opportunity for the president to try to reassure the public about his national security stewardship after the terrorism attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California. Advisers say Obama will also look for other opportunities to keep security issues at the forefront as he tries to ease Americans' concerns.

"Over the coming weeks and months, the American people should expect the president to continue to communicate directly about his commitment to fighting terrorism and protecting the homeland," spokesman Eric Schultz said.

Congressional Republicans have outlined a competing agenda for January, saying they'll spend the first days of 2016 taking another crack at eliminating key parts of the president's health insurance law and ending federal funding for Planned Parenthood. The legislation is unlikely to become law, but it is popular with the GOP base in an election year.

The debate over Obama's gun actions will quickly spill over into the presidential campaign. Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton has already called for more aggressive executive actions on guns, while Republican candidates largely oppose efforts to expand background checks or take other steps that curb access to guns.

In his weekly radio address, Obama said tens of thousands of people have died from gun violence since background check legislation stalled three years ago.

"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," Obama said. "We know that we can't stop every act of violence. But what if we tried to stop even one?"

Federally licensed gun sellers are required by law to seek criminal background checks before completing a sale. But gun control 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.

Despite his deep differences with Republicans, Obama has cited two agenda items for 2016 that have bipartisan support: a free trade agreement with 11 other nations called the Trans-Pacific Partnership and changes in the criminal justice system that would reduce incarceration rates for nonviolent offenders. He often points out that the U.S. accounts for 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of its inmates.

St. Louis area faces big cleanup effort after flooding

SUMMER BALLENTINE, Associated Press

CARLA K. JOHNSON, Associated Press

As the Mississippi River and its tributaries retreated from historic winter levels that flooded towns, forced evacuations and killed two dozen people, residents in the St. Louis area were facing a massive cleanup and recovery effort that will likely last weeks.

"The healing process, the restoration process has begun," Chris Greenhagen, pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Eureka, Missouri, one of the communities hit by flooding along the Meramec River earlier this week, said Saturday in a telephone interview.

The flood, fueled by more than 10 inches of rain over a three-day period that began last weekend, is blamed for 24 deaths in Illinois and Missouri.

Water from the Mississippi, Meramec and Missouri rivers largely began receding Friday in the St. Louis area. Two major highways — Interstate 44 and Interstate 55 — reopened south of St. Louis on Friday and

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 16 of 27

some evacuees were also allowed then to return home.

While residents took stock of the ruin, President Barack Obama on Saturday signed a federal emergency declaration for Missouri that allows federal aid to be used to help state and local response efforts. It also allows the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate disaster relief efforts. Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon had asked for the help.

Nixon and Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner also toured flood-ravaged areas as near-record crest predictions of the Mississippi River and levee breaks threatened more homes.

In Missouri, Noelle Pace said she packed up electronics, some furniture and her 4-year-old son's clothing and toys and left Pacific on Dec. 28, the day after she received a request to evacuate. She felt lucky to find the damage isolated to her crawl space when she returned for the first time Thursday.

"Everybody around us had catastrophic damage," Pace said. She said she might not be able to move back for weeks while her landlord replaces soaked insulation.

"It doesn't feel real yet," she said.

Illinois Emergency Management Agency spokeswoman Patti Thompson said the state's flooding death toll increased to nine. Fifteen have died in Missouri.

Rauner encouraged people to respect requests to evacuate.

"This is life-threatening," he told reporters at Carlyle Lake in Clinton County in southern Illinois. "It's not just the water; it's the temperature. Hypothermia is a big risk to people's lives."

The main culprit in the St. Louis region was the Meramec River, a relatively small Mississippi tributary that bombarded communities in the far southwestern reaches of the St. Louis suburbs during the week. Two wastewater treatment plants were so damaged by the floodwaters that raw sewage spewed into the river. Hundreds of people were evacuated in the Missouri communities of Pacific, Eureka, Valley Park and Arnold, where many homes took in water.

William Reynolds said he moved at least \$50,000 worth of inventory from his Valley Park store to the second story of his nearby home when the area was evacuated. He was still unpacking Saturday after the evacuation was lifted.

While the worst of the dangerous, deadly winter flood was over in the St. Louis area, the water was slowly make its way south.

In southeast Missouri, the Mississippi crested overnight Friday but not before damaging about two-dozen homes in Cape Girardeau, a community of nearly 40,000 residents that is mostly protected by a flood wall.

"What we'd like people to know is that in Cape Girardeau there have been so many precautions in place that even given the magnitude of this event it's really gone remarkably well for us," Molly Hood, Cape Girardeau's deputy city manager, said Saturday.

Elsewhere, the Illinois River continued to rise Saturday and could near historic crests Tuesday or Wednesday, according to Thomas Spriggs, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in St. Louis.

"It's still a very significant flood," Spriggs said. "It's going to be at major flood stage for the next three days."

Parts of the South were also in the flood's path.

