

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 1 of 36

- 1- Johnson Agency ad
- 1- Recycling Trailers in Groton
- 1- Preschool Screening
- 1- Today's Information
- 2- Upcoming events on gdilive.com
- 2- Golden LivingCenter Help Wanted Ad
- 3- Region 1A GBB Pairings
- 4- Drainage issues plague proposed Dollar General Store
- 6 - Kumla dinner planned in Groton
- 6- Brock Greenfield's Column
- 7- Superintendent's report to the school board
- 8- School Land Lease Auction
- 8- Heartland offers financing
- 9 - Today in Weather History
- 9- Livestreaming Weddings Ad
- 10- Local Weather Forecast
- 11- National Weather Map
- 11- Local Weather
- 12- Daily Devotional
- 13 - News from the Associated Press

Tuesday, February 23

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Chicken soup, grilled cheese, carrots and drip, fruit.

Senior Menu: Chili, cornbread, coleslaw, lime pear Jell-O

Birthdays: Jerry Rossow

8:30am: LifeTouch Photos at GHS Arena

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

4:30pm: GBB Region at Britton (Groton vs. Tio-spa Zina)

6:00pm: GBB Region at Britton (Roncalli vs. Milbank)

7:30pm: GBB Region at Britton (Sisseton vs. Britton-Hecla)

Wed., February 24

School Breakfast: Egg omelette, fruit, juice, milk.

School Menu: BBQ, French fries, romaine salad, fruit.

Senior Menu: Baked chicken, baked potato with sour cream, green beans, chocolate cake, whole wheat bread.

2016 Groton Area Elementary Preschool Developmental Screening for 4 and 5 year olds February 29 and March 1

Parents of children ages 4 and 5 in the Groton Area School District are asked to contact Heidi Krueger at the Groton Area Elementary School during school hours at 397-2317 to set up a screening time or to confirm their screening time. If your child is already receiving services or enrolled at Groton Elementary School they will not need to be screened.

Please bring a copy of your child's birth certificate and immunization record.

The Developmental Screening will take place at the Groton Area High School Arena. Please park and use the east entrance to the arena.

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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JOHNSON AGENCY

Real Estate & Insurance

Jay Johnson, Broker

www.johnsonagencygroton.com

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Groton, SD 57445

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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 2 of 36



Follow The Groton
Activities On-Line



gdilive.com

Coming up this week at gdilive.com

Girls Regional Game

4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23

Groton Area vs. Tiospa Zina at Britton

Ready to bring your heart and expertise to a team that feels more like a family? Bring your passion for patient care to the Golden LivingCenter in Groton. The Groton facility is now hiring for CNAs and Nurses. They have new wages with an excellent benefits package. All shifts are open. Join the team today by calling Jessica at 397-2365. The Golden LivingCenter of Groton is looking for you!

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 3 of 36

Region 1A Girls Basketball Tournament

#1 Webster Area

Score:

Date: February 25

Time: 6:00

Site: Britton Hecla Arena

Score:

Score:

#4 Sisseton

Score:

Date: February 23rd

Time: 20 minutes following 2nd

Site: Britton Hecla Arena

Score:

#5 Britton-Hecla

Date: March 1st

Time: 7:00

Site: Britton Hecla Arena

CHAMPION

State Qualifier

#3 Aberdeen Roncalli

Score:

Date: February 23rd

Time: 20 minutes following first

Site: Britton Hecla

Score:

Score:

#6 Milbank Area

Date: February 25th

Time: 20 minutes following

Site: Britton Hecla Arena

Score:

#2 Groton Area

Score:

Date: February 23rd

Time: 4:30

Site: Britton Hecla Arena

Score:

Score:

#7 Tiospa Zina

Region 1

Seed
Points

W-L

[Webster Area](#)

45.60

18-2

[Groton Area](#)

42.65

14-6

[Aberdeen Roncalli](#)

40.95

11-9

[Sisseton](#)

40.70

11-9

[Britton-Hecla](#)

39.28

7-11

[Milbank Area](#)

39.00

6-14

[Tiospa Zina](#)

36.89

4-15

Follow the Lady Tigers on

gdilive.com

Drainage issues plague proposed Dollar General Store in Groton

Tyler Oliver from Colby Capital Real Estate Development came before the Groton Planning and Zoning Commission Monday night to talk about getting a special exception for a Dollar General Store in Groton. The property in question is the east side of Main Street, south of US 12.

"It would be great for the community," Oliver said. "It's not a high volume store, but it would generate about \$1.2 million a year in sales." Oliver has built the stores in Britton, Webster, Redfield, Clark, Miller, Clear Lake, Volga and there will be a ground



breaking event for Ipswich. "Communities with 1,000 to 1,500 popular are idea," Oliver said.

But there was opposition. While they were in favor of having a store, they questioned having it in their neighborhood. Steve Smith said he did not like looking out his kitchen window looking at metal siding and dumpsters. Oliver said the dumpsters will be enclosed. Smith questioned if there would be extra lighting. Oliver said there are two street lights already in the area so the only extra lighting would be on the front side, facing US 12. The front side would be brick.

Doug Sombke said drainage will be an issue. "Houses will be flooded. It will be a major problem," he said. "You are not going to stop the water from going south." He said right now, the ground absorbs water. "You're going to push water. We live here. We know what happens when it rains. You'll build it and then leave town. Our basements will be flooded."

Oliver said they cannot drain water onto other people's property. "We will do what is necessary to retain the water, and then release it through the storm sewer system," he said. "If we can't get it right, we won't build it."

Jay Waage asked when the trucks would be coming in for stocking inventory. Oliver said the trucks only come during business hours. They would be 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Dollar General has over 12,000 stores across the United States. It would be a 9,100 square foot building with 30 parking spaces and there would be a 6' wood privacy fence on the south and east sides. "It's for small town America," Oliver said. "This is a national retail store looking at your community."

Eddy Opp said, "We would welcome a store like this in our community."

Colby Capital Real Estate Development would have a 15 year lease with Dollar General. The plan is to start building this fall and open in February 2017. The store would employ seven to 10 full time employees.

It was asked if other locations were looked at and Oliver said they did look at other sites, but there were either too expensive or not available. The property is currently owned by the Ken Fiedler family.

Todd Kokalas was also at the meeting.

Board members of the Planning and Zoning Commission are Chris Kahli, Tyke Nyberg, Gordon Nelson, President Les Hinds and city council representative David Blackmun. Board member Jeff Steen could not be at the meeting due to a prior obligation.

The property at one time was zoned highway commercial. It was rezoned to R3 to prevent unwanted

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 5 of 36

businesses like strip joints to be built on the site. Special exceptions have to be given to build a commercial business on this property. The commission tabled making a decision to allow Oliver time to present a drainage plan. Any decision made by the commission can be appealed to the city council. "We need to see your drainage plan," Hinds said. "There's ways to fix stuff."

About Dollar General from Wikipedia:

Dollar General Corporation is an American chain of variety stores headquartered in Goodlettsville, Tennessee. As of January 2015, Dollar General operated over 11,500 stores^[3] in 40 U.S. states.^[4]

The company acquired the 280 stores of the P.N. Hirsh Division of Interco, Inc. in 1983, and in 1985 added 206 stores and a warehouse from Eagle Family Discount Stores, also from Interco, Inc.^[5] In recent years, the chain has started constructing more stand-alone stores, typically in areas not served by another general-merchandise retailer. In some cases, stores are within a few city blocks of each other.

Dollar General offers both name brand and generic merchandise — including off-brand goods and closeouts of name-brand items — in the same store, often on the same shelf. Although it has the word "dollar" in the name, Dollar General is not a dollar store by the strict definition of that term as most of its products are priced at more than \$1.00. However, goods are usually sold at set price points in the range of .50 to 60 dollars, excluding articles such as phone cards and loadable store gift cards.

Dollar General often serves communities that are too small for Walmart stores (although many locations are in relatively close driving distance to a Walmart store or in the same communities that Walmart is located). It competes in the dollar store format with national chains Family Dollar and Dollar Tree, regional chains such as Fred's in the Southeast, and numerous independently owned stores.



Kumla \$10 Dinner

Sunday, Feb. 28th

Serving 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Groton Community Center

**(From US 12, go south on Main Street,
then go east on 2nd Ave for one block.)**

**Sponsored by
Heaven Bound Ministries
of Pierpont**



With Assistance from Thrivent Action Program

By placing an order through Schwans.com a portion of the sales will come back in support of our congregation! Your support of Heaven Bound Ministries is greatly appreciated! (When you check out, under Step 2: Coupon Codes and Fundraising, Click on "I would like to contribute to a new fundraiser." Then enter Campaign ID 26276. Campaign starts Monday, Feb. 22.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 7 of 36

Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

February 22, 2016

Legislative Session.

SB63. Require the development of school safety plans and require the conduct of lockdown drills in accredited schools.

SB69. Require accredited schools to accept transfer credits for courses taken by students from other accredited schools during the summer.

SB151. This is the Democrat proposal to address teacher salaries which includes a full cent sales tax increase but creates exemptions for groceries and makes an adjustment to the per student allocation under the current funding formula. This bill failed in committee today on a party line vote.

HB1112. Voids the SDHSAA Transgender policy and provides similar language to HB1008.

HB1182. Increase the state sales and use tax by 0.5%. Passed today with exactly 47 yeas votes.

SB131. Holds the major policy amendments to implement the new school funding formula.

SB133. Includes funding for supplemental educational programs contained in the Governor's education package.

School Administrators of South Dakota Executive Director Rob Monson keeps a list of legislation that he's monitoring on our behalf on the website, www.sasd.org.

Legislative Cracker Barrel Schedule.

Saturday, February 27; 10:00 AM – Aberdeen Ramkota

Saturday, March 5; 10:00 AM – Aberdeen Ramkota

GMS Training. On February 18, Mr. B. Schwan and I attended the Grants Management Systems training in Watertown. This is the program with which we're required to submit our Consolidated Title Application.

Long-Range Facilities Planning Sessions.

FJJ is on-site today and tomorrow conducting their input meetings and their other analyses of our facilities.

Emergency Management Table Top Exercise.

Our table-top exercise (meeting) has been scheduled for March 7. All of the local and regional emergency response agencies will be in attendance and we will be discussing each organization's plans to respond in certain emergency situations. Following the meeting, each group has the opportunity to revise plans. This is in partial preparation for the full-scale exercise that we're planning for the fall faculty inservice.

Electronic Board Meetings.

I've begun checking into options for conducting our meetings electronically. One of those options, BoardDocs which is promoted by ASBSD, looks very good but comes at a cost of \$2,700/year. We would have to make a decision about whether or not the time savings from the preparation and dissemination of board information is worth the price tag.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 8 of 36

SCHOOL LAND LEASE AUCTION

A school land lease auction will be held at the Brown County Courthouse in Aberdeen, SD on March 17, 2016 at 1:15 PM (CT) on the following tract:

16 125N 65W E2NE, E2SE

A list of tracts available for lease may also be obtained at the Brown County Auditor's Office or by contacting the Office of School & Public Lands at (605) 773-4172. For more information contact Mike Cornelison, Office of School & Public Lands, 500 E Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501-5070 or phone (605)773-4172. Disabled individuals needing assistance should contact the Office of School and Public Lands at least 48 hours in advance of the auction to make any necessary arrangements.



