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Monday, March 21

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

School Lunch: Turkey gravy, mashed potatoes, corn, tea bun, fruit.

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff noodles, mixed vegetables, cake with strawberries, whole wheat bread.

Anniv: Tim & Peggy Fliehs

Birthdays: Cheyenne Leonhardt, Courtney Pray, Duane McDonald, Melissa Raap, Michelle Sundling, Rayce Harder, Taylor Leonhardt, Terri Kjellsen,

6:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

7:00pm: City Council meeting at Community Center

7:00pm: National Honor Society Induction

7:30pm: St. John's Lutheran Christian Literature Cicle

Tuesday, March 22

CDE in Miller

Student Congress at Groton Area

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

School Lunch: Mini corn dogs, baked beans, lettuce, fruit.

Senior Menu: Herbed roast pork, baked potato with sour cream, lemon buttered broccoli, cinnamon apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

Anniversaries: Bruce & Pam Merkel, Jennifer & Brett Grenier

Birthdays: Brett Grenier, Don Walter, James Mortenson

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

Wednesday, March 23

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Soft shell taco, tater tots, fruit.

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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Lana's Annals

**Lana
Greenfield
District 2
State
Representative**

This is a wrap up of regular session in the House of Representatives. SB2, of which I spoke earlier was passed and now has the Governor's signature. This gives 25 per cent of the revenue from the alcohol beverage fund to our counties. I was hoping we would get this into law as the counties are strapped for money. While it does not begin to offset all costs, it will help. Alcohol and drug violations are causing a huge problem in our counties, and we really need to be proactive on this community problem.

SB129, donned the Jason Flatt Act, was also passed. The bill requires suicide awareness and prevention training for certain school employees. It is a one hour informational class, which can be offered during an in service or possibly online. This may be a very valuable tool to inform staff members of the warning signs of depression and actions leading up to possible suicides in our

schools. If this course could save one life even, then it has been one hour well spent.

SB92 met with approval (not mine) to spend 250,000 dollars for a math pilot project at the School of Mines for the third year in a row. This is a study to gain understanding as to why high school graduates are having so much trouble with math at the college level. I did not vote for it as I felt that if a student was lacking in math skills, he/she probably does not have the aptitude for that school's majors and perhaps should pursue another course of study. To spend three years studying why math is a problem should not, in my opinion, be funded by tax payers. It, however, found the Governor's favor and was signed.

SB43, also passed, increased the unemployment insurance penalty from 5 dollars to 25 dollars for late filings. I thought this was quite a jump, so I voted nay. It, however, found the body's favor with a 52-16 vote. Its "cousin" SB47, which tried to collect an administrative fee on behalf of the Department of Labor and Regulation, fell to defeat on a 34-33 vote. I was on the winning end of this one with my no vote. It would seem we try to promote business but at the same time, we impose so many regulations and penalties that survival becomes very hard.

The Michael Fitzmaurice Veterans Home will now have more beds added to the second floor and will be maintained as an assisted living area.(SB148). The total number of beds cannot exceed 76 for the entire structure, however. I think this was a good bill, and it found favor with almost every legislator. Some have made mention that it would be great to have a veterans' home in the eastern part of the state, and we would hope that this would be financially feasible in time. I realize it is hard for family members to travel so far across the state to see loved ones.

A few final words on the education funding bills: schools are beginning to find out at this time the amount of money they have for teacher raises. Some are fine with the money received (mostly large schools) and some are not. (middle-sized to small ones). The latter ones are now expressing their dissatisfaction to our legislative body and to our Governor. I have been a critic of the entire way the mechanisms were set up and executed. HB1182 was a TAX bill, which never went to a tax committee to be reviewed; instead it was assigned to appropriations. SB131, 132, 133 were EDUCATION bills, which were never sent an education committee; instead, all three were sent to state affairs and then to appropriations. Does this not seem strange? Also when you get your levy decreases due to the property tax relief of 40 million dollars, be apprised of the fact that owner/occupied will have a 10 per cent reduction, the commercial tax will be levied at 13 per cent less, and ag will be zero. Here were some other plans for education funding : 1. a three year phase-in raise for teachers 2. video lottery funding (which was deemed unworkable, however, as so much of that revenue that was promised to us teachers in the 90's has been re-directed for other uses) 3. using some of the 450 million in reserves to fund our teachers 4. having a fourth cent sales tax increase going to teachers and not over collecting an extra 40 million tax payer dollars for tax relief. These, however, got no traction, nor any media attention.

I consider it an honor serving you as a citizen legislator, not a politician. I have also enjoyed having the

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chance to discuss some of the session issues with you. Thank you for your calls, cards, and prayers. I am planning to run for House once again so will be travelling around this summer to meet with and to talk to more of you. I have gotten some input from you on a few new bills that would be worthy of being introduced next year. Some are very workable ideas.

I will update you on any bills that are vetoed and possibly need Legislative review on March 29. Have a wonderful week. God's blessings.
Rep. Lana Greenfield

Carnival of Silver Skates elect officers

The Carnival of Silver Skates Executive Board held its annual meeting today.

Please welcome our volunteer board members for 2016-17:

Chairperson: Rachael Van Liere Crank

Co-chair: Tina Kosel

Costumes: Pamela Opsahl Barse

Secretary: Kristie Wieseler Fliels

Treasurer: Dawn Imrie

City Liaison: Tasha Dunker

Skating Instruction Coordinator: Coralea Wolter

Publicity/Communications: Deb Schuelke & Sarah Keller-Hanten

golden
living

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!

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

Groton's NOON
GOOD FRIDAY service

Hosted this year at
Emmanuel Lutheran

Noon, Friday, March 25, 2016
Pastor Doug Duncan is preaching.

Let us join together in Word, song,
hope & prayer...

We welcome all!

Fellowship & refreshment
to follow.



Prom *Open House*

Monday, March 21st
3:30pm-7pm

Saturday, March 26th
10am-2pm

*Designers on hand for specialized ordering

*Choose designs specific for you

*Gems, ribbons, and jewelry



Putting Together a Great Wedding on a Budget

By Nathaniel Sillin

Will a modern wedding endanger your finances? It doesn't have to.

With the average price of an American wedding over \$31,000, the big day can impose financial stress for those who don't have savings in place. It's important to remember that these numbers indicate greater trends – not suggested spending patterns.

Before discussion about a ceremony or reception even begins, it's smart for couples to have a frank talk about money issues in general. Share financial information such as current spending, savings, investment and credit status (<https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action>). While this conversation may not seem terribly romantic, honesty about respective finances is the first step to responsible financial planning and compatibility.

Once you've chosen a desired wedding date, set a savings target with a realistic budget. If you want to get married fairly soon, realize you'll have less time to build a wedding fund. Start by making a general list (<https://www.theknot.com/wedding-budget/start>) of everything you might want in a wedding, and then adjust your vision to what will be in the bank by your desired date.