Moderate Mississippi River flooding is expected in Memphis. Dale Lane, director of the Shelby County Office of Preparedness, said high water from the river and its tributaries was approaching some homes on Mud Island, just south of downtown Memphis.

The National Weather Service issued a flood advisory for the Cumberland River at Dover, Tennessee, through Monday evening.

Minor flooding along the Ohio River was affecting the Kentucky cities of Owensboro and Paducah, and the crest wasn't expected until Thursday.

Idaho man finds art in back hair

NAMPA, Idaho (AP) — One man's back hair is another man's canvas.

At least that's how Mike Wolfe, 35, of Nampa, Idaho, has decided to approach manscaping.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 17 of 27

Wolfe tells KTVB-TV (<http://bit.ly/1RbVtWe>) that after years of feeling ashamed of his body hair, he asked a friend in 2008 to trim an American flag on his back rather than undergoing hair removal processes like shaving or waxing. Since then, the two meet up several times throughout the year to design a new creation onto Wolfe's back.

"Pssh, it's manhandling back hair," said Wolfe. "It's disgusting. But it's funny. You can't deny it's funny."

Tyler Harding, a former graphic artist who has been friends with Wolfe for more than a decade, says it takes about an hour to complete the artistic trim.

And the creations can now be seen on a calendar — called a Calend-hair — available for \$20. Some proceeds will benefit a charity at Wolfe's church.

Designs are uniquely named, such as Grim Reap-hair for October and M-hair-achi Band for May.

"Everybody always makes fun of the guy with back hair," Wolfe said. "Well now it's my turn to shine, right?"

Wolfe's wife takes some credit for him flaunting his fur. When they went on their first date, Wolfe told her he was hairy. He felt nervous at the time, but she took it in stride.

"Looking back now this might be because of me," Jamie Wolfe said. "Maybe I shouldn't have given him so much confidence in his back hair."

China rejects Vietnam protest over sea flight test

DIDI TANG, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China rejected a protest from Vietnam over a flight test it has conducted on a new airstrip on a man-made island in the South China Sea, saying it is part of China's territory.

Vietnam Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh said that the test flight violated Vietnam's sovereignty, breached mutual understanding and hurt the bilateral relations.

"Vietnam resolutely protests Chinese above-said action and demand that China immediately stop, not repeat similar actions," he said in a statement.

In a response Saturday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the test flight on the newly built airstrip on Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratly Islands was carried out to find out if the new airfield met the standards for civil aviation.

"Relevant activity falls completely within China's sovereignty," Hua said in a statement. "The Chinese side will not accept the unfounded accusations from the Vietnamese side."

China has become more assertive in pressing its claims to the South China Sea islands, an archipelago rich in natural resources that is the focal point of rival claims by neighboring governments.

China has recently piled sand on coral reefs atop of which it built airfields, radar installations and docking facilities. As with most of its policy in the South China Sea, Beijing has remained opaque about its plans for the island airstrips.

Beijing insists its island building works are justified and don't constitute a threat to stability and freedom of navigation. The U.S. and its regional allies have expressed concern that China's robust assertion of its claims has aggravated tensions.

Although Vietnam already has an airstrip in the Spratlys, it is just long enough to accommodate slow-moving cargo and surveillance planes. China's airstrip on Fiery Cross Reef is long enough for bombers capable of launching cruise missiles.

Somali extremists use Donald Trump clip to recruit followers

ABDI GULED, Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — Al-Qaida's East African affiliate has released a recruitment video targeting American blacks and Muslims that includes a clip of presidential candidate Donald Trump calling for Muslims to be banned from entering the United States.

The 51-minute video by the Somalia based al-Shabab militant group presents the U.S. as a country of institutionalized racism against blacks that also persecutes Muslims. The video presents radical Islam as the solution.

The clip of Trump on the campaign trail consists of his infamous proposal for the "total and complete

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 18 of 27

shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” to protect the country.

Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton had earlier claimed that the Islamic State group, another extremist organization, was using such quotes to recruit followers, prompting Trump to call her a “liar.”

The quotes from Trump are bracketed by a recorded speech from Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, one of the most prominent English-language recruiters for al-Qaida who was killed by a U.S. drone strike in Yemen in 2011, warning that the U.S. would turn against its Muslims.

The video was released on Twitter Friday, according to the SITE Intel monitoring group and tells the story of several Americans from Minnesota that joined al-Shabab and were killed in the fighting in Somalia, holding them up as examples to be followed.

Using footage from recent racial conflicts in the U.S. as well as historic quotes from Malcolm X, the video lays out the argument that blacks and Muslims will always face discrimination in the U.S. and should join jihadi movements to fight back.

Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser in the Obama administration, said he won't comment on any particular presidential candidate's remarks, but the administration has long warned that terrorist organizations will take advantage of any notion that the U.S. is at war with Islam.

Rhodes said he would hope that American send a message that rejects the notion that the U.S. and Islam are at war, and instead emphasize the contributions of Muslim-Americans.