Attention Groton Businesses!

Are you
...looking for low-interest financing?
...wanting to expand?
...planning to increase your labor force?

Heartland has programs available to help.
Contact us today!

CASEY CRABTREE
Heartland Director of Economic Development
(605) 256-6536 • ccrabtree@hcpd.com

Today in Weather History

February 23, 1977: A storm center developed over Colorado the morning of the 22nd and moved to southeast Nebraska by midnight Wednesday the 23rd with snow and rain entering southern Minnesota. The low center advanced to Iowa by sundown and weakened somewhat with precipitation across all of Minnesota. Snow was across the north and combination of rain and freezing rain were in the south. The low center then intensified over southeast Minnesota during the nighttime of Thursday the 24th before continuing northeast into Wisconsin with snow and blowing snow continuing over much of the state before ending on the 26th. There was a combination of rain, freezing rain and wind over southern Minnesota with 4 to 12 inches of snow in the north. Freezing rain and heavy icing on power lines caused the worst power failure in a decade in the twin cities with 125,000 homes affected. Power outages occurred over numerous areas of southern and central Minnesota. Many roads were ice-covered with numerous vehicle accidents and many cars in the ditch. Many roads were blocked or closed with numerous schools closed. Many trees were also damaged by the ice storm.

February 23, 2007: A strong area of low pressure tracking across the central plains brought widespread snowfall to parts of central and much of northeast South Dakota along with west central Minnesota. The precipitation initially began as freezing rain and sleet late in the evening of the 23rd as it lifted across the area through the morning of the 24th. The freezing rain and sleet then changed over to snow during the morning hours of the 24th. Thunder snow also occurred at some locations across the area. Snowfall amounts of 6 to 15 inches had occurred as the storm ended. With the initial slippery roads from the freezing rain and then the heavy snow, travel conditions became very difficult. The South Dakota State Emergency Management, Highway Patrol, and Department of Transportation issued a travel advisory for no travel for Interstate-90 and many highways in central South Dakota. There were numerous accidents along the interstate. Some snowfall amounts included, 7 inches at Browns Valley, 9 inches at Bryant, Webster, Wheaton, Artichoke Lake, and Tintah, 10 inches at Toronto, Roy Lake, Garden City, and Ortonville, 11 inches at Faulkton, 12 inches at Watertown, and 15 inches at Clear Lake.










**Livestream
your
wedding!**


How cool would that be?!

Call or text Paul at 605/397-7460.


Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 10 of 36

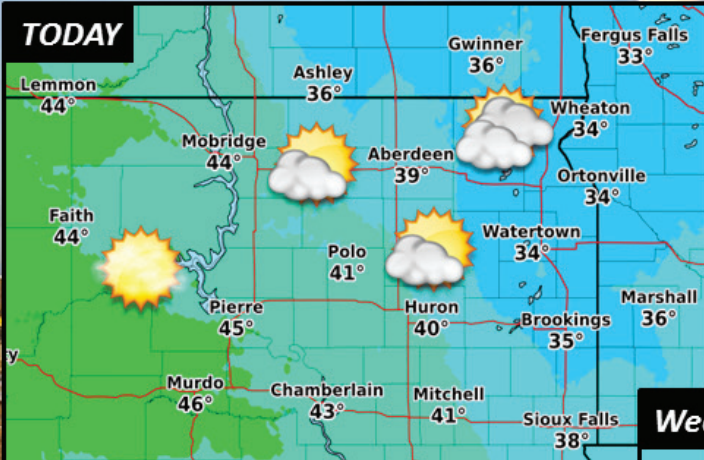
| Today | Tonight | Wednesday | Wednesday Night | Thursday | Thursday Night | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Increasing Clouds | Partly Cloudy | Chance Snow then Chance Rain/Snow | Chance Snow | Partly Sunny | Partly Cloudy | Sunny |
| High: 38 °F | Low: 22 °F | High: 36 °F | Low: 23 °F | High: 33 °F | Low: 20 °F | High: 47 °F |



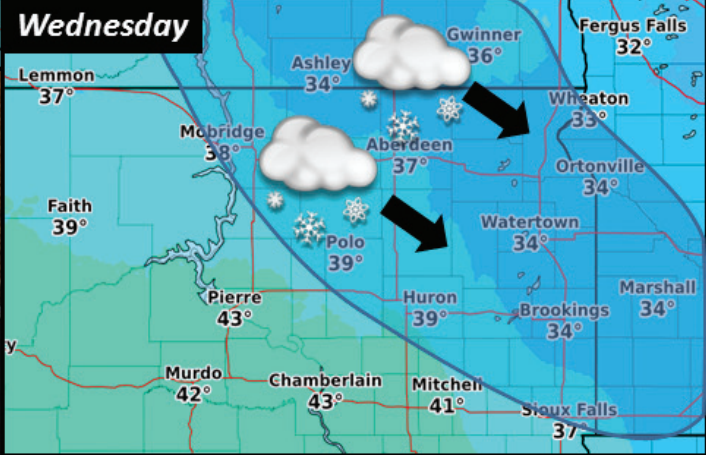
Seasonally Mild Temperatures Continue




TODAY




Wednesday




*Light Snow Showers
Dusting – 1"*



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Updated: 2/23/2016 3:59 AM Central

Published on: 02/23/2016 at 4:02AM

Temperatures continue to run a few degrees above normal across the region for the middle of the work week. We will see a few light snow showers move across the forecast area Wednesday but with little accumulation.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 11 of 36

Yesterday's Weather

High: 37.4 at 5:25 PM

Low: 23.1 at 12:08 AM

High Gust: 18 at 10:24 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60° in 1976

Record Low: -25 in 1910

Average High: 31°F

Average Low: 11°F

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.42

Precip to date in Feb.: 0.60

Average Precip to date: 0.89

Precip Year to Date: 0.60

Sunset Tonight: 6:11 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:21 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Mon, Feb 22, 2016, issued 2:30 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 12 of 36



NEVER FORGOTTEN

It was late one Friday evening when two Iowa City police officers were walking their beat in the downtown area. As they approached the steps of a church, they discovered a three-year-old child sitting alone. The tiny child was sitting quietly playing with a few tattered dolls and eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. She had been abandoned by her mother.

One of the officers sat next to the child and asked her what she was doing. "Mommy told me to wait for the other children to come to Sunday school so I can play with them," was her reply.

On one occasion, Isaiah cried, "Can a mother forget her child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on my hand."

What comforting, reassuring words! What peace it brings to the hearts of God's children! Knowing that He cares so much for us, His adopted children, that He even writes our names on His hand. How precious it is to have the assurance of His presence and the promise of unending love and mercy.

If or when we feel that God has forsaken us, we need to search our hearts and lives and ask ourselves this question, "Have we forsaken Him?" We know His Word assures us that He will never leave or forsake us.

Prayer: Our gracious Heavenly Father, how grateful we are and how comforting it is to know that You will never forget us, no matter what we do. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture for Today: Isaiah 49:15 "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"

News from the Associated Press

Missing state prison inmate caught after more than 4 months

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A state prison inmate placed on escape status last fall after walking away from a minimum-security lockup in Rapid City is back in custody.

Corrections officials say 24-year-old Salvador Ortiz was caught in Rapid City on Saturday and jailed.

Ortiz was serving a four-year sentence for burglary in Pennington County when he left the Rapid City Community Work Center without authorization on Oct. 7. He could now face another five years behind bars.

Governor meeting transgender people; Capitol event planned

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A group of transgender people is meeting Gov. Dennis Daugaard as he weighs signing a bill that would make South Dakota the first state to require public school students to use bathrooms and locker rooms that match their sex at birth.

Daugaard's office says the meeting is Tuesday. A Sioux Falls nonprofit is also holding an event then at the Capitol to support transgender children.

The Center for Equality requested the meeting because Daugaard said he hadn't knowingly met a transgender person. Daugaard says it's always good to have more information.

The governor says he hasn't decided how to act on the bill. The measure would require schools to make a "reasonable accommodation" for transgender children such as a single-occupancy bathroom.

The governor has also met with the bill's sponsors.

South Dakota 911 coordinator receives national award

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's 911 coordinator is being honored for her efforts to help establish a new statewide emergency communications network.

Shawnie Rechtenbaugh of Pierre will receive the Government Leader Award Tuesday night in Washington, D.C. The award is being presented at the 13th annual NG9-1-1 Honors Awards Reception.

It's sponsored by the NG91-1-1 Institute, the 911 Education Foundation and the Industry Council for Emergency Response Technologies.

Rechtenbaugh is coordinating the state's efforts to implement a Next Generation 911 system. The network would provide an advanced technological communications link to various emergency communication sites located statewide.

She's an employee of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Department of Public Safety Secretary Trevor Jones says Rechtenbaugh has been working with 28 different emergency call centers statewide on the project.

Training offered on developing, maintaining wildlife habitat

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — State officials will be offering training opportunities next month for South Dakota farmers and ranchers interested in developing and maintaining wildlife habitat on their land.

The workshops to be offered by representatives of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department and other organizations are part of the state's Habitat Pays campaign.

The training events are scheduled for March 3 in Aberdeen, March 7 in Redfield and March 14 in Wauertown.

Habitat Pays is an effort between the state's Game, Fish and Parks and Agriculture Departments meant to help farmers and ranchers implement wildlife habitat. The campaign's goals are to enhance wildlife population and preserve the state's outdoor traditions.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 14 of 36

Monday's Scores The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Bridgewater-Emery 87, Kimball/White Lake 53
Canistota 81, Colman-Egan 45
Canton 80, Baltic 40
Chamberlain 71, Aberdeen Roncalli 63
Chester 75, Dell Rapids St. Mary 35
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 50, Mobridge-Pollock 36
Corsica/Stickney 66, Parkston 57
Dell Rapids 91, Deubrook 52
DeSmet 53, Arlington 40
Deuel 80, Tiospa Zina Tribal 61
Elk Point-Jefferson 71, West Central 46
Flandreau Indian 79, Great Plains Lutheran 47
Hanson 57, Scotland 40
Irene-Wakonda 76, Bon Homme 41
Madison 75, Milbank Area 45
Marty Indian 73, Wagner 68
Miller 68, Stanley County 61
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 71, McCook Central/Montrose 46
Red Cloud 100, Bennett County 56
Sioux Falls Christian 75, Garretson 46
Vermillion 62, Beresford 51
Winner 66, Crow Creek 52

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Mitchell 53, Huron 46
Region 8A
First Round
Belle Fourche 60, Hot Springs 23
Lead-Deadwood 61, Hill City 52
Spearfish 67, Custer 57
District 1B
First Round
Wilmot 55, Rosholt 38
District 2B
First Round
Langford 57, Aberdeen Christian 21
District 3B
First Round
Faulkton 54, Eureka/Bowdle 33
Potter County 52, Edmunds Central 28
District 4B
First Round
Highmore-Harrold 44, Sunshine Bible Academy 33
District 6B
First Round
Wessington Springs 48, Iroquois 35
District 9B
First Round

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 15 of 36

Freeman Academy 37, Scotland 32
Menno 60, Marion 44
District 10B
First Round
Alcester-Hudson 50, Centerville 48
District 11B
First Round
Kimball/White Lake 45, Corsica/Stickney 37, OT
District 12B
First Round
Colome 67, Gregory 56
District 13B
First Round
Kadoka Area 68, Crazy Horse 21
District 14B
First Round
Oelrichs 45, Rapid City Christian 29
Philip 50, Edgemont 10
District 15B
First Round
Dupree 55, Tiospaye Topa 38
McIntosh 68, Wakpala 57
District 16B
First Round
Bison 57, Takini 39

State House approves proposed sales tax hike for teacher pay

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The proposed half-cent sales tax hike that would help fund Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard's plan to raise teacher pay survived a difficult political test Monday by clearing the state House after narrowly failing there last week.