As the numbers start looking real to you, determine what can be purchased or done inexpensively and others that will require professional help. Take a look at the guest list and see if you can make some cuts. Consider a handheld music player hooked up to a great speaker system instead of a live band. Are you content with your brother's photo and video skills, or is it a better idea to hire a professional team?

Consider off-dates, off-times and off-venues. Though wedding season is more year-round than it's ever been, wedding prices still tend to be highest throughout the warm months. Explore winter dates and more obscure venues. Take City Hall, for example. Depending on the municipality, you can either schedule ahead or show up with local license and ceremonial fees as the only costs involved. There's no need for expensive wardrobe or other trappings. What about having the wedding at home? It's free space and, depending on the talents of friends and family, homemade food and decorations can also keep expenses to a minimum. But remember that the home or property owner may need a special insurance rider to cover any potential damage or liability, particularly if liquor is being served.

And finally, consider a "surprise" wedding. Planning a party or gathering where a wedding breaks out can provide money-saving advantages to guests and bridal party alike. Having a wedding at a party – especially a regular holiday party you host where family and friends already know to gather – requires little more than a legal officiant and whatever food, beverage, entertainment and insurance costs you need to consider. An unannounced wedding eliminates all pre-wedding costs related to invitations, showers and parties, and you can give your guests a break on gifts.

Bottom line: Flashy weddings aren't worth jeopardizing your finances for years to come. Make creative, affordable wedding planning part of your love story.

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City of Columbia has opening for city finance officer and city maintenance worker. Call at 396-2655 apply before April 4th application deadline.

Come and go bridal shower for Sarah Geary, bride-to-be of Sam Thorson, Saturday, April 23, 10 a.m., St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton. The couple is registered at Bed Bath and Beyond and at Target.

 livestream

**DOLLAR
GENERAL®**

Special Exception Hearing
Monday, March 28th, 7 p.m.
Groton Community Center
If you can't make it to the
hearing, watch it live on

gdilive.com

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Today in Weather History

March 21, 1997: As temperatures began to warm up towards the end of March, the near record to record winter snowpack over central, north central, and northeast South Dakota began melting. The resulting runoff filled up ditches, lakes, creeks, streams, and low-lying areas. The massive amount of water swamped hundreds of sections of county and township roads as well as several state and federal highways. The inundated sections of roads were either broken up or washed out. Tens of culverts were blown out or damaged, and several bridges were either damaged or washed out by chunks of ice and the high water flow. Road closures were extensive, with rerouting taking place for school buses, mail carriers, farmers, and ranchers. Many spillways and dams received some damage or were washed out. In addition, thousands of acres of farmland and pastureland were underwater. Due to the high groundwater, a countless number of homes received water in their basements. A few towns were partially flooded, including Twin Brooks in Grant County, Corona in Roberts County, and Raymond in Clark County. The following week, in the early morning hours of March 27, water flowed into Raymond filling the basements of several homes. In rural areas, several farms were surrounded by water and were inaccessible, leaving some people stranded and livestock marooned. Many other residences and businesses, mainly across northeast South Dakota, received significant damage or were a total loss. As a result, several people had to be evacuated. At the time, many long-term residents said this was the most significant flooding they had seen in their lifetimes. The flooding continued into early to mid-April.

March 21, 2012: Several record high temperatures occurred across the region in March.

1801: The Jefferson Flood hit the Connecticut Valley. The flooding was the greatest since 1692. The Federalists named the flood for the new President, who they blamed for the disaster.






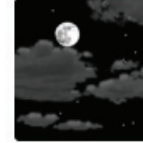

1876: More than 40 inches of snow stopped traffic at Montreal, Quebec Canada. Trains were delayed, and mail carriers resorted to snowshoes.

1932: A tornado swarm occurred in the Deep South. Between late afternoon and early the next morning severe thunderstorms spawned 31 tornadoes in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee. The tornadoes killed 334 persons and injured 1784 others. Northern Alabama was hardest hit. Tornadoes in Alabama killed 286 persons and caused five million dollars damage.

1951: Antarctica is the windiest place in the world. Port Martin averaged 40 mph winds throughout the year. On this day, the winds averaged 108 mph.

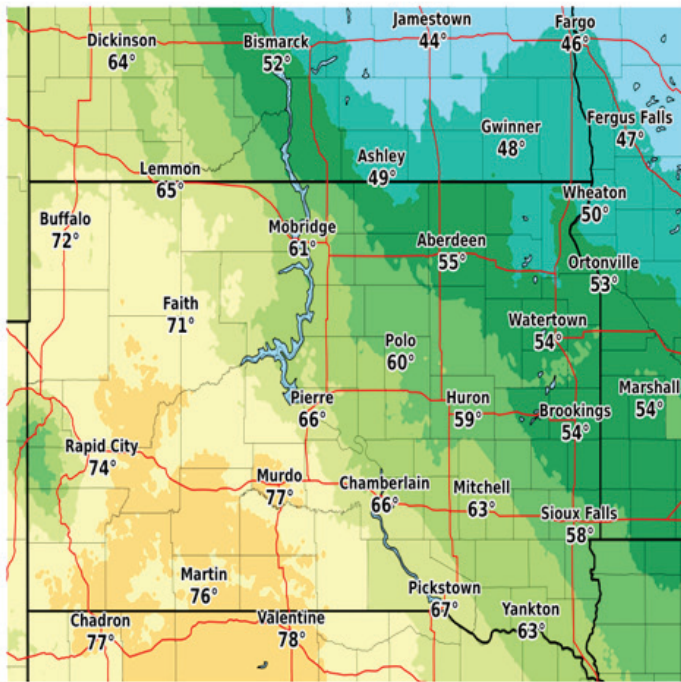
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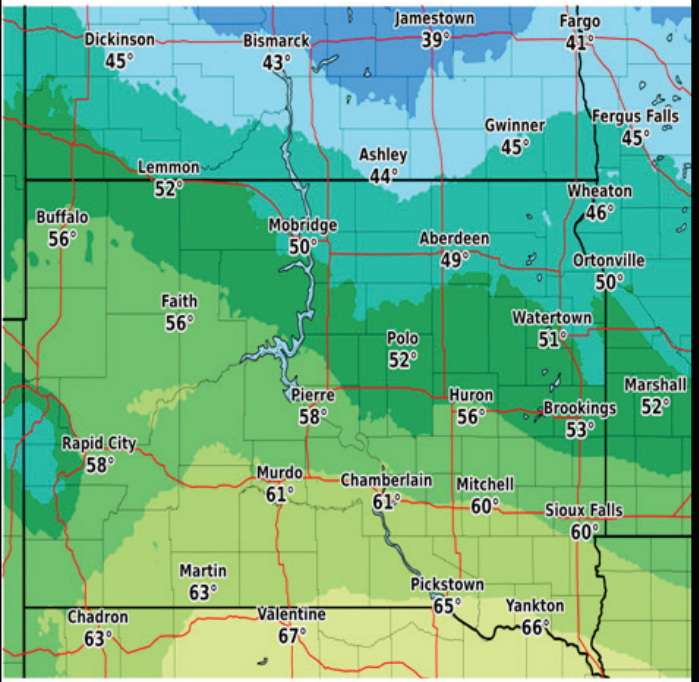
Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Slight Chance Rain then Slight Chance Rain/Snow	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 54 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 49 °F	Low: 28 °F	High: 37 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 43 °F