“We're at war with terrorists. We're not at war with Islam,” Rhodes said. “The terrorists want us to act like we're at war with Islam. That's how they recruit people. That's how they stir up grievances. To defeat terrorists, we need to kill terrorists on the battlefield, but we also need to defeat this narrative that allows them to recruit people.”

Al-Shabab is fighting the internationally-backed Somali government. It was pushed out of Mogadishu in 2011 with the help of African Union troops.

The militants have still carried out numerous guerrilla attacks in Somalia and the countries contributing troops, including Kenya, Djibouti and Uganda.

Trump, who is leading in polls in the race to be the Republican candidate in next year's presidential election, has been rebuked by both Democratic and Republican candidates for their parties' nomination, for his proposed ban on Muslims in early December.

Clinton's campaign declined to comment on the video.

Coroner: Body of 5-year-old boy with autism found in canal

ALLENTOWN, Pa. (AP) — The body of a 5-year-old Pennsylvania boy with autism was found in a canal about a quarter mile from a relative's home where the boy wandered away, barefoot and without a coat, during a New Year's Eve party, authorities announced Saturday.

Lehigh County Coroner Scott Grim said an autopsy Monday will help determine when Jayliel Vega Batista entered the water at Canal Park in Allentown.

“Preliminarily, this is being considered a tragic accident,” Allentown police Chief Keith Morris said at the same Saturday evening news conference.

The boy went missing about 10:30 p.m. Thursday, after family members told police he was playing with a tablet computer with other children before he simply wandered away without being immediately noticed. Temperatures were near freezing Friday night into Saturday, and rose to only the high 30s.

Search dogs tracked the boy's scent to the canal, where a searcher found the tablet early Saturday afternoon. That prompted police to call in fire department divers who found the boy's body about 8 feet from shore, in 6 feet of water, authorities said.

“At this point, we don't believe there was any foul play involved,” Morris said. But police were continuing their investigation in hopes of pinpointing where, how and why the boy may have entered the water.

The chief couldn't immediately say whether anyone might face charges because the boy wandered away, though authorities took care to note they were attempting to assist the boy's grieving family. They asked reporters and the public to respect the family's privacy, and said a local funeral director has offered to pay for the boy's burial.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 19 of 27

"I loved my son," the boy's father Gilberto Vega said shortly after being told of his son's death, The (Allentown) Morning Call reported. "He had no fear. He didn't understand the dangers."

The tablet was found about 30 yards away from where the dogs traced the boy's scent. It's possible the boy entered the water at that location, then drifted to the spot where he was found Saturday, authorities said.

Grim couldn't say how the boy died, or whether he was likely still alive when he entered the water.

"We'll determine that Monday at the autopsy," Grim said, adding that calculations involving the water temperature and the body temperature of the boy will help determine how long he's been in the water and how he died.

Thurman Clark, 25, told the newspaper that he found the tablet computer shortly after joining other searchers at the canal about 1 p.m. Saturday.

"I really hope it's not his," Clark said.

Earlier in the day, police Capt. Glen Dorney said 20 search-and-rescue dog teams were looking for Jayliel and crews were re-canvassing his neighborhood because a search of nearby woods and other possible locations showed no signs of the boy.

The boy was visiting his great-aunt's home for the holiday, and left barefoot and without any kind of outerwear, police said.

The residents of Allentown, about 50 miles northwest of Philadelphia, joined the search for the boy without being asked. Police had to ask some volunteers to stop because there were so many, instead urging residents to search their properties, including parked cars and any places the boy might be hiding or seeking refuge from the cold.

Mayor Ed Pawlowski commended the volunteers and others who tried in vain to find the boy.

"This is a sad day in the conclusion of our search," the mayor said. "This is a sad day in our city."

4 gunmen, 2 troops dead in attack on Indian air base

CHANNI ANAND, Associated Press

PATHANKOT, India (AP) — Suspected militants infiltrated an Indian air force base near the border with Pakistan and fought security forces for hours, leaving at least four gunmen and two Indian troops dead in what is being seen as a possible attempt to undo recent progress in relations between the two rival countries.

The attack Saturday at the Pathankot air force base in Punjab came just a week after the first visit to Pakistan in 12 years by an Indian prime minister. Police said they were investigating whether the gunmen came from the Indian portion of Kashmir, where rebels routinely stage attacks, or from Pakistan.

The assault began a couple of hours before dawn when a group of gunmen entered the section of the base where the living quarters are located, the Defense Ministry said. The attackers, however, were unable to penetrate the area where fighter helicopters and other military equipment are kept, it said.

By late morning it appeared that the violence had ended with the killing of the gunmen by Indian forces. But two hours later, more gunfire erupted and an air force helicopter was seen firing at an area of the base, a major installation located about 430 kilometers (267 miles) north of New Delhi.

Air force spokeswoman Rochelle D'Silva said Saturday night that troops were combing the entire base to fully secure it. She said that the combing operation was expected to continue through the night, and that the full number of casualties would be clear once the base was completely secured.