The full chamber voted 47-21 to approve the plan, hitting the required two-thirds margin necessary to pass the tax hike. The proposal fell just one vote short of that threshold last week, but Monday's vote means the measure is headed to the state Senate.

Advocates for the tax increase argued the state needs a sustainable funding source to boost teacher pay, and they celebrated the bill's passage. Daugaard said he's "very pleased" with the vote, adding that "passing this first step is a very good thing."

"It's one of the most exciting days of my career in education," said Mary McCorkle, president of the South Dakota Education Association, a professional organization with more than 5,000 members.

Momentum has been building to raise South Dakota's teacher pay, which a state task force studying education funding said is the lowest of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. If the bill is approved, it would be the first permanent increase to the state's sales tax rate of 4 cents per dollar in nearly half a century.

The increase would raise more than \$100 million in the upcoming budget year, most of which would be put toward helping raise the state's target average teacher salary to \$48,500 per year.

A large chunk of the increase would also go to property tax relief, while an amendment approved by House lawmakers would put some of the funding toward salaries at technical schools.

Opponents of the tax hike argued that education could be prioritized in existing tax dollars. Republican Rep. Roger Hunt said the hike simply amounted to putting more money into a "broken" education system.

The opponents were successful in blocking the plan last week, but supporters pushed to have the bill reconsidered, and they were able to move it forward Monday.

Two Republican lawmakers switched their votes to support the measure, while a Democrat flipped to oppose it. Republican Rep. Scott Craig issued a statement late Friday saying he planned to change his vote to keep the sales tax proposal moving through the Legislature.

"I thought my mind clear, and I determined what was necessary was to change my vote to tell the teachers and to tell the state this Legislature does value teachers, does value education and we are working on something," Craig said after the plan passed.

Robin Curtis, a teacher at Winner School District who has come to the Capitol to support the tax hike, said she watched a livestream of the House considering the bill with her students Monday at school. Curtis said she's excited about the outcome of the vote, but said "there's still more work to do."

House Republican leader Brian Gosch, an opponent of the tax hike, was pursuing a raise for teachers without increasing taxes. But that effort is unlikely to spur much interest from supporters of the sales tax plan, he said.

"It's what I expected, and the sun will come up tomorrow," Gosch said.

Moody's upgrades South Dakota bonds to highest possible rate

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Moody's has upgraded bonds in the state to the highest rating South Dakota can attain from the credit rating agency, which cited conservative fiscal practices and a healthy, stable economy in making the decision, Gov. Dennis Daugaard announced Monday.

The Moody's rating change follows Standard and Poor's, a different rating agency that last year upgraded South Dakota to the highest rating it issues. Moody's lauded South Dakota's record of structurally balancing its budget and keeping high reserves, low debt and zero pension liability, Daugaard said in a statement announcing the upgrade.

The governor's office said upgrades usually allow bonds to carry lower interest rates.

"These types of upgrades demonstrate our state's exceptional credit worthiness to financial markets," Daugaard said. "This leads to substantial savings in future interest payments."

The improvement means certain bonds issued through two state bonding authorities have been given an "Aa1" rating, an improvement over their previous Moody's "Aa2" rating.

A constitutional provision largely blocks the state from directly incurring debt, which means it must use methods at "arms-length" from the state, Bureau of Finance and Management Commissioner Jason Dilges said.

"This is the highest credit score South Dakota can attain. Period," Dilges said. "Receiving this is tremendous for South Dakota. It's a big recognition to South Dakota."

Standard and Poor's last year cited the state's "consistently strong" financial position and record of "conservative budgeting" in upgrading the state from an issuer credit rating of "AA+" to "AAA."

Daugaard said at the time that he hoped that Moody's would consider following Standard and Poor's upgrade.

Stanford professor to speak on nanoscale materials

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Stanford University professor will kick off the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology Chemical and Biological Engineering speaker series on Tuesday with a talk on nanoscale materials for sustainable energy.

Stacey Bent will focus her presentation on creating nanoscale materials for solar cells and water splitting to produce hydrogen for fuel. She says that with the intensifying global need for alternative energy, there is strong interest in developing new materials for sustainable energy devices.

She says that underlying a diverse set of energy conversion devices are similar physical and chemical phenomena, many of which can be controlled with nanoscale materials.

Bent is the chair of the Department of Chemical Engineering and the Jagdeep and Roshni Singh Profes-

sor in the School of Engineering at Stanford.

Native American Hall of Honor seeks nominations

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The nomination process is open for the North Dakota Native American Hall of Honor.

The Hall is a new annual program recognizing Native Americans who have gone above and beyond in representing their tribe and culture. It's located in the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck.

The program recognizes traditional and contemporary achievements in four categories: Arts and Culture, Athletics, Leadership and Veterans. Nominations can be made of people who are living or in memory of those who have died.

The program is a partnership of the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, the State Historical Society of North Dakota and the State Historical Society Foundation.

The society says the vetting process will be competitive, with only two people per category accepted into the Hall each year.

IEA: Slashed spending by drillers could lead to price spike

DAVID KOENIG, AP Business Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Oil prices will more than double by 2020 as current low prices lead drillers to cut investment in new production and gradually reduce the glut of crude, the head of a group of oil-importing countries said Monday.

Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency, said oil would rise gradually to about \$80 a barrel.

Oil prices shot to more than \$100 a barrel in mid-2014 before a long slide sent them crashing below \$30 last month.

"There was a rise, there will be a fall, and soon there will be a rise again," Birol said on the opening day of a huge energy-industry conference that will feature addresses by the oil minister of Saudi Arabia, the secretary-general of OPEC, the president of Mexico, and U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz.

Birol's group issued a fresh outlook on energy markets. It forecast that 4.1 million barrels a day will be added to the global oil supply between 2015 and 2021, down sharply from growth of 11 million barrels a day between 2009 and 2015.

A year ago, the Paris-based IEA, an organization of 29 major oil-importing nations including the United States, had forecast a relatively swift recovery in oil prices, but the decline continued, with the price for a barrel of crude hitting levels last seen in 2003.

Experts underestimated the ability of shale-oil producers in the United States to withstand falling prices — for a time — which, combined with OPEC refusing to cut production, led to a glut. The same experts now think that U.S. production, along with new supplies from Iran, which has been freed from international sanctions, will blunt what otherwise might be a sharper run-up in prices.

Nobody saw the shale-oil boom coming, and it has changed the market, said Neil Atkinson, who edited the IEA report released Monday.

"Producers everywhere around the world are having to accept that \$100 a barrel is not something that is likely to return soon," Atkinson said. He and Birol declined to blame low oil prices on OPEC's decision to keep pumping away to preserve market share in the face of rising competition from the U.S. and elsewhere.

Now, IEA says, investment in future oil exploration and production is declining for a second straight year — the first back-to-back downturn in 30 years. U.S. shale oil production will fall in 2016 and 2017 before recovering with higher prices, the group predicted.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Venezuela and Qatar have discussed freezing production if other oil countries go along with a strategy to boost prices. On Monday at IHS CERAWEEK, an annual energy-industry conference in Houston, OPEC Secretary General Abdalla Salem El-Badri called a potential freeze "a first step" that, if it sticks, could be followed by other measures, which he did not specify.

The price of U.S. crude soared more than 6 percent Monday. A barrel of benchmark U.S. oil rose \$1.84 to \$31.48 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, the international benchmark, climbed \$1.68, or 5.1 percent, to \$34.69 a barrel in London. The price of wholesale gasoline jumped 4 percent.

Oil prices have tumbled 70 percent since mid-2014, and gasoline prices have followed. The U.S. Energy Information Agency expects an average price of \$1.98 per gallon nationwide this year. The last time gasoline averaged less than \$2 for a full year was 2004.

Low oil prices have had devastating effects on communities that rely on the energy industry. Home sales have fallen sharply in North Dakota and the West Texas cities of Midland and Odessa, and more recently in Houston.

Statehouses fighting transgender choice in school facilities

LISA LEFF, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — In clashes over which restrooms and locker rooms transgender students should use, the U.S. Department of Education has warned public schools that a 1970s sex discrimination law makes it illegal to deny them access to the facilities of their choice.

Schools around the country, some fearing federal investigations that could cost them millions in funding, generally have yielded to the guidance. Now, a backlash is brewing.

The South Dakota Legislature last week became the first to pass a bill that would require transgender children and teenagers to use the school facilities that correspond to their "chromosomes and anatomy" at birth. Lawmakers in at least 22 other states have introduced similar legislation at odds with the government's interpretation of the U.S. law, the Human Rights Campaign said in a policy brief Monday.

Gay rights groups are pressuring South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard to veto his state's bathroom access bill while working to stop others from advancing. But with federal courts still considering the issue, and none so far validating the government's reasoning, the statehouse-level defiance could test the limits of the Obama administration's advocacy on transgender rights.

"Local control on this issue has taken a huge, huge hit," said Republican state Rep. Fred Deutsch, the author of the South Dakota legislation. "This bill pushes back against federal overreach and intrusion into our lives, and is an attempt to regain control of something as basic and common sense as privacy rights for our children while at school."

The Education and Justice departments determined in 2013 that transgender students were entitled to federal civil rights protections under its reading of Title IX, the 1972 law that bans sex discrimination in education. The analysis arose from a complaint by a transgender middle school student against a Southern California school district, which agreed to settle the case by updating its policies.

Since then, the Education Department has reaffirmed its position in memos advising school districts of their responsibilities under Title IX and in other complaint resolutions. The most recent was reached in December with a suburban Chicago school district that agreed to allow a transgender high-schooler access to the girl's locker room once private stalls were installed.

"Title IX's sex discrimination prohibition extends to claims of discrimination based on gender identity or failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity and OCR accepts such complaints for investigation," the department's Office for Civil Rights told districts in a 2014 memo on sexual violence.

The courts so far have been less accommodating. A federal judge last year dismissed a lawsuit brought by a transgender student at the University of Pittsburgh who was expelled for using the men's locker rooms and bathrooms. A federal judge in Virginia also rebuffed a transgender teenager's request for an order requiring his high school to allow him to use the boys' restrooms. Both decisions have been appealed.

Jennifer Smith, an education lawyer in Chicago who represents a number of Illinois school districts, said the lack of legal clarity has left her clients unsure how to craft compliant and thoughtful policies.

"They look at the Pittsburgh case, they look at what OCR has said, they look at state and local laws, and it's really gray. No one knows what to make of it," Smith said. "We are making as practical decisions as we can in a really unsettled area of law."

Gay rights advocates say they will sue to overturn the South Dakota law if the Republican governor doesn't veto it. Though the courts are still weighing school facility use, transgender employees have brought successful sex discrimination claims under the 1964 Civil Rights Act and due process clause of the Constitution, according to Dru Levasseur, who directs the Transgender Rights Project at LGBT legal group Lambda Legal.