Mild Today, Cooler on Tuesday

Monday Afternoon Highs
Valid: March 21, 2016



Tuesday Afternoon Highs
Valid: March 22, 2016



National Weather Service, Aberdeen SD

Published on: 03/21/2016 at 3:35AM

Mild temperatures are expected today, but they'll turn cooler on Tuesday as clouds increase and winds turn northerly.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 44.1 at 5:11 PM

Low: 24.2 at 7:56 AM

High Gust: 14 at 1:41 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 79° in 1907

Record Low: -12 in 1965

Average High: 42°F

Average Low: 22°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.71

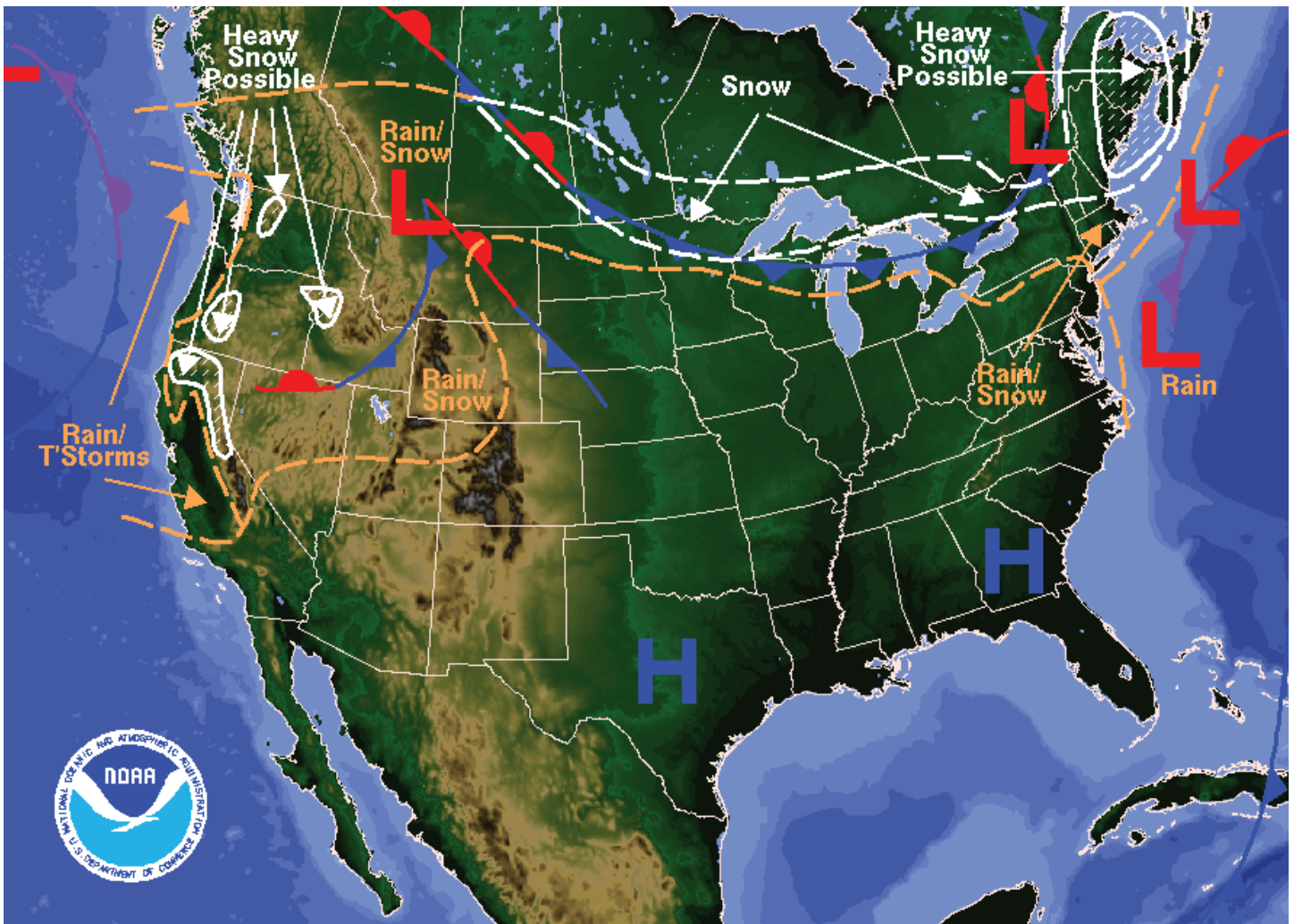
Precip to date in March.: 0.35

Average Precip to date: 1.73

Precip Year to Date: 0.95

Sunset Tonight: 7:48 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:31 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Mon, Mar 21, 2016, issued 3:15 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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TEMPTED TO BE BAD TEMPERED

Bobby Jones, one of the world's all-time great golfers, began playing golf at the age of five. At twelve, he was the town's best golfer. But he had a terrible temper.

When he was fourteen, he entered the National Amateur Tournament and lost. His Grandpa Bart said to him, "You're good enough to win. But you will never win until you control your temper."

Years later, after winning tournament after tournament, a reporter was talking to Grandpa Bart about Bobby. During the interview Grandpa said, "Bobby was fourteen when he mastered golf. But he was twenty-one when he mastered himself."

It is a tragedy when we allow our tempers to control us instead of God controlling our tempers. His power is available to us when we surrender our hearts and lives to Him and ask for His Spirit to live within us.

If we do not master our tempers, our tempers will master us. God's Word warns us to "Stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry."

Prayer: Lord, there are times when I lose control of my faith and feelings and do and say things that I regret. Please take charge of my life and let me be the kind of person who reflects Your kindness at all times. Amen.

Scripture for Today: Ephesians 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Former Butte County prosecutor sentenced on drug charges

BELLE FOURCHE, S.D. (AP) — Former Butte County State's Attorney Heather Plunkett has been sentenced for drug charges that led the governor to suspend her late last year.

The 31-year-old Plunkett was given a 90-day suspended jail sentence and ordered to pay \$861 in fines and fees on misdemeanor marijuana-related charges.