By 9 p.m., no gunfire had been heard around the base for more than three hours.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an unannounced visit to Pakistan on Dec. 25 to meet with his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif. The visit was seen as a potential sign of thawing relations between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. The two leaders also held an unscheduled meeting at the Paris climate change talks last month.

Ahead of Modi's visit to Pakistan, the national security advisers of both countries had met in Thailand. The foreign secretaries of both nations are scheduled to meet in Islamabad later this month.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 20 of 27

The Indian Defense Ministry said there had been intelligence reports about a likely terror attack on military installations in Pathankot, and that the air force had been prepared to thwart any attackers.

"Due to the effective preparation and coordinated efforts by all the security agencies a group of terrorists were detected by the aerial surveillance platforms as soon as they entered the Air Force Station at Pathankot," the ministry said in a statement.

Despite the intelligence on a possible attack, at least two air force troops were killed in the gunbattle, the Press Trust of India news agency reported. PTI, citing police, also said at least four gunmen had been killed.

Pathankot is on the highway that connects India's insurgency-wracked Jammu and Kashmir state with the rest of the country. It's also very close to India's border with Pakistan. The Himalayan region of Kashmir, where rebels have been fighting since 1989 for independence or merger with Pakistan, is divided between India and Pakistan, but is claimed in its entirety by both.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training Kashmir's insurgents, a charge Islamabad denies, and the attack was viewed by many in India as an attempt to unravel recent progress in the country's relationship with its archrival.

In the past, the contentious issue of Kashmir has halted talks between India and Pakistan.

"These kinds of attacks are nothing new and have generally been the outcome of the dispute of India and Pakistan over Kashmir," said Noor Ahmed Baba, a political scientist at Central University in Indian Kashmir's capital, Srinagar.

Baba said that there were elements in both countries that would like to see the peace process fizzle out, and that all sides must "exhibit political maturity and sagacity to defeat the vested interests."

Modi, at a speech in the southern city of Mysore, congratulated security forces "for turning the intentions of our country's enemies into dust. They didn't let them succeed. And I salute the martyrdom of the soldiers who sacrificed their lives."

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh told reporters that India wants peace with Pakistan, but "if there is any kind of terror attack on India, we will give it a fitting reply."

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry condemned the attack. "Building on the goodwill created during the recent high level contacts between the two countries, Pakistan remains committed to partner with India as well as other countries in the region to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism afflicting our region," it said in a statement.

The State Department said it was committed to strong partnership with India in combating terrorism and urged all counties in the region to "disrupt and dismantle terrorist network" and bring perpetrators of the latest attack to justice.

In July, gunmen staged a similar attack at a police station and a moving bus near Gurdaspur, a border town in India's Punjab state. The three attackers then killed four policemen and three civilians before being shot dead by security forces.

TV ratings for New Year's 6 Bowls down 13 percent overall

RALPH D. RUSSO, AP College Football Writer

Lopsided games and playing the College Football Playoff semifinals on New Year's Eve for the first time led to a 13 percent drop in TV ratings for the New Year's Six Bowls from last year.

The Rose Bowl on Friday drew its lowest rating (7.9) since it became part of the BCS in 1999.

But don't expect any changes to future College Football Playoff schedules based on the one-year dip.

The overnight ratings for the big New Year's Day bowls were announced Saturday by ESPN, which broadcasts all the games.

Overall, the ratings for the six major games played Thursday and Friday, including the semifinals in the Orange and Cotton bowls Thursday, averaged a 7.1 overnight rating, down from 8.2 last season, when the first playoff games drew record-breaking audiences to ESPN.

"That decline, frankly, is not much of a surprise and it's modest," College Football Playoff executive director Bill Hancock said. "It's too soon to know how much was due to the lopsided games or how much

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 21 of 27

what I think we all thought would be an inevitable decline from the excitement of the first year or the semifinals on New Year's Eve. I suspect it's a combination of those three, but I don't have any idea what the weighting is. ESPN is studying the numbers and we'll learn a lot more in the next few months."

The average margin of victory in the New Year's Six games was 24.2 points.

All three of Friday's major bowls were blowouts. The Fiesta between Ohio State and Notre Dame, earned a 6.2 rating. That was up 35 percent from last season's Arizona-Boise State game. The Buckeyes beat the Fighting Irish 44-28.

Stanford beat Iowa 45-16 in the Rose Bowl on Friday. The previously lowest-rated Rose Bowl since 1999 was the 2012 game between Stanford and Wisconsin, which drew a 9.4.

The Sugar Bowl, which Mississippi won 48-20 against Oklahoma State, drew a 5.3 rating. That was the lowest Sugar Bowl since the Bowl Championship Series was established in 1999.

ESPN did see big increases in digital viewers who streamed the game online through WatchESPN. ESPN said the New Year's Six averaged 776,000 unique viewers and 43,871,000 total minutes for the six games, up 54 percent and 67 percent, respectively, from last year.