"We know that transgender people are protected under federal law, and there seems to be some kind of gap of, 'Well, you are protected but maybe that doesn't apply to restrooms,'" Levasseur said. "You can't live your life if you don't go to the restroom, so there cannot be some kind of separate rule."

Man gets 35 years for fatally shooting cousin in Rapid City

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man accused of fatally shooting his cousin in Rapid City over Memorial Day weekend last year has been sentenced to 35 years in prison.

Twenty-one-year-old Sean Marshall pleaded guilty to manslaughter last month in the death of 22-year-old Charles Metcalf. He had been charged with murder but reached a deal with prosecutors.

Authorities said the cousins were under the influence of alcohol and drugs when they started fighting. Police said Metcalf was shot in the back multiple times. Marshall said he feared for his life because Metcalf had threatened him.

Marshall was sentenced Friday. He will be eligible for parole after serving about half of his sentence.

Stolen vehicle arrest in Rapid City leads to arson suspect

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have made an arrest in what they say was an arson fire in Rapid City. The 28-year-old Rapid City man was arrested Friday after allegedly stealing a vehicle from a residence and for possessing marijuana.

Authorities say that after the man was taken to jail he confessed to being responsible for a house fire earlier in the morning. Investigators with the Pennington County Sheriff's Office followed up and determined that the man had started the blaze with a lighter. No one was home at the time.

The man has been arrested on charges related to the vehicle theft, drugs and fire.

Israeli military demolishes homes of 2 Palestinian attackers

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel demolished the homes of two Palestinians who committed separate attacks against Israelis that killed five people, the military said Tuesday.

The West Bank homes of the attackers, identified as Raid Halil and Mahmoud Harub, were demolished as a five month-long wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence is roiling the region.

The assailants carried out two separate attacks on the same day last November. One stabbed and killed two Israelis in a Tel Aviv office building. The other opened fire on cars in the West Bank, killing one Israeli, an American student and a Palestinian. Both attackers were apprehended.

Israel says home demolitions are an effective tool that can deter attacks but critics say the tactic amounts to collective punishment.

Since the violence erupted in September, some 28 Israelis have been killed in near-daily Palestinian attacks, mostly stabbings. At least 166 Palestinians have been killed, 119 said by Israel to have been attackers. The rest have been killed in clashes.

Israel says the violence is fueled by a Palestinian campaign of lies and incitement. The Palestinians says it is the result of frustrations stemming from nearly 50 years of occupation.

Also Tuesday, more than 30 former Israeli generals, ministers and other officials called for the division of Jerusalem, saying a wall should be erected between the Jewish and Arab sides of the city. In a full-page ad in the daily Yediot Aharonot, the group said Israel's capture and annexation of those areas in the 1967 Mideast war was a "historic error."

Jerusalem remains one of the most intractable issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel consid-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 20 of 36

ers the city its eternal, undivided capital while Palestinians want the eastern sector as the capital of their hoped-for state.

Many of the attackers in the current wave of violence have come from Arab areas of the city.

GOP candidates make intense 11th-hour arguments in Nevada

STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NICHOLAS RICCARDI, Associated Press

ELKO, Nevada (AP) — Republican presidential candidates took last-minute appeals for support across the breadth of Nevada, jockeying for votes with unabashed critiques of their White House rivals.

Front-runner Donald Trump delivered a broadside against competitor Ted Cruz, telling thousands in Las Vegas he thinks the Texas senator "is sick."

"There's something wrong with this guy," said Trump.

For his part, Cruz spent significant time Monday seeking to explain the ouster of his spokesman for tweeting a story that falsely accused White House hopeful Marco Rubio of insulting the Bible. And when the candidates weren't directing their fire at each other, they used scattered appearances on the eve of Tuesday's caucuses to assail Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

So raucous was this day that Trump stopped short at one point in his talk to bemoan the very delegate-selection he was in Nevada to tap.

"Forget the word caucus," he told a crowd of some 5,000. "Just go out and vote, OK?" At another point, he said, "What the hell is caucus?"

Trump is still chafing from his lone loss in the GOP presidential selection sweepstakes, a narrow defeat at Cruz's hands in Iowa. He reiterated his calls for disqualifying Cruz because of "his fraudulent win in Iowa."

Cruz saved some rhetorical ammunition for Clinton, telling an audience in Elko, Nevada he likes the thought of her behind bars. One of his supporters had shouted that he should "put Hillary in jail" if he's elected in November. Cruz paused, and then responded: "With any luck, she'll be there already." Clinton has been trying to surmount a months-long controversy over her use of a private email server during her time as secretary of state.

Amid the fusillade of critical statements Monday, there was even a sort of let's-get-physical moment.

It was at a rally in Las Vegas where Trump, the billionaire real estate mogul, said he'd like to punch a protester in the face. He lamented the "old days" when he said the man would have been taken out of the event on a stretcher.

Rubio, who nosed out Cruz for second place in the South Carolina primary, was high on the Cruz's list of talking points — even if the Texan would have preferred otherwise. Addressing the firing of spokesman Rick Tyler, Cruz told reporters he had no choice but to dismiss his aide. "We are taking the high road," Cruz said.

Tyler did not return telephone, text or email messages left by The Associated Press seeking comment.

It's not the first time that Cruz's campaign has been accused by rivals of using questionable tactics. Cruz apologized to GOP hopeful Ben Carson earlier this month after his campaign promoted a news story suggesting that Carson was getting out of the race. Cruz's campaign has also acknowledged creating a website that used a computer program to create a fake picture of Rubio shaking hands with President Barack Obama.

Speaking during a campaign stop in Elko, Nevada, earlier Monday, Rubio criticized Cruz for the incident and asked whether Cruz would fire anyone involved.

"It's every single day something comes out of the Cruz campaign that's deceptive and untrue, and in this case goes after my faith," Rubio told reporters when asked about the incident.

Trump lashed out at Cruz over Twitter on Monday, saying that Cruz "has now apologized to Marco Rubio and Ben Carson for fraud and dirty tricks. No wonder he has lost Evangelical support!"

Meanwhile, establishment heavyweights continued to back Rubio, with many saying they see him as the candidate who can unite a disharmonious Republican Party. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson and Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch were the latest to endorse the Floridian. South Florida's three Cuban-American members

of Congress also said that they shifted their support to Rubio, having previously backed Jeb Bush, who dropped out of the campaign following the South Carolina primary.

Democratic presidential hopefuls coming off a tight battle for Nevada, meantime, kicked off the week on opposite ends of the country. Clinton was fundraising in northern California, while Sen. Bernie Sanders held a rally in Massachusetts, another Super Tuesday state. South Carolina votes in the next Democratic primary on Saturday.

Sanders vowed to fight on despite his loss in Nevada, saying he has no plans of leaving the race anytime soon. He downplayed Clinton's weekend victory, pointing out that the win only resulted in her picking up four additional delegates, out of the 2,383 needed to win the nomination. He said his campaign has plenty of time to make up lost ground.

"This is about a slog, state by state by state," he said. "Even if we do well, Secretary Clinton will get a lot of delegates and we'll just have to keep moving on."

Recording studio, a favorite of Bowie, to close next month

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York City recording studio that was a favorite of David Bowie, Lou Reed and Norah Jones will close next month after 28 years.

The Magic Shop's last day will be March 16.

The New York Times (<http://nyti.ms/1LDW3qs>) cited a dispute with the landlord. It says founder Steve Rosenthal's attempt to buy the property — backed by Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters — failed when his bid was rejected by the co-op board.

Rosenthal said he'll continue his business in audio restoration and archiving.

Over the years, Rosenthal has worked on recordings by the Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, Woody Guthrie and jazz pianist Erroll Garner. He shared a Grammy nomination this year for his work on a recording by Garner.

Study finds anti-AIDS vaginal ring partially protects women

LAURAN NEERGAARD, AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a new approach to HIV prevention, women modestly reduced their risk of infection by inserting a vaginal ring coated with an anti-AIDS drug once a month, according to two long-awaited studies from Africa.

The ring proved safe although it cut HIV infections by less than a third overall, researchers reported Monday. But surprisingly, it worked far better in women 25 and older, leaving researchers wondering if the youngest women, who got little to no benefit, simply didn't use the device properly.

"For a woman to have a prevention tool that she can control is an incredibly important goal," said Dr. Jared Baeten of the University of Washington, who led a National Institutes of Health-funded study of the ring. "I want rings, pills and other strategies to be on the shelf for women so they can make choices for what's going to work for them."

Despite the questions the studies raise, the nonprofit International Partnership for Microbicides said it considered the results promising enough to seek appropriate regulatory approval for wider use in parts of Africa.

"You can't just say, 'Until something is perfect, we're going to wait,'" said Dr. Zeda Rosenberg, founding chief executive officer of IPM. "We have to give women options."

Women make up more than half of the nearly 37 million people worldwide living with HIV, most of them in hard-hit Africa, and scientists have long sought tools to help them protect themselves when their partners won't use a condom.

Aside from condoms, healthy people also can take a daily anti-AIDS pill to lower their risk from an infected partner. That so-called "pre-exposure prophylaxis" isn't widely available in poor countries, and other attempts at HIV-blocking vaginal gels haven't yet panned out.

But the age disparity found in the vaginal ring studies is so puzzling that the NIH plans to consult with outside experts on next research steps.

While women need a discreet form of HIV prevention, "it's going to be absolutely critical" to determine if the younger women really didn't follow instructions, or if there was some biological difference, cautioned Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of NIH's National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Vaginal rings are sold in the U.S. for birth control, but the anti-AIDS version tested in Africa contained no contraception. Instead, it slowly oozes an experimental virus-blocking drug named dapivirine into the surrounding vaginal tissue. Women would replace the ring once a month, when it was time for another dose.

Two studies involving more than 4,500 women in Africa are being presented at the Retrovirus Conference in Boston, comparing women who used the dapivirine ring with those given an identical-looking but drug-free version. It offered modest protection, reducing by 27 percent to 31 percent the participants' overall risk of HIV.

But closer inspection of the large NIH-funded ASPIRE study in Malawi, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe turned up something odd. Ring users who were 25 and older were 61 percent less likely to be infected while those ages 18 to 21 essentially got no benefit, Baeten said.

While the ring is designed to stay in place for an entire month before being replaced, there are signs the younger women didn't use it as regularly, said Baeten, whose results also were published online Monday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. He said women had to get comfortable with the how to use a device they'd never seen before, but those who used the ring continuously saw protection that continued throughout the 2½-year study.

"The ring must be used consistently to achieve protection," the IPM's Annalene Nel told reporters Monday as she discussed the second study, called the Ring Study. Conducted in South Africa and Uganda, that study likewise showed a trend toward greater protection for women over 21, she said.

While that study isn't completed yet, the IPM said South African regulators asked researchers to switch all the remaining study participants to the dapivirine-coated ring rather than the placebo version.

Early studies of those daily anti-AIDS pills also found less protection in younger people, who did better at sticking with the tablets only after their effectiveness was proven, said Mitchell Warren, executive director of AVAC, which advocates for a range of HIV prevention tools. He said there is "a global imperative" to answer remaining questions about the ring.