Plunkett and her husband were arrested Dec. 4 when the state Division of Criminal Investigation served a search warrant at their Belle Fourche (foosh) home. Gov. Dennis Daugaard suspended her with pay and she later resigned. She pleaded guilty to three misdemeanor charges the day before Christmas.

Authorities ID Spearfish man killed in weekend truck crash

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — The Highway Patrol has identified a Spearfish man who died in a one-vehicle crash near the city.

Authorities say 26-year-old Ashley Sutton lost control of his pickup truck on a curve on a road about 2 miles north of Spearfish, and the vehicle rolled in a field.

The crash happened about 7 a.m. Saturday. Sutton was pronounced dead at the scene.

Stanford coach Tara VanDerveer influences so many coaches

JANIE McCAULEY, AP Sports Writer

STANFORD, Calif. (AP) — Three seasons ago before a Thanksgiving Day tournament game in Puerto Valarta, Tara VanDerveer surprised and impressed Aaron Johnston with her knowledge of his South Dakota State team — and his state in general.

From the complex issues such as struggles facing the Native American communities, to the finer details about the Jackrabbits program she hardly needed to know.

"She was just kind of aware of some of the challenges that go into some of those Native American communities and had a genuine sense of wanting to help if she could," Johnston recalled Sunday. "That's a neat thing. It was fun. She's always been very outgoing, really cordial and she really has no reason to be toward us, so it's nice."

Not that VanDerveer will be so friendly come tipoff Monday night, when her fourth-seeded Cardinal (25-7) take their home floor in Maples Pavilion to face No. 12 seed South Dakota State (26-6) for a berth in the Lexington Regional.

Just take the 30th-year, Hall of Fame coach's remarks from Saturday night after beating her former Stanford and Olympic star Jennifer Azzi: "I love Jennifer but I love winning more."

She did take time to pose for photos with some Jackrabbits fans Saturday.

"I like to get to know and to understand where they're coming from and the style they play," VanDerveer said Sunday, noting she has driven through South Dakota and stopped at the Black Hills.

The 62-year-old VanDerveer's thoughtfulness with colleagues she knows well and those she doesn't, with coaches near and far, is one thing. Her ability to evolve and adjust her style over three successful decades in this game is another thing Johnston admires.

"It's just so unusual in this day in age. There are other coaches like Tara but not as many it seems like who have coached for that long and have been at one place and have adjusted with just the changing flow of basketball," Johnston said before his team headed to practice. "What they do now is very different than what they did even a short period ago. To have the courage to make those kind of changes as a coach, go outside of your comfort zone just says a lot about how she continues to evolve and lead us all in adapting to the different way basketball is played right now."

Several of the current South Dakota State players were part of that 80-60 loss to a Stanford team led

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by Chiney Ogwumike.

"We are a completely different team than we were two years ago. Definitely looking forward to the opportunity to play them again," senior guard Gabby Boever said. "I'm just playing like it's my last game. That's how I always have to play."

Stanford understands that philosophy.

Two weeks ago, Stanford shockingly got bounced by Washington in its Pac-12 tournament opener. Lili Thompson and her teammates realized right away how quickly a season can change.

The Cardinal will keep that in mind taking the court Monday night.

"For me the biggest thing you take is that one and done," Thompson said. "This is the real deal. We have to earn every game that we want to play."

Stanford did most everything right in Saturday's 85-58 rout of San Francisco, from a 49-22 rebounding advantage to shooting 51.7 percent and scoring 18 second-chance points.

VanDerveer is challenging her team to do more.

"You better come out ready and you better know what you're doing against them," VanDerveer said. "They play with a purpose."

The Jackrabbits already knocked out No. 5 Miami on Saturday despite struggling against full-court pressure, missing free throws late and committing 22 turnovers.

"It puts us on the map. Teams that are ranked higher can't overlook us," Summit League defensive player of the year Clarissa Ober said.

Johnston does have one special request for VanDerveer:

"I hope she doesn't take any of our good players. We need them all," he said of a roster made up all of women from Minnesota and South Dakota except for one. "She's got enough of her own."

Sorry, VanDerveer won't commit.

"If someone has the grades and they're that good we're going after them, it doesn't matter where they're from," she said.

TOURNAMENT TIDBITS

South Dakota State: advanced to the second round for the first time since 2009 after losing its previous five NCAA openers.

Stanford: The Cardinals is 33-4 playing at home in the NCAA Tournament. Maples Pavilion has hosted more women's tournament games — 65 on Monday — than any other venue aside from Tennessee's Thompson-Boling Arena (66). ... VanDerveer needs 22 victories to join Pat Summitt as the only NCAA women's basketball coaches with 1,000 career wins.

Bighorn ruling could have ramifications on Western grazing

KEITH RIDLER, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals recognizing a connection between bighorn sheep die-offs and diseases transmitted by domestic sheep could have far-reaching ramifications on federal grazing allotments in the West.

The ruling earlier this month by the three-judge panel against domestic sheep producers upheld a lower court ruling in Idaho supporting a U.S. Forest Service decision to close sheep grazing allotments to protect bighorns.

"A lot of people were looking at this waiting to see what they did," said Laurie Rule of Advocates for the West, noting it's the first time a U.S. circuit court has ruled on disease transmission between the species.

The ruling gives the Forest Service legal backing to look at other areas in the West where domestic sheep grazing should be limited to protect bighorns, she said, or for environmental groups "to try to force the Forest Service to do it if they're not going to do it on their own."

The Idaho Wool Growers Association and others sued in 2012, contending that the U.S. Forest Service illegally shut down 70 percent of sheep grazing in the Payette National Forest in west-central Idaho based on unproven disease transmission between domestic and bighorn sheep.

But a U.S. district court — and now a federal appeals court— disagreed.

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"There's that possibility that it could be used on other forests," said Stan Boyd, executive director of the Idaho Wool Growers Association. He said the association was considering its next move involving possible legal action.

Kristine Lee, director of Natural Resources for the U.S. Forest Service's Intermountain Region, said the agency already had a strategy before the circuit court ruling.

"For us, what it does, it supports our strategy to look at and analyze the risk of contact between bighorn and domestic sheep through our regulations," she said. "Bottom line, the court ruling does not alter what we're doing."

North America had about 2 million bighorn sheep before numbers declined starting in the late 1800s to about 10 percent of that, the circuit court decision said, with over-hunting, habitat loss, food competition and disease transmission from domestic sheep generally cited as reasons.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game estimated the state's bighorn population at 3,065 in March 2015, up from about 2,900 the year before. About 1,500 of those are in the Salmon River Mountains and Hells Canyon in the western part of the state, which includes the areas where the sheep grazing allotments were closed.

The Payette National Forest came out with a management plan in the early 2000s that environmental groups contended didn't protect bighorn sheep habitat from domestic sheep diseases. Forest managers tried again with the goal of maintaining a viable population of bighorns.