"The College Football Playoff is a long-term, multiplatform play for us," Burke Magnus, ESPN executive vice president of programming and scheduling, said in a statement. "With that said, there are many variables that impact ratings results including what happens on the field and the numbers this year were obviously impacted by the unbalanced scores of these games."

Last season's College Football Playoff semifinals, played on New Year's Day, drew a record number cable viewers, and ratings that edged past 15 for both the Oregon-Florida State Rose Bowl and the Ohio State-Alabama Sugar Bowl.

Total viewership for the semifinals played Thursday between Michigan State and Alabama in the Cotton Bowl and Clemson and Oklahoma in Orange Bowl plunged 34.4 percent, from 28,271,000 in 2015 to 18,552,000.

"What that tells me is many, many fans found a new way to watch the games," Hancock said.

ESPN has the rights to all six games. This is the second season of 12-year contracts worth a total of \$7.3 million to the major college football conferences. The Rose and Sugar bowls have separate television deals with ESPN that lock in their prime New Year's Day time slots. When the College Football Playoff semifinals are played in the other four games in the New Year's Six rotation, they will be played on New Year's Eve.

ESPN suggested moving this season's semifinals to Jan. 2, a Saturday with no NFL games to compete against, but playoff officials did not want to delay the start of what they hope can become a new tradition.

Next season, the Fiesta and Peach bowls will host the semifinals on New Year's Eve, which falls on a Saturday. The semifinals are back in the Rose and Sugar bowls, and on New Year's Day, after the 2017 season.

"There hasn't been discussion in our group at all about changing the dates," Hancock said.

'Game of Thrones' author blogs that he missed book deadline

VERENA DOBNIK, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For fans of George R.R. Martin, winter is not coming — at least not right away.

The "Game of Thrones" author says he missed a Dec. 31 deadline to finish "The Winds of Winter," the sixth book in his popular fantasy series. That means the next HBO season based on the novel will start airing in April, before the book is published.

The words "you won't like it" appeared Saturday on Martin's blog, reporting that "the book's not done. ... I tried, I promise you. I failed."

Martin says he is working with HBO to ensure the show reflects the next installment of the "A Song of Ice and Fire" books — in which characters warn of impending doom with the phrase "Winter is coming."

With hundreds of pages and dozens of chapters written, Martin said he estimates it will still take months more if the writing goes well.

"You can blame my travels or my blog posts or the distractions of other projects and the Cocteau and whatever, but maybe all that had an impact," he wrote, referring to the single-screen Jean Cocteau Cinema

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 22 of 27

he purchased and fixed up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he lives.

"For months now I have wanted nothing so much as to be able to say, 'I have completed and delivered *The Winds of Winter*' on or before the last day of 2015," the 67-year-old author blogged.

The truth is "sometimes the writing goes well and sometimes it doesn't, and that was true for me even when I was in my 20s," he wrote.

Messages left at Martin's office and the cinema were not immediately returned.

Two-year twins: Babies born Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 in San Diego

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Twins in San Diego are getting some attention because, though born just minutes apart, one has a birthday in 2015 and one in 2016.

Jaelyn Valenica was born New Year's Eve at 11:59 p.m. Her twin brother, Luis Valencia Jr., arrived at 12:01 a.m. on New Year's Day.

KGTV-TV reports (<http://tinyurl.com/jaqbtas>) that the babies were due at the end of January, but doctors at San Diego Kaiser Permanente Zion Medical Center called the mother in because one was in a breech position.

The father, Luis Valencia, called it a New Year's blessing to have two healthy children.

France quarrels over revoking citizenship of terrorists

SYLVIE CORBET, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The push by France's Socialist government to revoke the citizenship of convicted terrorists with dual nationality after the Paris attacks has turned into a harsh political dispute, with the far right applauding the move while some on the left express indignation at what they call a divisive measure.

French President Francois Hollande submitted the proposal three days after the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris that left 130 dead, in a shift toward a hard line on security. The idea appears to have strong support in French public opinion. Several polls over the past week suggest that 80 to 90 percent of the French are in favor of the measure.

Under current French law, citizenship revocation can only be applied to people who have been naturalized, not if they are French-born, and the procedure is rarely implemented.

The new rules would extend it to all dual nationals, but cannot be applied to people who are only French citizens, as France's obligations under international law prevent it from leaving a person stateless.

Opponents of the measure consider it would create two classes of citizens — dual nationals who could lose their citizenship and others who cannot — in opposition to the principle of equality set out in France's constitution.

French authorities have not said how many of those arrested over the Paris attacks are dual nationals.

Prominent Socialist Party figures, including former Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, have publicly expressed their disapproval, but Hollande has stuck to his guns.

"France must take the good decisions beyond traditional party divisions," the president said in his New Year's Eve speech.