Charlotte council votes to extend transgender rights

TOM FOREMAN Jr., Associated Press

JONATHAN DREW, Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina's largest city has passed a law allowing transgender people to choose public bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity, which the governor had called a threat to public safety and warned that the General Assembly may step in.

The Charlotte City Council voted 7-4 Monday to expand protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, making it the latest frontier in a national debate on how businesses treat gay, lesbian and transgender customers. One of the revisions to the city's nondiscrimination ordinance allows people to choose restrooms corresponding to the gender with which they identify.

"I'm pleased that Charlotte has sent a signal that we will treat people with dignity and respect, even when we disagree," Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts said moments after the vote.

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory — a former mayor of Charlotte, one of the 20 largest cities in the U.S. according to census figures — said in an email Sunday that changing the policy on restrooms could "create major public safety issues."

"Also, this action of allowing a person with male anatomy, for example, to use a female restroom or locker room will most likely cause immediate State legislative intervention which I would support as governor," he wrote in the email to two Council members.

Roberts said she hadn't heard from McCrory as of late Monday night.

The issue has been part of a national debate that included the high-profile defeat of a nondiscrimina-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 23 of 36

tion ordinance late last year by voters in Houston, and LGBT advocates worried bathroom-access fears would be used elsewhere to fight equal-rights measures. South Dakota legislators recently passed a bill requiring students to use bathrooms corresponding to their sex at birth, though it hasn't been signed by the governor.

In North Carolina, the advocacy group Equality NC issued a statement criticizing McCrory for "perpetuating the same tired and debunked myths about transgender people and public safety." Executive director Chris Sgro accused the governor and legislators of trying "to bully the Charlotte City Council with threats to strip municipalities of their rights to govern."

During the meeting, about 140 members of the public got one minute each to give the council their opinions on the measure. Because the council chambers were filled to capacity, some speakers had to stay in an adjacent room and await their time.

Among the speakers was Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of NC Values Coalition.

"I applaud Gov. McCrory for having the sense to throw out this unreasonable and unnecessary ordinance," Fitzgerald said to the council. "If you pass this tonight, you can guarantee yourself at least a lawsuit or the General Assembly coming against what you've done."

Materials given to the council ahead of the meeting cited some residents' concerns that sexual predators would use the ordinance to gain entry to women's restrooms for assault or indecent exposure, but it also noted that staff researchers hadn't uncovered any evidence of an increase in such crimes in cities with non-discrimination ordinances.

Before the meeting, several hundred people stood outside in a wind-driven rain to protest the proposal, holding signs with messages such as: "No Men In Women's Restrooms" and "Keep Kids Safe."

Chris Williams, a 30-year-old father of three, passed out "No" stickers to the crowd, saying most Charlotte residents "stand with religious values."

"I don't want my kids having to even question, 'Why is there this person in the restroom?'" he said. "I don't think they should even be faced with that question and that concern."

The measure adds sexual orientation, gender identity and marital status as attributes protected from discrimination when it comes to public accommodations including restaurants, retail stores and other businesses. It would take effect in April. Public school would not be affected by the law.

A similar measure was narrowly defeated by the Charlotte City Council in March 2015, even after the removal of a provision that would have allowed bathroom use based on gender identity. Local officials later announced that transgender people could use the bathrooms corresponding to their gender identity in city- and county-owned facilities.

Members of Charlotte's LGBT community said in a survey the changes are needed because they have been denied service, received poor service or experienced disparaging comments, according to supplemental materials attached to Monday's Council agenda.

Opponents of the measure — including some clergy and business owners — have sent the City Council a letter saying businesses should have the right to refuse service based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

10 Things to Know for Today The Associated Press

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

1. NEVADA PROVIDES NEW TEST OF TRUMP'S UNORTHODOX CAMPAIGN

The GOP front-runner's rivals hope what they feel is their superior get-out-the-vote effort will pay off in Tuesday's caucuses.

2. DETAILS DEEPEN MYSTERY SURROUNDING KALAMAZOO SHOOTINGS

Jason Dalton admits gunning down six victims but officials acknowledge a motive may never be fully known.

3. WHICH COUNTRY IS STILL SHAPED BY GULF WAR

Twenty-five years after Saddam Hussein's invasion, Kuwait has a freely elected parliament but problems persist and many fear the nation could be gripped by the same regional tensions at play across the Middle

East.

4. GOP'S SUPREME COURT FIGHT GETS BOOST FROM UNEXPECTED ALLY

As Senate Judiciary Committee chairman decades ago, Joe Biden argued that President George H.W. Bush should wait until after the November election to name a nominee.

5. WHO PROBES LINK BETWEEN ZIKA AND MICROCEPHALY

Joint teams of U.S. and Brazilian health workers will fan out across one of Brazil's poorest states in search of mothers and infants to determine whether the virus causes babies to be born with unusually small heads.

6. AMID COAL MARKET STRUGGLES, LESS FUEL WORTH MINING IN U.S.

At current prices, the largest coal reserves in the U.S. will be tapped out in just a few decades, a government research team finds.

7. WHAT MELINDA, BILL GATES URGE THE YOUTH TO DO

In an annual letter on philanthropy, they call on the young to be a driving force for innovation and change.

8. NORTH KOREAN RESTAURANTS FEELING THE PINCH

This comes after Seoul instructed its citizens to not patronize its rival's government-affiliated eateries abroad that usually pull in a stream of travelers — and their precious foreign currency.

9. CHINESE PHONES GO GLOBAL AFTER PUSHING ASIDE APPLE, SAMSUNG

Analysts expect that they will increase their market shares in Europe, the U.S. and South Korea by attracting budget-conscious consumers.

10. TENNESSEE HEAD COACHES WILL HOLD RARE JOINT NEWS CONFERENCE

It will take place two weeks after a group of unidentified women sued the school over its handling of sexual assault complaints made against student-athletes.

Top diplomats meet at fraught time between US, China

MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top diplomats of the U.S. and China meet Tuesday in Washington at a fraught time in relations between the two world powers.

It's been seven weeks since North Korea conducted a nuclear test and they still haven't agreed on how to censure Pyongyang. Also, tensions are rising in the South China Sea after Beijing deployed anti-aircraft missiles on a disputed island.

Secretary of State John Kerry and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi sparred over much of the same territory a month ago in Beijing. But as they sit down for more talks at the State Department, both situations have only grown more serious.

North Korea followed up its Jan. 6 underground nuclear explosion with a Feb. 7 rocket launch that was condemned by the U.N. Security Council because such rockets use technology that could be applied to ballistic missiles.

While China has joined in the international criticism, it has balked at imposing the kind of tough economic sanctions that the U.S. wants, fearing it could threaten the stability of North Korea, a neighbor and traditional ally of Beijing.

In the meantime, the U.S. has taken tougher steps of its own.

Congress passed the most stringent U.S. sanctions yet that aim to restrict North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's access to hard currency. The restrictions could hit Chinese banks and companies that do business connected to the North's nuclear and missile programs and its human rights abuses. President Barack Obama signed the bill into law last week.

And on the security front, the U.S. and close ally South Korea have begun talks on deploying a missile defense system that China fears could be used against it as well North Korea.

The U.S. and China are expected, eventually, to fashion a compromise over a U.N. resolution, as both sides oppose North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them.

But they appear leagues apart on the South China Sea.

Washington and Beijing have been trading accusations of "militarizing" those waters, an important thoroughfare for world trade where six Asian governments have competing territorial claims.

The accusations intensified last week following reports that China had deployed anti-aircraft missiles on Woody Island in the Paracel chain, which is occupied by China but also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam.

The U.S. and its Asian allies are watching now whether China puts military assets on artificial islands it has built in the Spratly island chain, further south.

The Obama administration is under congressional pressure to step up the U.S. response. Lawmakers are expected to raise their concerns at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing Tuesday with the commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Monday that the U.S. would continue to press China to stop its militarization in the South China Sea. He called for a diplomatic process to settle territorial claims peacefully.

A couple of U.S. Navy operations close to disputed land since October have already riled Beijing.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Monday that "reconnaissance" by U.S. ships and planes, not China's actions, were responsible for stoking tensions in a region where the U.S. is not a claimant.

"The deployment of defense facilities on China's own territory is no different from what U.S. does in Hawaii," she said.

Damage to India canal highlights Delhi's water vulnerability

KATY DAIGLE, Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Engineers were working to restore New Delhi's full water supply Tuesday after protesters damaged a key canal in a neighboring state and disrupted supplies over the weekend — highlighting the extreme water vulnerability faced by the Indian capital's 18 million residents.

Some supplies resumed to northern and central parts of New Delhi, and will hopefully reach western neighborhoods by Tuesday evening, said Delhi's water minister, Kapil Mishra. In the meantime, 70 water tankers have been sent to western areas of the city where taps have been dry for up to two days.

The destruction of the Munak canal link by protesters in the state of Haryana has focused attention on New Delhi's precarious water supply. The canal, which channels water from north Indian rivers, accounts for about 60 percent of the city's water supply. Another 25 percent comes from groundwater, while the polluted Yamuna River supplies about 12 percent.

Yet even when the Munak canal flow is unimpeded, the overall water supply is not enough to meet New Delhi's needs, and shortages are common during the dry seasons.

The situation is especially bad for the most marginal communities living in slums or riverside shanties, where many rely on sewage-tainted river water, leaks from broken pipes or deliveries by municipal water trucks. Others in New Delhi draw heavily from the ground, leading the city's aquifer levels to decline by 4 meters (13 feet) in the last decade, according to the Central Ground Water Board.

When protesters from the underprivileged Jat community breached the canal wall on Saturday, they effectively cut off about two-thirds of New Delhi's water. The Jats, traditionally a farming community within India's ancient system of caste hierarchy, were demanding quotas in government jobs and educational institutions.

Clashes between the protesters and government forces left 12 people dead before Jat leaders agreed Monday to end the demonstrations while negotiating with officials, and the army took control of the canal.

Residents of Sanjay Colony, a slum in southwest New Delhi, said Tuesday that this week's water shortage was making an already bad situation worse.

"We already spend a lot of hours trying to get water," said Indrapal, a security worker who gave only his first name. "People haven't been able to go to work."

They worried that a water crisis created by political protesters was setting a bad precedent for New Delhi's water security.

"Now it's the Jat community. Later it will be someone else asking for something," a Sanjay Colony resident named Lila said. "The government has been slow in reacting."

Ram Lal, a man who runs a small shop in the slum, also criticized the protesters, saying they "have done wrong. They should not have cut the water supply. Because of that, we couldn't get our water tanker."

Authorities in New Delhi had issued warnings over the weekend of impending water shortages, advising residents to use the resource sparingly and canceling all school classes on Monday. But while some residents were filling buckets and bottles in case the situation worsened, others, including many wealthier households that rely on groundwater, were buffeted from the crisis.

Delhi water board authorities were working with experts in the army and Haryana state on Tuesday to repair the damage done by the protesters, said Mishra, the Delhi water minister. Of the city's three water treatment plants, one was again working at full capacity, while the other two had resumed operations at 50-60 percent capacity.

Nevada provides new test of Trump's unorthodox campaign

MICHELLE RINDELS, Associated Press

JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — In the days leading up to Tuesday's Nevada caucuses, Marco Rubio's campaign office in Las Vegas buzzed with activity.