In 2010, following legal action by environmentalists to speed the process, the Payette National Forest issued a decision closing 70 percent of sheep grazing allotments, concluding that bighorns faced a significant risk of contracting fatal diseases from domestic sheep and needed large buffers.

That closure led to the lawsuit by domestic sheep growers in 2012.

In 2014, a federal judge for the District of Idaho ruled against the domestic sheep growers. The appeals court upheld that decision.

Many Western states eager to bolster the populations of bighorn sheep, a coveted big game animal among hunters, have been active in transplanting bighorns. But recurring die-offs from disease have stymied efforts in many areas.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game transplanted bighorns but hasn't since state lawmakers in 2009 — in the midst of sheep grazing being shut down in much of the Payette National Forest — approved a law backed by domestic sheep producers aimed at protecting allotments.

Jim Jeffres of the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation said the law views bighorns as invaders in areas with domestic sheep. He said that put an end to efforts to transplant bighorns because the wild sheep would just die without measures to prevent them from mingling with domestic sheep.

"With the politics involved it's extremely difficult for any state agency to address this, and it's politically unsafe for a lot of federal agencies to push this," he said.

The circuit court decision is significant, Rule said, because federal law takes precedent over state law when it comes to maintaining viable habitat on Forest Service land in areas with federal sheep grazing permits.

Boyd said the number of domestic sheep in Idaho has dropped from 2.7 million in the 1930s to about 185,000. He cited land restrictions, predators and problems getting reliable labor. But he said markets for sheep products are strong.

"We just keep plugging on," he said, noting one possible solution for sheep producers is some type of vaccine that could prevent disease transmission to bighorns.

"Hopefully one of these days we'll figure something out that will help ease the pressure," he said.

USD could lead University Center in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The University Center in Sioux Falls could go under the leadership of the University of South Dakota if approved by the Board of Regents.

The center worked with its three main colleges — University of South Dakota, South Dakota State University and Dakota State University — to put forward the redesign in a memorandum expected to go before the Board of Regents at its next meeting, the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/1Mo3jH7>) reported.

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University Center executive director Craig Johnson said the changes follow years of declining enrollment, which has fallen by about one-third since a peak in 2011.

Tena Haraldson, director of marketing communications and university relations for the University of South Dakota, said university centers were originally created to bring public university educations to populous areas. She said location doesn't matter as much with the advent of online classes.

Johnson said the University Center now needs to meet the needs of the Sioux Falls community. As lead institution, the University of South Dakota's role would be to help structuralize the decision-making process.

"In the past, we didn't have any one party who was empowered enough to make a decision," Johnson said. "It was everybody around the table, and if everybody didn't agree, then something just didn't happen."

Moving forward, Johnson said the focus of the University Center will be marketing the associate degrees it offers, which would also expand regardless of whether approval is given to University of South Dakota's leadership position. Johnson added that the facility will keep its name for the time being.

The Board of Regents is expected to vote on the memorandum during its upcoming meeting to be held from March 30 to April 1 in Rapid City.

Opponents worry school choice measure just the start

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Opponents of a limited school choice bill on Gov. Dennis Daugaard's desk that would offer businesses tax credits in exchange for donations to private-school scholarships worry it lays the groundwork for a larger program that would siphon a significant number of students and support from public schools.

If Daugaard signs the bill, South Dakota will join more than a dozen states that have tax credit school choice laws. Public education advocates are urging him to veto it, saying that the state has an obligation to provide public education and the measure could unconstitutionally direct public funds to religious schools.

"It's the beginning of what we've seen in other states," said Mary McCorkle, president of the South Dakota Education Association, a teacher's union. "That is a concern. It's the camel's nose in the tent."

Daugaard must make a decision on the bill by March 26.

Proposals to enact or expand tax credit school choice programs were introduced this year in 18 states, according to the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, a pro-school choice nonprofit.

Under the South Dakota plan, about 1,000 scholarships averaging nearly \$2,200 each would be available in the upcoming fiscal year. Students would be eligible for the scholarships if their families the year before made up to 150 percent of the income standard used to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, among other conditions.

"This is a voice for change when it comes to underserved populations, and it is a big deal," said Robert Wehde, president of Sioux Falls Catholic Schools.

Insurance companies could get an 80 percent tax credit for total contributions to a grant organization that would provide the scholarships. The total amount of credits would be capped at \$2 million each budget year.

Republican Sen. Phyllis Heineman, a main sponsor of the bill, said it's a "very modest" program, and expansion would depend on whether families use it and prove they want an alternative.

The strategy is to "start small and grow," said Susan Nogan, a senior policy analyst at the National Education Association.

Such tax-credit programs in states like Arizona, Florida and Pennsylvania have grown significantly, Nogan said.

Raising the tax-credit limit happens because donations hit the state caps or because the programs are so popular, said Brittany Corona, state programs and government relations director at the Friedman Foundation.

"It's better not to have a cap and allow the market to take off from there," she said.

In South Dakota, public education advocates argue that it could violate constitutional provisions blocking public funds from going to religious societies or institutions.

"This year, it's an insurance company asking for this credit. Who's next?" said Rob Monson, executive

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director of the School Administrators of South Dakota. "This just opens what I think is a huge Pandora's box."

But Erica Smith, an attorney at the Institute for Justice, a Virginia-based libertarian group that defends school choice measures, says case law supports that tax credits are not public funds and don't violate the prohibition.

"It's just special interest groups not wanting school choice," she said.

State offering grants for local mosquito-control programs

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The state Department of Health is again making funding available to help communities across South Dakota with efforts to control mosquitoes and prevent the spread of West Nile virus.

State outbreak response coordinator Susan Gannon says cities, counties and tribes can apply to receive a piece of the \$500,000 that the agency has for mosquito-control programs.

Gannon says personal protective measures and local mosquito control programs "are the keys to reducing the risk of West Nile." The state has recorded 2,208 West Nile virus cases since 2002.

The virus is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Symptoms include fever, nausea, head and muscle aches.

Funding for the applying jurisdiction will be based on its population and number of human West Nile virus cases reported in 2015.

South Dakota DENR hosting environmental conference

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources is hosting an environmental and ground water quality conference in Pierre.

The conference scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday will include exhibits and presentations covering subjects related to South Dakota's environment, ground water, geology, mining and mineral resources.

DENR Secretary Steve Pirner attendees of the 28th Annual South Dakota Environmental and Ground Water Quality Conference will get a chance to learn about mine remediation projects, risk management approaches for emerging contaminants, Sioux Quartzite in southeastern South Dakota and other topics.

The conference is free and open to the public. It will be held at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center.