While the left is divided, Hollande is getting unusual support from the right. The far-right National Front has claimed it is at the origin of the idea. "Terrorists don't deserve French citizenship, because French citizenship is an honor", vice president of the party Florian Philippot told France Info radio.

Members of the conservative opposition, including former President Nicolas Sarkozy, have also largely supported the proposal — while also calling for more security measures.

The government says the new measure would apply to a very small number of people.

The issue remains highly sensitive in France as some have compared it to the revocation of citizenship of Jews and members of the French Resistance during World War II, when the government led by Philippe Petain collaborated with German authorities. The Vichy regime revoked the citizenship of more than 15,000 naturalized and 500 French-born people — including General Charles de Gaulle.

"It's dangerous because you start wanting to revoke the citizenship of some people, then take a step

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 23 of 27

further," said Socialist senator Samia Ghali.

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls defended the action this week. "This is a strong symbolic act that punishes those who excluded themselves from the national community. Nothing less, nothing more," he said in a written statement.

France first adopted the revocation of citizenship in 1848 for those who refused to accept the abolition of slavery, Valls recalled.

The constitutional change, to be debated in Parliament in February, requires a three-fifths majority vote from lawmakers.

About 50 human rights and anti-racist organizations and unions have launched a petition to reject the measure.

Some human rights defenders consider the proposal implicitly targets France's Muslim community, the largest in Western Europe — including many French-born with Moroccan, Tunisian or Algerian origins who have both citizenships.

The Paris attacks, which left 130 dead and hundreds wounded, were carried out in the name of the Islamic State group largely by French and Belgian extremists. Some of them were of Moroccan descent.

The possibility of revoking the citizenship of all dual nationals — not only the naturalized ones — already exists in Britain, Canada and the Netherlands.

In the U.S., a person can have his naturalization revoked for being a member of the Communist party, another totalitarian party or a terrorist organization within five years of his or her naturalization. The measure does not apply to natural-born U.S. citizens.

Trial in NYC set to air GM ignition switch recall issues

LARRY NEUMEISTER, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A civil trial set to start this month in New York City will test the legal boundaries of hundreds of claims remaining against General Motors Co. stemming from faulty ignition switches.

The case involves an Oklahoma man who blames a defective ignition switch for preventing his air bags from deploying during a crash. It's the first trial to result from hundreds of lawsuits filed against GM after the auto giant revealed in 2014 that faulty ignition switches in Chevy Cobalts and other small cars necessitated an unprecedented recall. The switches can slip out of the "on" position, causing the cars to stall, knocking out power steering and turning off air bags.

GM knew about the faulty switches for more than a decade but did not recall them until February 2014. The company paid nearly \$600 million to settle 399 claims made to a fund it established. Those claims covered 124 deaths and 275 injuries, though GM's fund rejected more than 90 percent of the 4,343 claims it received, according to figures the company released in December.

In recent weeks, U.S. District Judge Jesse M. Furman, the presiding judge, has made rulings that may prevent the automaker from taking the easy road toward settling or forcing dismissal of scores of lawsuits.

The judge has refused the company's request to exclude evidence and arguments related to punitive damages, saying GM's delay in recalling admittedly defective vehicles was "arguably dangerous conduct as it involved a hidden defect that caused a risk of serious injury or death."

The judge also ruled that the "New GM," as it is repeatedly referred to in court papers, cannot dismiss the claims of Robert S. Scheuer — the plaintiff in the trial set to start Jan. 11 — merely because he failed to keep his 2003 Saturn Ion after his front air bags failed to deploy when he was forced off an Oklahoma highway by another car and smashed head-on into two trees in Bristow.

Scheuer, of Tulsa, was injured in the May 28, 2014, crash and retained lawyer Bob Hilliard, co-lead counsel for hundreds of federal cases consolidated in New York City.

"For years and years, GM — including to some of my clients — would say: 'Look, this accident is your fault. Take \$75,000 even though your family is dead,'" he said in a telephone interview from his Texas office.

Hilliard said the litigants watching the case closely include "many traumatized folks who got pushed around by GM while the cover-up was active."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 24 of 27

General Motors has told U.S. regulators in a recent quarterly report that it still faces 217 wrongful death and injury lawsuits in the U.S. and Canada, along with 122 lawsuits alleging that the recalls reduced values of owners' cars.

GM spokesman Jim Cain said the Scheuer trial, likely to last about a month, is the first of six bellwether trials that will occur over the next year. He said the outcome of the Scheuer trial would "help form the basis for settlement of similar claims."

"It's our belief that the air bags weren't designed to deploy in the accident that he had," Cain said.

In September, GM announced it had reached a \$575 million deal with Hilliard to settle 1,385 death and injury cases and to resolve a 2014 class-action lawsuit filed by shareholders claiming GM's actions reduced the value of their stock.

The announcement came as the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan revealed GM had settled a criminal investigation, agreeing to pay \$900 million to the government to avoid prosecution on wire fraud charges.

The company has initiated companywide safety reforms and in 2014 issued a record 84 recalls covering more than 30 million vehicles, including 27 million in the U.S.