Lt. Gov. Mark Hutchison was there, personally calling likely Rubio supporters and reminding them to participate. The campaign has been phoning voters, knocking on doors and organizing caucus training sessions for months in a state where the freshman senator from Florida spent several years of his childhood.

"We feel like we're the best-organized campaign in Nevada right now," said Hutchison, who joined the campaign as state chairman 10 months ago and is working with staff from the respected political consultancy that helped propel Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval to victory.

"If you gauge how well candidates are going to do based on grassroots organization and involvement, Marco Rubio's got an edge," he said.

Because Nevada's caucus model demands more of a time commitment from voters, takes place on a Tuesday night and requires participants to have gotten their registration in order more than a week ago, Hutchison and others in Rubio's camp hope what they feel is a superior ground game will pay off against GOP front-runner Donald Trump.

"The margin's so small in terms of what's going to make a difference in these elections," Hutchison said. "We just want to get as many votes as we can."

The billionaire businessman, meanwhile, leading in the few preference polls taken in the state ahead of Tuesday's caucuses, suggested recently a win on Tuesday is a foregone conclusion.

"Maybe I don't even have to go there and campaign, I don't know," he said with a smile last week at the Sun City retirement community in Bluffton, South Carolina.

But Trump showed another side in talking to supporters in Las Vegas Monday night, suggesting that caucuses are puzzling and saying "nobody even knows what it means."

"Forget the word caucus, just go out and vote, OK?" he said. "I don't want to give you an excuse. What the hell is caucus?"

Trump's efforts to build a get-out-the-vote effort in Nevada don't appear to match those put together by Rubio and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who won Iowa's leadoff caucuses on the strength of his ground game.

The real estate mogul's Nevada operation is based at two offices opened late last year and led by 20-something political operative Charles Munoz, who once worked for Americans for Prosperity, the group affiliated with the billionaire Koch brothers.

Last week, a Trump surrogate declined to appear at a breakfast organized by the Las Vegas-based group Hispanics in Politics, apparently unfazed that representatives from all other major candidates were there. The group's president, Republican Fernando Romero, said he tried to persuade one of two Trump supporters he'd met recently to come to the breakfast.

"We're not running into any (Trump supporters)," Romero said. "I personally have not witnessed it, and it's not like I'm hiding in a closet."

"I really don't believe it's a good system," Trump told radio host Hugh Hewitt in an interview Monday. "You know, I like to have a person walk in, vote and leave, as opposed to walk in, sit around and who knows what happens."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 27 of 36

While Cruz's campaign dispatched the state's rising-star conservative attorney general, Adam Laxalt, onto the trail, and Rubio's campaign padded its long list of Nevada endorsements over the weekend with Nevada Republican Sen. Dean Heller and several state legislative leaders, the number of notable Nevada elected officials on Team Trump remains stagnant at one.

Republican Assemblyman Brent Jones is an outsider among outsiders who's rankled members of his party by recruiting a slate of fellow anti-tax candidates to run against them. After backing Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker early in the race, Jones said the Trump campaign found him rather than the other way around.

His children's nanny showed up to work one day in a Trump T-shirt. And then the owner of a cafe in his Las Vegas-area district went on a pro-Trump tirade for so long that Jones wondered if he'd get served at all.

"It was the passion of the average people — not people in the beltway," Jones said. "Something was really going on."

Trump has made several trips to the state, drawing crowds thousands-strong. Corey Lewandowski, Trump's national campaign manager, said he and his team are now focused on providing Trump supporters with the information they will need to take part in Tuesday's caucuses.

The campaign recently launched an online search page that allows voters to plug in their addresses and find out their caucus location, and has been holding caucus training sessions.

The enthusiasm for Trump was on display Monday night at Trump's caucus-eve event at Las Vegas's South Point Arena, which drew an estimated crowd of more than 6,000. While many surveyed in the crowd said they had not received any communication from the campaign, others reported receiving frequent emails and phone calls.

Several also said they had changed their registration to Republicans so they could vote for Trump and had attended a campaign-run caucus training session. John Galardi, 73, a Republican from Las Vegas who is retired from a construction company, said the session he attended drew between 40-50 others.

"I'm still a little confused," said Galardi, who has never taken part in a caucus before, but he said he's planning to attend so he can cast his vote for Trump. "I like everything about him. He's giving American pride back."

Jones acknowledged Trump's spotty organization in the state could affect his performance on Tuesday, but said a groundswell of working-class Nevadans who don't run in the usual political circles are ready to propel a plainspoken, unflappable candidate to victory.

"He's willing to fight, and our Republican Party is so unwilling to fight," Jones said. "The GOP just caves, caves, caves."

Legal woes threaten Philippine presidential front runners

JIM GOMEZ, Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — It's not just difficult to predict who will win Philippine presidential elections this year — thanks to some of the candidates' legal woes, it's difficult to predict who will be allowed to run.

Four are within striking distance. Sen. Grace Poe, a political newcomer, leads opinion polls ahead of the May 9 elections, with Vice President Jejomar Binay, close behind. They are followed by former Interior Secretary Mar Roxas and Rodrigo Duterte, mayor of the southern city of Davao.

Poe, 47, has seen her popularity soar since she first ran for office three years ago. She is the adopted daughter of one of the country's most famous movie couples. Her late father mostly played roles as a defender of the downtrodden in a country still plagued by widespread poverty and corruption.

But the Commission on Elections ruled in December that Poe was not a natural-born Filipino as required by the Constitution because she was abandoned as a baby by her unknown parents at a Roman Catholic church.

The U.S.-educated Poe, who renounced her Filipino citizenship for about five years to live with her own family in America, also lacked the required 10-year Philippine residency ahead of the vote, the commission said. That prompted Poe to bring her case to the Supreme Court, which could deliver its verdict soon — and have a huge impact on the presidential race.

"This particular election has the most uncertainty," said Ana Maria Tabunda, research director of Pulse

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 28 of 36

Asia, an independent pollster whose latest survey last month showed Poe leading with support from 30 percent of respondents, with Binay garnering 23 percent.

Roxas and Duterte each got 20 percent each in the survey that polled 1,800 people nationwide and had a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percent.

"It's a very tight race," Tabunda said. "We don't really know what the next survey will say."

Should the court rule against Poe's candidacy, it is unclear who would benefit. Poe has carried on, holding rallies across the country.

"The story of my life started in a church," Poe told followers when she kicked off her campaign outside a downtown Manila church popular among the underclass. "So I decided to go in front of a church to launch the next chapter of my life."

President Benigno Aquino III's successor will need to grapple with poverty, corruption and Marxist and Muslim insurgencies in the south — persistent problems facing the country that three decades ago toppled the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos through a "people power" movement.

Aquino's anti-graft campaign led to the detention of his predecessor on an elections fraud charge and three senators, and the economy has grown steadily. However, a tenth of the country's 100 million people still seek better-paying jobs abroad. He ends his six-year term in June.

Aquino, who has had a falling out with Binay, has endorsed Roxas, a former investment banker who served as Aquino's transport chief and later as interior secretary in charge of local governments and the national police.

Legal woes have also hounded Binay and Duterte, a tough-talking mayor who has caught national attention for threatening to take down criminals, drug lords and corrupt bureaucrats within half a year if elected president.

Elections officials have dismissed petitions to disqualify Duterte, 70, but those could still be challenged in court. His party put forward another candidate while they convinced him to run, and some questioned whether he could replace the party's initial nominee.

Binay, 73, faced several months of investigation by a Senate committee over alleged corruption when he was still mayor of Makati city, Manila's version of Wall Street. He has denied the allegations, which have weighed down his popularity.

Anti-graft officials have found "probable cause" against Binay over alleged corruption in the construction of a parking building when he was mayor. But a government prosecutor said Binay would not be charged before a special anti-graft court until his vice presidency ends because he has immunity while in office.

Unlike in the past, the closely-fought battle now has left many undecided, including Macario Puno, a 48-year-old father of seven who ekes out a living by peddling boiled duck eggs and chips in Manila's streets.

Puno backed the winning candidates in the last three presidential polls, including Aquino in 2010, because he said the choices always narrowed down to just two main contenders.

"Now there are four major candidates," Puno said. "And they're all sweet-talkers."

A blind penguin gets airborne in a New Zealand marine haven

NICK PERRY, Associated Press

FLEA BAY, New Zealand (AP) — Blindy the little blue penguin was born without functioning eyes and developed the unusual habit of swimming in tight circles.

So to prevent the bird from continually crashing into the side of the small pond where it swims, Shireen Helps began tossing it out into deeper water. Penguins are flightless but Blindy, for a few moments anyway, gets to be airborne.

Blindy lives in New Zealand's Flea Bay, home to three humans and more than 2,500 penguins. Efforts by the Helps family over more than three decades helped save the bay's penguins from predators while many nearby colonies were wiped out.

These days, the colony is thriving, a hopeful sign at a time when many penguin species from the Galapagos Islands to Antarctica are facing threats from humans that come from overfishing and global warming.

Helps and her husband Francis never intended to become penguin custodians. Francis moved to Flea Bay,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 29 of 36

also known as Pohatu, in 1969, with the intention of farming sheep and cattle. He said it wasn't until the first night, when he was kept awake by noises like a donkey braying, that he realized he was surrounded by penguins.

"They're very noisy at night, especially pre-breeding," said Shireen Helps. "They get really wound up. They party all night."

After meeting Francis, Shireen moved to the bay in 1974, and said she noticed other penguin colonies in the area were disappearing.

"And that's when we started to look critically around our own backyard," she said. "We found dead penguins everywhere. We realized that predators were hitting into them, and if somebody didn't do something to save this colony, it would be lost."

So they began trapping feral cats, ferrets and stoats. They also built tiny wooden huts for the penguins to monitor them and to stop them fighting each other for nesting sites. Finally, they started nursing the ill birds, managing to save some and return them to the wild.

Found in parts of Australia and New Zealand, the penguins go by several names: little penguins, little blue penguins, and fairy penguins. Adults stand just 33 centimeters (13 inches) tall and weigh 1 kilogram (2.2 pounds), making them the world's smallest penguin species.

Those living around the South Island's Banks Peninsula, where Flea Bay is located a little southeast of Christchurch, are a local variant, known as white-flipped, due to the distinctive white stripes along the leading edge of their flippers.

Over the years, the Helps have developed an admiration for the little seabirds, and their observations have brought some amusing insights.

"A common thought is that penguins mate for life. Well, some of our monitoring notes make interesting reading if you're into soap operas," she said. "So yeah, they can fool around."

There was one penguin they called Shark Bait, which they found bleeding after it had been mauled by a shark. They got a veterinarian to administer stitches and fed it plenty of anchovies before returning it to the ocean.

Blindy, who is about 12 weeks old, was from a nearby colony and was found by a local farmer after it had left its nest and gotten lost in a creek.

Helps said Blindy was born with a malformed head and beak, making it hard to tell if it's a male or female. She said at first its circling antics seemed to make the penguin disorientated but now it's swimming more confidently.

"If it gets dizzy going around one way, it changes direction and goes around the other way," she said. "So it's really learning very well."

She said the penguin is too disabled to be returned to the wild, but she hopes that a zoo might take it. Although penguins are seabirds, they can also live in fresh water and often do so in zoos.