About 10,900 South Dakotans among new health coverage buyers

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — About 10,900 South Dakota residents are among the new customers who signed up for subsidized private health insurance through the federal marketplace created by President Obama's signature health care law.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says the marketplaces nationwide signed up nearly 4.9 million new customers for 2016 coverage during the third open enrollment period, which ended on Jan. 31.

The health care law requires nearly every American to have health insurance. Nearly 26,000 South Dakota residents signed up for private insurance or renewed coverage.

A federal report shows the average tax credit for South Dakota customers is \$306 per month, and the average premium after tax credits is \$110 per month.

Obama in Cuba: Historic Castro summit a key test for detente

JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN, Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Brushing past profound differences, President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro will sit down Monday at Havana's Palace of the Revolution for a historic meeting, offering critical clues about whether Obama's sharp U-turn in policy will be fully reciprocated.

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For Obama, there's no better place than Havana to show that engagement can do more than isolation to bring about tangible change in the tiny communist nation. Yet for the Cubans, the glaring question is whether their own government is ready to prove the ambitious diplomatic opening is more than just talk.

Obama opened the first presidential visit to Cuba in nearly 90 years on Sunday when Air Force One touched down in Havana. Strolling through the grand cobblestoned plazas of Old Havana with his wife, Michelle, and daughters Sasha and Malia, Obama created an indelible image for both Cubans and Americans of the peacemaking that he and Castro have cautiously but doggedly pursued.

"The time is right," Obama said in an ABC interview, when asked why he was proceeding now with the Cuba initiative.

"Obviously our intention has always been to get a ball rolling," he said, "knowing that change wasn't going to happen overnight." Obama acknowledged in the interview with anchor David Muir that "we still have significant differences around human rights and civil liberties" but argued that making the trip at this time "would maximize our ability to prompt more change." He conceded that Cuba under President Rau I Castro "is still a one-party state" that exerts tight control over its people and stifles dissent.

Obama also revealed he plans to announce while visiting here that Google has made arrangements to upgrade Internet access on the island.

Indeed, the U.S. and Cuba are working more closely together now than at any time since relations took a nose dive amid Cuba's 1959 revolution. Yet while Americans are now flocking to Cuba in greater numbers, closer ties have yet to bring about the degree of change that many Cubans hoped would follow after Obama and Castro moved to normalize relations 15 months ago.

Since taking power in 2008, Castro has orchestrated economic and social reforms with lasting and broad-based impact, though to many Cubans and foreigners they appear slow to materialize. Not only are hundreds of thousands of Cubans now able to pursue free enterprise, but restrictions on cellphones and Internet have been eased and citizens feel more comfortable discussing Cuba's problems.

Yet Castro has given little ground when it comes to changing Cuba's single-party system or easing strict limits on media, assembly and political dissent. His government has also repeatedly chided Obama for saying he wanted to empower Cubans.

None of that has dissuaded Obama, who insists that any intransigence by Cuba's government only proves why Cubans will be better off when they're intimately exposed to American values.

"Let God will that this is good for all Cubans," said Odilia Collazo, a 79-year-old Havana resident, as she watched Obama's arrival on state television. "It seems to me that Obama wants to do something good before he leaves."

To that end, Obama came to Havana hoping his visit would spur Castro to offer gestures of good faith and meaningful change, which would undermine critics who accuse Obama of kowtowing to an authoritarian government. Though Cuba approved U.S. hotel chains Starwood and Marriott to operate here and moved to lift fees on converting U.S. dollars, those steps pale in comparison to sweeping changes Obama has enacted to lift decades-old U.S. restrictions.

On his first full day in Cuba, Obama was to lay a wreath Monday at the memorial to Jose Marti, a Cuban independence hero, before heading to Castro's presidential offices. After a series of meetings, the two leaders planned to address reporters. The White House's attempts to get Castro to agree to a joint news conference appeared unsuccessful, and it was unclear whether they'd answer any questions.

Castro appears to be closely and intensely managing what constitutes the most important change in Cuban foreign policy since the Cold War. Though Obama's aides have downplayed expectations for the meeting, Castro's remarks alongside Obama will be closely parsed for indications of whether he'll respond to Obama's opening with major new domestic changes.

Obama also planned an event with U.S. and Cuban entrepreneurs aimed at championing Cuba's fledgling private sector. He was to be feted in the evening at a state dinner, an honor illustrating just how far the U.S. and Cuba have come despite their deep ideological differences.

His visit was to continue Tuesday with a major speech that Cuban officials said would be carried on TV. Before departing for Argentina, Obama planned to meet with political dissidents and attend a game

between Major League Baseball's Tampa Bay Rays and Cuba's beloved national team.

In his first few hours on the island, Obama created indelible images of a new U.S.-Cuba relationship as he walked the rain-soaked streets of Havana and dined at a privately-owned restaurant in a bustling, working-class neighborhood. Jubilant crowds surged toward his heavily fortified motorcade, reminders of the Cuban people's deep affection for Americans despite decades of enmity between their governments.

Yet in a pointed reminder that Obama's aspirations for improved human rights in Cuba have yet to be fulfilled, a group of anti-government protesters were arrested while Air Force One was flying to Cuba, a scene that plays out weekly in Havana. Members of the Ladies in White group, one of Cuba's most prominent opposition groups, were expected to attend Obama's meeting with Cuban dissidents.

Sebastian Coe insists track not in 'terminal decline'

PAT GRAHAM, AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Sebastian Coe knows the next big track star is out there. The next enticing performance-enhancing drug? It's out there, too.

The president of track is all too aware that his sport suffers from an image issue these days, with lingering doping scandals and corruption charges overshadowing the action around the oval.

For a weekend, though, Coe caught a glimpse of track as he envisions it — with 7,000 ardent fans cheering on every lap and leap at the world indoor championships.

The question is: can he clean it up so fans can truly believe in what they're seeing.

In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press, Coe discussed topics such as doping, the status of Russian athletes for the Rio Olympics, how to bring the sport into the 21st century and where Usain Bolt ranks in the pantheon of track's elite.

"We must always, always remember that, yes, our product is athletics, but our business is entertaining people," Coe said. "You would not have been sitting here (the other night), concluding we're a sport in terminal decline. Because we're not."

Recent scandals have knocked it off course, though. The Russians didn't compete at world indoors after the IAAF suspended Russia in November following an independent report by a World Anti-Doping Agency panel detailing systematic corruption and doping cover-ups in the country.

Coe said a decision could come in May or early June whether Russia's track and field program has done enough to repair its anti-doping measures and can compete in this summer's Olympic Games.

And then there's the issue of meldonium, an endurance-boosting drug Coe knew nothing about until tennis great Maria Sharapova tested positive for it at the Australian Open. The drug was added to the banned list in January, and athletes are being caught with it in track, too. At least one athlete missed the world indoors over use of meldonium.

Asked if the sport could ever get to the point where there's no talk of doping — where the athletes and their accomplishments grab the headlines — Coe said: "I would love to be able to tell you that has to be our ambition.