States plan renewed debate on LGBT rights, religious freedom

DAVID A. LIEB, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — With same-sex marriage now legal nationwide, lawmakers in numerous states are preparing for a new round of battles in 2016 over whether to grant discrimination protections to LGBT people or religious exemptions to nonprofits and businesses that object to gay marriage.

The tussle over civil rights and religious freedoms is one of several hot-button issues that could drive states in opposite policy directions, as lawmakers seek to appeal to voters during a year in which more than 5,800 state legislative seats will be up for election.

Republicans hold majorities in two-thirds of the states' legislative chambers, meaning they get to set the agenda. Those priorities could include attempts to exempt businesses from providing wedding-related services to gay couples, expand gun rights and further restrictions on abortions.

Democrats, meanwhile, will likely be pushing in the opposite direction.

"What we've got is division," said William Pound, executive director of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

He predicts there will be a "significant number of bills" seeking to advance either religious rights or the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

"You've got the Democratic states reacting very differently, a lot of the time, than the Republican states to these issues," Pound said.

Those potentially divisive debates will be playing out as legislators also struggle with some traditionally difficult financial issues, such as budget shortfalls and calls to boost funding for public schools and infrastructure. Education issues are expected to be at the forefront in more than a third of the states, according to an analysis by Associated Press statehouse reporters around the country.

At least 10 states might consider new revenue for transportation in 2016, building on a trend in which at least half the states already have acted in the past several years.

States that rely heavily on the energy industry for tax income, such as Alaska, Oklahoma, West Virginia and Wyoming, are taking big budget hits due to falling oil, natural gas and coal revenue. But tax cuts could be on the agenda in more than a half-dozen other states, including Arizona, Florida and Maine.

States' general revenues are expected to grow by about 2.5 percent in 2016, according to the National Association of State Budget Officers. As they prepare their next budgets, "states are still going to be very pinched" to meet rising costs for K-12 schools, Medicaid and core services, said David Adkins, executive director and chief executive of The Council of State Governments.

Added to the mix will be several emerging issues, such as how to quell a rise in opiate addictions and overdoses, and whether to extend regulations to online fantasy sports and to individuals renting rides or lodging through the "sharing economy."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 25 of 27

Some states also will be wrestling with unique local issues, including flood recovery in South Carolina, whether to keep the Confederate emblem on the Mississippi flag, as well as ethics overhauls following political scandals in New York, Missouri and New Mexico.

Influential national groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Family Research Council are preparing for a new round of legislative debates after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June that states must allow same-sex marriage. Their focus now is on the effect of that ruling.

There are 22 states with laws barring discrimination based on sexual orientation and 21 with laws limiting the government's ability to burden the free exercise of religion. But just four states — Connecticut, Rhode Island, Illinois and New Mexico — have both.

The ACLU will be seeking to expand the list of places barring discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It's targeting at least a half dozen states — Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania — that have Republican-led legislatures and also may be pivotal in presidential elections.

The Supreme Court's decision "certainly provides momentum on the issue," said Pennsylvania Rep. Dan Frankel, a Democrat from the Pittsburgh area who has been unsuccessfully sponsoring gay rights bills for more than a decade.

He said challenges remain and pointed to a November referendum in which Houston voters rejected a city ordinance extending nondiscrimination protections to gay and transgender people.

The Family Research Council, which opposed the Houston ordinance, is supporting state measures that would grant broad protections "from government discrimination" against people "who have a sincere belief — religious or not — in natural marriage," said Quena Gonzalez, the group's director of state and local affairs.

Missouri House Majority Leader Mike Cierpiot said many of his Republican colleagues were alarmed by the Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage.

"I think there's a lot of states that are looking at this and seeing what can be done to make sure that religious freedoms are respected," said Cierpiot, a Republican from suburban Kansas City.

An intense debate over gay rights already is shaping up in Indiana, where a religious-rights law passed last spring thrust the state into the national spotlight over concerns it could sanction discrimination against gays and lesbians. A coalition of 150 businesses is backing legislation to ban discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

An LGBT rights proposal outlined by Indiana Senate Republicans would grant broad exceptions intended to protect small business owners and religious schools, nonprofits and adoption agencies. For example, a wedding-related business with fewer than four employees could refuse to do work for a same-sex marriage.

Other issues that made headlines in 2015 also are expected to lead legislative agendas in the new year:

— Lawmakers in several states are seeking to expand gun rights, citing a need for self-defense following a spate of mass shootings in San Bernardino, California, a community college in Oregon, a historically black church in South Carolina and a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado.

States such as Florida, South Dakota and West Virginia are among those considering bills allowing concealed guns on college campuses or dropping requirements for a government permit to carry concealed weapons.

Stricter gun controls are being discussed in California, Illinois and New York, including measures that would prohibit firearm sales to people on government no-fly lists or terrorist watch lists.