Animal ecologist Chris Challies, who has monitored white-flipped little penguins for more than four decades, said the population on Banks Peninsula plunged by as much as 80 percent from 1980 to 2000 as they were attacked by predators like ferrets, which would sometimes wipe out entire colonies between breeding seasons.

He said the trapping program introduced by the Helps family "probably saved the colony through the 1990s."

The penguins were also given a boost after local authorities banned fisher folk from using nets which inadvertently caught the penguins and later declared the area around Flea Bay a marine reserve.

Longer-term, Challies said, factors like global warming could severely affect their habitat. Recent studies indicate that emperor penguins face a big threat from changes to Antarctica's sea ice, which will affect their breeding and ability to catch fish.

The little blue penguins "are doing very well at the moment but we can't count on it," Challies said. "These things can fluctuate. It's the marine environment we can't control."

For now, Flea Bay is providing a sanctuary, and dozens of seals have also found a home there. Shireen Helps runs a small business hosting tour groups which come to see both, while her husband and son

Daniel continue to manage the farm.

Helps says to keep one step ahead of the predators, she's been experimenting with a new concoction. She's breeding mice and using the slurry from their cages in traps, which she says has been working well.

On a recent summer evening, she placed a penguin she had nursed back to health in the breaking waves. But it turned its back on the ocean and marched back toward Helps. So she picked it up and tossed it out a little deeper, and this time, it swam away.

Syrian opposition accepts truce with some conditions

BEIRUT (AP) — The main umbrella for Syrian opposition and rebel groups says it "agrees to a temporary truce" as long as the main opposition's demands are met.

The High Negotiations Committee says in a statement issued after its meeting in Saudi Arabia late Monday that it "has given its acceptance of international efforts for a cessation of hostilities in Syria."

The announcement came hours after the United States and Russia agreed on a new cease-fire for Syria that will take effect Saturday.

The HNC says "acceptance of the truce is conditional" to the Syrian government ending its siege of 18 rebel-held areas, releasing detainees and the cessation of aerial and artillery bombardment.

Indirect peace talks between the Syrian government and HNC collapsed on Feb. 3, because of a large-scale government offensive.

Supreme Court fight has lawmakers doing somersaults

KATHLEEN HENNESSEY, Associated Press

JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans in favor of putting off consideration of a Supreme Court nominee during an election year have focused on an unexpected ally: Joe Biden, circa 1992.

As Senate Judiciary Committee chairman more than two decades ago, the vice president argued that President George H.W. Bush should wait until after the November election to name a nominee — echoing the case Republicans now make against President Barack Obama's plan to try to fill the late Justice Antonin Scalia's seat.

Republicans on Monday gleefully circulated grainy video of Biden laying out his thoughts on the Senate floor. In the remarks, Biden said that a temporarily depleted court was small price to pay for avoiding a "bitter fight" that would assuredly damage the nominee, the Senate and the court, "no matter how good a person is nominated by the president."

Looking past the election, Biden urged Bush, if he were re-elected, to "consult and cooperate" with the Senate and "moderate" his selections.

Biden's plan was hypothetical, coming amid speculation that Justice Harry Blackmun was considering retiring in the coming weeks. And in a statement late Monday, he said any notion that he opposed filling Supreme Court vacancies in an election year "is not an accurate description of my views on the subject."

Still, it was more than enough to fuel the elaborate game of gotcha playing out in Washington.

The debate over judicial nominations is a study in role reversals. Depending on which party is in power, several major players in the current fight have staked out positions on both sides:

WHAT THEY SAID THEN:

"President Bush should consider following the practice of a majority of his predecessors and not — and not — name a nominee until after the November election is completed. ... Once the political season is underway, and it is, action on a Supreme Court nomination must be put off until after the election campaign is over." — Biden, June 1992.

WHAT THEY SAY NOW:

"Some critics say that one excerpt of my speech is evidence that I oppose filling a Supreme Court vacancy in an election year. This is not an accurate description of my views on the subject. In the same statement critics are pointing to today, I urged the Senate and White House to work together to overcome partisan

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 31 of 36

differences to ensure the Court functions as the Founding Fathers intended. That remains my position today." — Biden, in a statement on Monday.

THEN:

"The reality is that the Senate has never stopped confirming judicial nominees during the last few months of a president' term." — Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, in a forum in July 2008.

NOW:

"It only makes sense that we defer to the American people who will elect a new president to select the next Supreme Court justice." — Grassley, in a statement after Scalia's death.

THEN:

"We will institute the Thurmond Rule, yes." — former Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., at Georgetown University in December 2006. He was referring to the unofficial principle that judicial nominees shouldn't be confirmed in the lead-up to an election.

NOW:

"There is no such thing as the Thurmond Rule," Leahy on CNN the day after Scalia's death.

THEN:

"Even with 'lame duck' presidents, there is an historical standard of fairness as to confirming judicial nominees — especially circuit court nominees." — Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., on the Senate floor in July 2007.

NOW:

"The American people should have a voice in the selection of their next Supreme Court justice. This vacancy should not be filled until we have a new president." — McConnell, now majority leader, in a statement after Scalia's death.

THEN:

"Nowhere in (the Constitution) does it say the Senate has a duty to give presidential appointees a vote. It says appointments shall be made with the advice and consent of the Senate. That is very different than saying every nominee receives a vote." — Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid, on the Senate floor in 2005.

NOW:

"Failing to fill this vacancy would be a shameful abdication of one of the Senate's most essential constitutional responsibilities." — Reid, in a statement after Scalia's death.

THEN:

"Given the track record of this president and the experience of obfuscation at the hearings, with respect to the Supreme Court, at least, I will recommend to my colleagues that we should not confirm a Supreme Court nominee except in extraordinary circumstances." — Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., in a 2007 speech.

NOW:

"Whether Republicans agree or not with my evaluation of whichever candidate the president puts forward, they have a constitutional obligation to hold hearings, conduct a full confirmation process and vote on the nominee based on his or her merits." — Schumer, in a blog post last week.

THEN:

"There are some who believe that the president, having won the election, should have complete authority to appoint his nominee ... (and) there should be no further question as to whether the judge should be confirmed. I disagree with this view." — then-Sen. Barack Obama, in January 2006, the same year he joined a filibuster against Justice Samuel Alito's confirmation.

NOW:

"There's been a basic consensus, a basic understanding, that the Supreme Court is different. And each caucus may decide who's going to vote where and what but that basically you let the vote come up."— Obama, at a news conference last week.

25 years later, Gulf War stills shapes tiny, oil-rich Kuwait

HUSSAIN AL-QATARI, Associated Press

JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — The scene U.S. forces encountered as they pushed into Kuwait in 1991 to end the Iraqi occupation could only be described as a hellscape.

Hundreds of burning oil wells set ablaze by Iraq's army had left sand sodden in an oily sludge and the skies overhead choked with thick black smoke.

As they fled, Saddam Hussein's troops looted homes, private property and state buildings. As many as 5,000 Kuwaitis were dead.

Twenty-five years later, the Iraqi occupation and its aftermath still shapes life in this tiny emirate at the tip of the Persian Gulf, now challenged by power struggles, a failure to diversify its oil-dependent economy and the growing disillusionment of its youth in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

"After the liberation, Kuwait was supposed to bring about a very promising dynamic to its society," said Shafeeq Ghabra, a political science professor at Kuwait University. "Sadly, 25 years later, Kuwait is navigating its way in a very troubled region that reflects its problems on the feelings and temperament of Kuwait's citizens."

Many in the West were unfamiliar with Kuwait prior to the Aug. 2, 1990, Iraqi invasion. With just 6,880 square miles (17,820 square kilometers) of territory, Kuwait is smaller than New Jersey.

But within its confines lie massive oil reserves — the world's sixth-largest — that have allowed Kuwaitis to enjoy cradle-to-grave subsidies and drawn a large expatriate population, including many Palestinians who came to fill technical jobs. Before the invasion, the country's population of 1.6 million was 60 percent foreign.

It proved to be too tempting of a target for Saddam as his troops, hardened by the 1980s war with Iran, rushed into the country and pushed aside Kuwaiti forces.

Kuwait's emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah, and his royal court fled to Saudi Arabia, where they directed an armed resistance from their temporary abode in the luxury penthouses of a Saudi hotel in the western mountain city of Taif.

By the time the U.S.-led coalition retook the country following a ground war that lasted only 100 hours, much damage had been done. It took months for firefighters to cap and stop the oil well blazes set by the retreating Iraqi army. Iraqi troops also had flooded the Persian Gulf with as much as 336 million gallons (1.3 billion liters) of oil, the biggest offshore spill in history.

For four months after the Iraqis were pushed out, Kuwait was ruled under martial law.

Kuwait's security forces, angered by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's support for Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, targeted Palestinian expatriates and other foreigners. Many Palestinians fled, while Kuwaiti officials arrested thousands. Dozens were killed, while activists at the time said hundreds were tortured.

Today, Kuwait is home to 4.2 million people, some 70 percent of them foreigners. It has a freely elected parliament, though recent elections have seen largely pro-government lawmakers gain seats. A new skyscraper-studded skyline has risen in its capital, fueled by high oil prices.

The Al Sabah family still rules the country, with Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah now serving as emir. The monarchy controls all key government positions, yet nowhere else in the Gulf can elected lawmakers block initiatives or question officials, calling in Cabinet ministers for grilling over allegations of mismanagement and other issues.

But there is widespread frustration over government policies and corruption. Though Arab Spring-inspired protesters stormed parliament in 2011, Kuwait largely escaped the unrest that swept the region.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 33 of 36

"After the liberation, we hoped that Kuwait would be rebuilt to its days of glory, the golden '70s and '80s, when it was at the forefront in terms of development in the region," said Nadia Sager, a writer whose book on the Iraqi invasion was turned into a popular television drama. "I wouldn't be exaggerating if I say that no one is that optimistic anymore."

Though some Gulf countries have diversified, oil remains the driver of Kuwait's economy, leaving it vulnerable to low global prices. Lawmakers are looking at making unpopular budget cuts in response.

Another pressing concern is terrorism. Kuwait, home to both Sunnis and a minority of Shiites, largely has avoided the unrest gripping the rest of the Mideast following al-Qaida attacks and the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

However, the rise of the Islamic State group has worried the country, especially after a June suicide bombing at a Shiite mosque in Kuwait City claimed by the extremists killed 26 people and wounded 227. Soon after the attack, Sheikh Sabah visited the bomb site in a sign of support.

There are also other sectarian and domestic issues. Over 100,000 people live in Kuwait without citizenship. Known by the Arabic word "bidoon," they are pressing for government recognition. Kuwait's youth population is growing increasingly disenchanted over corruption, poor governance and lack of reforms.

"The government's failures to bring about progressive change, in infrastructure and development projects especially, is undeniable and is affecting the new generation," Sager said.

Rubio builds momentum, Cruz campaign shows signs of struggle

STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NICHOLAS RICCARDI, Associated Press

ELKO, Nevada (AP) Marco Rubio amassed increasing support for his candidacy while Ted Cruz's campaign showed signs of struggle as Republican presidential candidates crisscrossed Nevada on Monday on the final day of campaigning ahead of the state's GOP caucuses.

Cruz told reporters Monday he has asked his campaign spokesman, Rick Tyler, to resign for tweeting a story that falsely alleged Rubio insulted the Bible.