"But practically, I'm afraid there probably are always going to be a few people in a few systems that will want to try and buck the system. We have to be proactive, have to really throw every effort behind creating opportunities for clean athletes. This is all about protecting clean athletes."

Some athletes have voiced their concern over taking the starting line against competitors they know are dirty and losing out on the medals and moments at big meets they'll never get to treasure.

"It's fundamentally about creating a platform for clean athletes to be able to show the world they're extraordinary talents, without people necessarily sitting in the stands questioning whether what they're watching has got anymore merit than professional wrestling," Coe said.

Even more, Coe wants to take the sport into the 21st century by mixing it up a little bit. Make it quicker paced and more fan friendly.

Part of that was on display in Portland, when athletes were introduced in grand style before finals and medal ceremonies were held at a nearby plaza. It was another chance for fans to interact with medal winners.

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Recently, the sport lost a Diamond League stop in New York when the organizers elected to hold a street race instead. If it sparks interest, Coe is all for it.

"We have to be realistic about this — a lot of people are not going as a first instinct, to come into our stadiums to watch track and field," Coe said. "If they're introduced to it, in and around shopping malls, in a big population center, if that helps us bring them into the stadium, that has to be a good thing. If New York is saying they can really create an exciting experience in the streets, that's fine. That's absolutely fine."

Other topics discussed by Coe:

— On Ethiopia, Morocco, Kenya, Ukraine and Belarus being in "critical care" and needing to seriously improve their anti-doping programs: "It's important that we understand where there are problems and how we can work together with the federation to fix them. That was the principle behind the discussion around those five countries."

— On the controversy surrounding the bidding process for the 2021 world championships that was awarded to the city of Eugene: "The council voted to go to Eugene and that's where we are. We're looking forward to being back here. If you can bring a few of these people (from Portland) as well — that will be one heck of a stadium."

— On concerns over the Zika virus and political issues at the Rio Games: "It doesn't really matter where you are in the world, doesn't matter if it's Madrid or Tokyo, it's hard (to stage an Olympics). It's the toughest thing any city has to pull off."

As for his thoughts on Bolt being the best track athlete of all time, well, Coe didn't want to go down that road. No, that would be a disservice to the likes of Jesse Owens, Haile Gebrselassie or Jackie Joyner-Kersey.

"We're very lucky to be able to talk about generation after generation of athletes, across so many disciplines, that are frankly blowing our minds in terms of their genius ability to do what they do," Coe said.

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. HISTORIC MEETING ON TAP IN HAVANA

The sit-down between Obama and Raul Castro may offer critical clues about whether the U.S. president's sharp U-turn in policy will pay lasting dividends.

2. NORTH KOREA FIRES SHORT-RANGE PROJECTILES INTO SEA

The continuation of weapon launches is an apparent response to ongoing South Korea-U.S. military drills it sees as a provocation.

3. WHAT A U.S. JUDGE IS URGING OBAMA TO DO

AP's Jeff Horwitz reports the jurist is urging the White House to protect from public disclosure federal court records involving the once-secret criminal history of a former Trump business partner.

4. HOW THIS CAUCUS IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS

Utah voters Tuesday will navigate a new online-voting system officials hope will boost turnout for the state's caucuses.

5. FEARS IN IRAQ OVER SHIITE MILITIAS' POWER

When the fighting is done against the Islamic State group, some in the military and government fear the forces will seek to dominate Iraq the way the Revolutionary Guard does Iran and Hezbollah does Lebanon.

6. MIXED REACTIONS TO TRUMP'S WALL ALONG ARIZONA BORDER

The plan stirs up emotions among voters who live here with some saying it would divide Mexico and the U.S. and others who say nothing short of a wall will do.

7. APPLE KICKS OFF BUSY WEEK

The tech giant is expected to show off some new additions to the current family of iPhone and iPad devices.

8. 'YOU'VE WON ... A COLLEGE EDUCATION'

In hopes of wooing students in an era of tight competition, colleges start to deliver small batches of

acceptance letters in the style of a surprise television sweepstakes.

9. WHY BEN AFFLECK TAKES BATMAN ROLE SERIOUSLY

The actor is trying to win over fans skeptical of him playing the caped crusader in "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" by putting a lot of physical effort into the role.

10. WHERE BASEBALL IS ALLOCATING ITS SALARIES

Major league teams have increased spending on younger players — led by Cuban prospects — but overall percentage of revenue going to players has been relatively stable for a decade.

Ex-State Dept worker to be sentenced for 'sextortion' scheme

KATE BRUMBACK, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Sitting at a desk in the American embassy in London, a former U.S. State Department employee used his government-issued computer to prey on vulnerable young women and manipulate them into sharing nude photos, amassing thousands of images to make himself feel powerful, prosecutors said.

Michael C. Ford, 36, faces years in prison when a federal judge sentences him Monday for sending "phishing" emails to young women, specifically targeting members of sororities and aspiring models, and claiming to be a member of Google's account deletion team, which doesn't exist, to get them to hand over their passwords.

While he occasionally used the photos for sexual arousal, it was primarily about power, he told investigators.

"He stated that his wife is the 'alpha and breadwinner' in their family, and he was doing this to fill a 'power void,'" prosecutors wrote in a court filing.

Prosecutors want a federal judge to send him to prison for eight years while defense attorneys are arguing for much less.

Ford's lawyers say their client has acknowledged his wrongdoing and shown he's committed to changing his behavior. Despite longtime struggles with alcohol and more recent bouts of severe depression, he still has strong support from his family and friends, his lawyers wrote.

More than two dozen letters written by family and friends describe him as a doting husband and loving father to his 2-year-old son. His wife is due to give birth to their second child this summer and relies heavily on his support, the letters say.

Ford used the women's passwords to access their email and social media accounts and searched for sexually explicit photographs and personal information. He sent messages threatening to put the images online or send them to the women's families and friends if they didn't do what he wanted, a practice known as sextortion, prosecutors said. In several instances, he followed through on those threats.

When his victims reacted with shock or anger, he escalated his activity with taunts and threats, prosecutors said. He pushed for more explicit photos and asked them to use hidden cameras to record "sexy girls" in locker rooms and changing rooms, prosecutors said.

In a single day last April, he sent 800 phishing emails, and 180 follow-up messages to potential victims who hadn't responded to his initial email and to 15 others who had provided incorrect passwords, prosecutors said. Another day in April, he sent initial harassing emails with photos attached to 98 new victims.

Prosecutors said one woman told investigators she considered carrying a gun because she was afraid he'd physically attack her, while another slept with a knife under her pillow.

Ford was arrested in May and pleaded guilty in December to nine counts of cyberstalking, seven counts of computer hacking to extort and one count of wire fraud. The cyberstalking and hacking counts each carry a maximum of five years in prison, while the wire fraud count carries up to 20 years in prison.