— A battle over funding for Planned Parenthood — and a renewed push for additional abortion restrictions — is expected in response to undercover videos released last summer showing Planned Parenthood officials discussing aborted fetal body parts.

Ohio Right to Life has an aggressive agenda, including a 20-week abortion ban, a prohibition on ending pregnancies involving a Down Syndrome diagnosis and the defunding of Planned Parenthood. Republican-led legislatures in Arizona, Idaho, Missouri, South Dakota and Utah also are among the places pushing greater restrictions on abortion and Planned Parenthood.

In Colorado, where a gunman killed three people at a Planned Parenthood clinic in November, the Democratic-led House could consider increasing the state's protest buffer around abortion clinics. But Republican senators may try to defund Planned Parenthood, citing the fetal body part videos.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 26 of 27

— Some states, responding to police shootings of citizens that prompted widespread protests, plan to try again in 2016 to set policies for the use of police body cameras and new procedures for investigating police shootings.

Several states are considering comprehensive sentencing changes, such as prison alternatives for non-violent offenders. More states also are expected to debate bills relaxing laws against marijuana, either by revoking criminal penalties or allowing for its medicinal use.

Today in History The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Jan. 3, the third day of 2016. There are 363 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 3, 1946, William Joyce, the pro-Nazi radio propagandist known as "Lord Haw-Haw," was hanged at Wandsworth Prison in London for high treason.

On this date:

In 1521, Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Leo X.

In 1777, Gen. George Washington's army routed the British in the Battle of Princeton, New Jersey.

In 1870, groundbreaking took place for the Brooklyn Bridge.

In 1911, the first postal savings banks were opened by the U.S. Post Office. (The banks were abolished in 1966.)

In 1938, the March of Dimes campaign to fight polio was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who himself had been afflicted with the crippling disease.

In 1949, in a pair of rulings, the U.S. Supreme Court said that states had the right to ban closed shops.

In 1959, Alaska became the 49th state as President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a proclamation.

In 1967, Jack Ruby, the man who shot and killed accused presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, died in a Dallas hospital.

In 1977, Apple Computer was incorporated in Cupertino, California, by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Mike Makkula Jr.

In 1980, conservationist Joy Adamson, author of "Born Free," was killed in northern Kenya by a former employee.

In 1990, ousted Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces, 10 days after taking refuge in the Vatican's diplomatic mission.

In 2000, the last new daily "Peanuts" strip by Charles Schulz ran in 2,600 newspapers.

Ten years ago: Lobbyist Jack Abramoff pleaded guilty to providing gifts to officials in exchange for their help; he agreed to cooperate in investigations of corruption in Congress. Iran told the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency it planned to resume nuclear fuel research. Militants broke into the home of an Afghan headmaster and decapitated him in the latest in a spate of attacks blamed on the Taliban that had forced many schools to close.

Five years ago: Democrat Jerry Brown was sworn in as California's 39th governor, returning to the office he'd left 28 years earlier. Prosecutors in Dallas declared Cornelius Dupree Jr. innocent of a rape and robbery that had put him in prison for 30 years.

One year ago: Boko Haram extremists kidnapped about 40 boys and young men and killed scores of soldiers in a bold attack on a multinational military base in northern Nigeria. Abu Anas al-Libi, 50, a man accused by U.S. prosecutors of being an al-Qaida member involved in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, died in New York while awaiting trial. Former U.S. Sen. Edward W. Brooke, a liberal Republican who became the first black in U.S. history to win popular election to the Senate, died in Coral Gables, Florida, at age 95.

Today's Birthdays: Record producer Sir George Martin is 90. Actor Dabney Coleman is 84. Journalist-author Betty Rollin is 80. Hockey Hall-of-Famer Bobby Hull is 77. Singer-songwriter-producer Van Dyke Parks is 73. Musician Stephen Stills is 71. Rock musician John Paul Jones (Led Zeppelin) is 70. Actress Victoria

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 3., 2016 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 163 ♦ 27 of 27

Principal is 66. Actor-director Mel Gibson is 60. Actress Shannon Sturges is 48. Actor John Ales is 47. Jazz musician James Carter is 47. Contemporary Christian singer Nichole Nordeman is 44. Musician Thomas Bangalter (Daft Punk) is 41. Actor Jason Marsden is 41. Actress Danica McKellar is 41. Actor Nicholas Gonzalez is 40. Singer Kimberley Locke ("American Idol") is 38. Actress Kate Levering is 37. NFL quarterback Eli Manning is 35. Actress Nicole Beharie (TV: "Sleepy Hollow" Film: "42") is 31. Pop musician Mark Pontius (Foster the People) is 31. Rhythm-and-blues singer Lloyd (single name is correct) is 30. Pop-rock musician Nash Overstreet (Hot Chelle (shel) Rae) is 30. Actor Alex D. Linz is 27.

Thought for Today: "Not all who wander are lost." — J.R.R. Tolkien, English author (born this date in 1892, died in 1973).