"We are not a campaign that is going to question the faith of another candidate for president," he said, calling Tyler "a good man" and noting that he deleted the tweet once he discovered it was false.

Tyler did not return telephone, text or email messages left by The Associated Press seeking comment.

It's not the first time that Cruz's campaign has been accused by rivals of using questionable tactics. Cruz apologized to GOP hopeful Ben Carson earlier this month after his campaign promoted a news story suggesting that Carson was getting out of the race. Cruz's campaign has also acknowledged creating a website that used a computer program to create a fake picture of Rubio shaking hands with President Barack Obama.

Speaking during a campaign stop in Elko, Nevada, earlier Monday, Rubio criticized Cruz for the incident and asked whether Cruz would fire anyone involved.

"It's every single day something comes out of the Cruz campaign that's deceptive and untrue, and in this case goes after my faith," Rubio told reporters when asked about the incident. "I guess one of their spokespersons apologized, and I accept their apology."

Republican front-runner Donald Trump lashed out at Cruz over Twitter on Monday, saying that Cruz "has now apologized to Marco Rubio and Ben Carson for fraud and dirty tricks. No wonder he has lost Evangelical support!" He reiterated his calls for disqualifying Cruz because of "his fraudulent win in Iowa."

Trump's campaign manager Corey Lewandowski said Monday that the billionaire businessman has been seeking advice from former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani as he gradually expands his tight inner circle.

Meanwhile, establishment heavyweights continued to back Rubio, with many saying they see him as the candidate who can unite a disharmonious Republican Party. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson and Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch were the latest to endorse Rubio. South Florida's three Cuban-American members of Congress also said that they shifted their support to Rubio, having previously supported for former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush's now defunct bid.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 34 of 36

Former Sen. Bob Dole told ABC News on Monday that he too had been backing Bush, but he's now supporting Rubio because "he wants to grow the party as opposed to Cruz. I don't know what he wants to grow."

Since Friday, Rubio has added 12 new Congressional or gubernatorial endorsements, while Trump and Cruz have added none.

While five men officially remain in the race for the Republican nomination, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy billed it as a two-man contest between Trump and Rubio. Speaking to MSNBC's "Morning Joe" Monday, McCarthy said Trump's victory and Rubio's second-place finish in Saturday's South Carolina primary dealt a blow to Cruz's strategy to win the nomination. The California congressman predicted voters in Florida, Rubio's home state, would determine whether Rubio continues or Trump easily rolls on to the nomination.

Cruz on Saturday characterized a two-man contest as well between him and Trump. But Rubio, who campaigned in South Carolina alongside the state's GOP Gov. Nikki Haley, has continued to capitalize on the momentum from his second-place finish.

Across the country, Ohio Gov. John Kasich turned his attention to Virginia, which is among the dozen states voting on March 1.

Kasich, who finished second in New Hampshire's Republican primary, won the endorsement of Tom Ridge, a former Homeland Security secretary and Pennsylvania governor.

Ridge had supported Bush for president since early 2015 and campaigned with him in South Carolina. Bush quit the race Saturday after a disappointing finish in the Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina primaries.

Kasich's campaign says Ridge is signing on as a national co-chairman.

Democratic presidential hopefuls coming off a tight battle for Nevada kicked off the week on opposite ends of the country Monday. Hillary Clinton was fundraising in northern California, while Bernie Sanders held a rally in Massachusetts, another Super Tuesday state. South Carolina votes in the next Democratic primary on Saturday.

Amid coal market struggles, less fuel worth mining in US

MATTHEW BROWN, Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Vast coal seams dozens of feet thick that lie beneath the rolling hills of the Northern Plains once appeared almost limitless, fueling boasts that domestic reserves were sufficient to power the U.S. for centuries.

But an exhaustive government analysis says that at current prices and mining rates the country's largest coal reserves, located along the Montana-Wyoming border, will be tapped out in just a few decades.

The finding by the U.S. Geological Survey upends conventional wisdom on the lifespan for the nation's top coal-producing region, the Powder River Basin. It also reflects the changing economic realities for companies seeking to profit off extracting the fuel as mining costs rise, coal prices fall and political pressure grows over coal's contribution to climate change.

"You're looking at a forty-year life span, maximum, for Powder River coal," said USGS geologist Jon Haacke, one of the authors of the analysis.

Claims that the U.S. had reserves sufficient to last as long as 250 years came from "greatly inflated" estimates of how much coal could be mined, Haacke added. They were based on data put out by the U.S. Energy Department, which for decades has made little distinction between coal reserves that reasonably could be mined and those that could not.

The perception of coal's abundance began to shift in 2008, when the USGS team released initial data that called into question the longevity of U.S. supplies.

Yet assertions that America was the "Saudi Arabia of coal" persisted, including in 2010 by President Barack Obama and continuing in recent months by industry supporters. The Department of Energy states on its website that based on current mining rates, "estimated recoverable coal reserves would last about

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016 ♦ Vol. 22 - No. 209 ♦ 35 of 36

261 years.”

Belying that outlook is both the USGS assessment and the industry’s recent changes in fortune. Mine production has dropped after many electric utilities switched from coal to cheaper natural gas. Two of the three biggest domestic coal companies, Arch Coal and Alpha Natural Resources, declared bankruptcy in the past 18 months.

Leslie Glustrom, an environmental activist from Boulder, Colorado, who has urged the Energy Department to change how it tallies up the nation’s untapped resources, said she believes the end for the Powder River Basin is coming even more rapidly than the USGS study suggests. And she said it has little to do with a “war on coal” that Republicans frequently accuse the Obama administration of waging.

“This is not a political problem. It’s a geologic problem,” Glustrom said.

In Wyoming, which produces about 40 percent of the nation’s coal, State Lands Director Bridget Hill said she had no reason to dispute the USGS findings, but found no cause for alarm. Flagging global demand could rebound, she said. Proposed coal ports now stalled on the West Coast could get built. And a rise in oil and gas prices could make coal competitive again.

“The economics might be different from what we know now,” Hill said.

It’s been four decades since its low-sulfur content first made Powder River Basin coal the fuel of choice among electric utilities that needed to cut their sulfur dioxide pollution. Sprawling strip mines in the region have since removed more than 11 billion tons of coal, the equivalent of 95 million loaded rail cars.

To gauge how much coal remains, USGS researchers since 2004 have analyzed the geology from minerals removed by 30,000 holes drilled deep into the earth. The data revealed almost 1.1 trillion tons of coal buried across the 20,000-square mile Powder River Basin. Of that, only 162 billion tons is within coal seams considered thick enough and close enough to the surface to make extracting them worthwhile.

The amount drops even more drastically when the coal’s quality is factored in and compared against current prices. When the USGS data was first compiled, in 2013, Powder River Basin coal was selling for \$10.90 a ton, resulting in about 23 billion tons being designated as economically-recoverable.

With coal prices down to \$9.55 a ton, the reserve estimate has plummeted to just 16 billion tons, Haacke said. That’s equivalent to 40 years at the current production pace of 400 million tons annually from the basin’s 16 mines in Wyoming and Montana.

Meanwhile, mining costs have trended up. That’s been driven by an increase in the “stripping ratio” — how many tons of earth must be removed to mine a ton of coal — as the region’s thick coal seams curve gradually deeper into the earth.

Before it went bankrupt, Arch Coal saw its profit margin in the Powder River Basin slide from \$1.67 per ton to 26-cents per ton, according to company filings with securities regulators. Other companies have reported a similar trend.

“It became two to one, then three to one, then three-and-a-half to one,” Haacke said of the stripping ratio. “That becomes a dirt-moving operation rather than a coal-moving operation.”

Today in History The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 23, the 54th day of 2016. There are 312 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Feb. 23, 1836, the siege of the Alamo began in San Antonio, Texas.

On this date:

In 1848, the sixth president of the United States, John Quincy Adams, died in Washington, D.C., at age 80.

In 1863, British explorers John H. Speke and James A. Grant announced they had found the source of the Nile River to be Lake Victoria.

In 1870, Mississippi was readmitted to the Union.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an agreement with Cuba to lease the area around Guan-

tanamo Bay to the United States.

In 1927, President Calvin Coolidge signed a bill creating the Federal Radio Commission, forerunner of the Federal Communications Commission.

In 1934, Leopold III succeeded his late father, Albert I, as King of the Belgians.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. Marines on Iwo Jima captured Mount Suribachi, where they raised a pair of American flags (the second flag-raising was captured in the iconic Associated Press photograph).

In 1954, the first mass inoculation of schoolchildren against polio using the Salk vaccine began in Pittsburgh as some 5,000 students were vaccinated.

In 1965, film comedian Stan Laurel, 74, died in Santa Monica, California.

In 1970, Guyana became a republic within the Commonwealth of Nations.

In 1989, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted 11-9 along party lines to recommend rejection of John Tower as President George H.W. Bush's defense secretary. (Tower's nomination went down to defeat in the full Senate the following month.)

In 1995, the Dow Jones industrial average closed above the 4,000 mark for the first time, ending the day at 4,003.33.

Ten years ago: The snow-covered roof of a Moscow market collapsed, killing 66 people. A United Arab Emirates company volunteered to postpone its takeover of significant operations at six major U.S. seaports, giving the White House more time to convince skeptical lawmakers the deal posed no increased risks from terrorism. Japan's Shizuka Arakawa (shih-ZOO'-kuh ah-rah-KAH'-wah) stunned favorites Sasha Cohen of the United States and Irina Slutskaya (sloot-SKY'-yah) of Russia to claim the ladies' figure skating gold medal at the Turin Winter Olympics.

Five years ago: In a major policy reversal, the Obama administration said it would no longer defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act, a federal law banning recognition of same-sex marriage.

One year ago: A jury in New York found the Palestinian Authority and Palestine Liberation Organization liable for their roles in terrorist attacks in Israel between 2002 and 2004 in which Americans were killed or injured; the Palestinians said later they would appeal the ruling. Tapping the anxieties of aging baby boomers, President Barack Obama called for tougher standards on brokers who manage retirement savings accounts. Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald apologized for misstating during a "CBS Evening News" segment that he had served in the military's special forces.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Peter Fonda is 76. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Fred Biletnikoff is 73. Author John Sandford is 72. Country-rock musician Rusty Young is 70. Actress Patricia Richardson is 65. Former NFL player Ed "Too Tall" Jones is 65. Rock musician Brad Whitford (Aerosmith) is 64. Singer Howard Jones is 61. Rock musician Michael Wilton (Queensryche) is 54. Country singer Dusty Drake is 52. Actress Kristin Davis is 51. Tennis player Helena Sukova is 51. Actor Marc Price is 48. TV personality/businessman Daymond John (TV: "Shark Tank") is 47. Actress Niecy Nash is 46. Rock musician Jeff Beres (Sister Hazel) is 45. Country singer Steve Holy is 44. Rock musician Lasse (loss) Johansson (The Cardigans) is 43. Actress Kelly Macdonald is 40. Actor Josh Gad is 35. Actress Emily Blunt is 33. Actor Aziz Ansari is 33. Actress Dakota Fanning is 22.

Thought for Today: "Men are more often bribed by their loyalties and ambitions than by money." — Robert H. Jackson, U.S. Supreme Court Justice (1892-1954).