Federal sentencing guidelines use a variety of factors to arrive at a suggested range, and the judge is not obligated to follow it. The federal probation office has recommended a range of about four to five years.

Prosecutors say Ford actually began victimizing young women in 2009 posing as a scout for a talent agency and the owner of an adult website, emailing women and asking for racy photos and personal information. He knew some of them were minors because he had their birthdates, but encouraged them to send videos anyway, prosecutors said. He also attempted to meet some in person and stalked at least

one, prosecutors said.

Even though he doesn't face charges for the earlier activity, prosecutors argue the judge should consider it when sentencing him, in part because it led seamlessly to the later activity.

Defense attorneys argue their client quickly acknowledged his wrongdoing, helped with the investigation and pleaded guilty, saving the government the time and expense of a trial.

Seoul: North Korea fires 5 short-range projectiles

HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea fired five short-range projectiles into the sea on Monday, Seoul officials said, in a continuation of weapon launches it has carried out in an apparent response to ongoing South Korea-U.S. military drills it sees as a provocation.

The projectiles launched from a site near the northeastern city of Hamhung flew about 200 kilometers (125 miles) before landing in waters off North Korea's east coast, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

The firings came three days after Seoul said North Korea launched its first medium-range missile into the sea since early 2014, ignoring U.N. resolutions against such tests.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency initially reported that a missile had also been launched on Monday, but later changed that to say projectiles had been fired.

The firings appear to be North Korea's response to annual springtime U.S.-South Korean military exercises that it says are a rehearsal for an invasion. Earlier this month, North Korea fired several short-range missiles and artillery shells into the sea and threatened pre-emptive nuclear strikes against Washington and Seoul.

This year's drills are the largest ever, and come after North Korea conducted a nuclear test and a long-range rocket launch earlier this year, leading the U.N. Security Council to impose its toughest sanctions on the country in two decades.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un recently ordered tests of a nuclear warhead and ballistic missiles capable of carrying such warheads. He issued the orders while overseeing what state media called a successful simulated test of a re-entry vehicle aimed at returning a nuclear warhead to the atmosphere from space so it could hit its intended target. The re-entry vehicle is considered one of the last major technologies North Korea must master to develop long-range missiles equipped with nuclear weapons capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.

Analysts in South Korea said the medium-range missile launch last Friday may have been a test of the re-entry technology. North Korean state media have not commented on the reported launch.

South Korean defense officials say North Korea doesn't yet have functioning intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Q&A: Utah votes Tuesday with some casting ballots online

MICHELLE L. PRICE, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah voters on Tuesday will navigate a new presidential caucus system that comes months earlier than last time and opens the Republican race to online voting with computers, smartphones or tablets.

Unlike in some past presidential campaigns, the state of Utah is not paying for a primary election this year, leaving the parties to set up their own systems.

Democrats are holding a traditional paper vote, but to boost participation, the Utah GOP is offering online voting in addition to the usual ballot. It's one of the first prominent uses in the country of online voting, which presents new security and privacy challenges for officials.

State Republican officials say they're confident in their process because it's been used for national elections in other countries.

Some questions and answers about Utah's presidential caucus system:

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CAUCUSES VS. PRIMARY?

Utah's GOP-dominated Legislature decides every four years if it wants to pay about \$3 million for a state-run presidential primary or leave the contest to the parties. This time, Utah Republicans decided to run their own election, scheduling it the same evening party supporters were already to gather at neighborhood caucuses to elect state and local officeholders. With Utah Republicans deciding to run their own contest, lawmakers didn't want to foot an election bill and left Democrats to run their own caucuses, too.

HOW DO REPUBLICANS PARTICIPATE?

The Utah GOP caucuses are only open to Republicans, who can vote online, in-person at their neighborhood caucus meetings, or by filling out an absentee ballot and having another caucus-goer deliver it to a meeting, along with a copy of the voter's ID. The evening meetings are typically open for about two hours. Republicans had to declare to the party by Thursday that they would participate by voting online. Once party officials verified their registration, voters were emailed a 30-digit PIN to enter when casting their vote. The online voting system is open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. local time on Tuesday.

HOW DO DEMOCRATS PARTICIPATE?

Utah's Democratic caucuses are open to all voters, but they can only participate by attending a neighborhood meeting and casting a ballot. The meetings run from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. local time. Votes will be accepted from anyone in line by 8:30 p.m.

IS ONLINE VOTING SECURE?

James Evans, the Utah Republican Party chairman, said party officials interviewed six companies to administer the system before awarding an \$80,000 contract to Florida-based SmartMatic, which has set up online voting in the small country of Estonia. Evans wouldn't explain the specifics of the system or how he thinks it's safe from security breaches. He contends traditional voting has more risk of fraud. "How do I know that somebody in the county clerk's office isn't messing with the vote results?" he asked. "I think there's a greater likelihood of that than anything else."

Mark Thomas, Utah's director of elections, said state officials studied online voting last year and noted that while security is a concern, even false claims of hacking could throw results into question. While people bank online and file taxes online, Thomas said, elections officials aren't quite ready to adopt online voting. He said Tuesday's vote by the GOP will give an initial taste of what it might look like when government eventually adopts the practice.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Republicans Donald Trump, Ted Cruz and John Kasich are vying for 40 delegates; Democrats Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are competing for 37.

Judge wants US to protect Trump associate's secret history

JEFF HORWITZ, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A U.S. judge is urging the Obama administration to protect from public disclosure federal court records related to the once-secret criminal history of a former Donald Trump business partner.

In a highly unusual order prompted by The Associated Press, U.S. District Judge Brian M. Cogan said that unless the Justice Department acts before April 18, he will decide whether to make the court files public under the assumption that federal prosecutors don't care.

The case involves Felix Sater, a Trump business associate who had pleaded guilty in a major Mafia-linked stock fraud scheme and cooperated with the government. The AP reported in December that, even after learning about Sater's background, Trump tapped Sater for a business development role in 2010 that included the title of senior adviser to Trump. Sater received Trump Organization business cards and was given an office within the Trump Organization's headquarters, on the same floor as Trump's own.

"It seems to me that the government has a unique interest in keeping documents that relate to cooperation agreements under seal," the judge wrote in his order. "The government should speak and assert its position as to whether the public's right to access each document in the record is outweighed by a compelling need for secrecy."

Lawyers for the AP had asked the judge to justify sealing a five-year criminal contempt proceeding in

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U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

Not only did Cogan seal all documents in the contempt case, he also initially sealed the AP's request that he unseal his justification for their sealing. When The New York Times asked the judge to unseal the AP's request to unseal the sealing order, that request was sealed, too. Late last week, he made the requests by the AP and the newspaper publicly accessible — but ordered that the parties to the case file any response to them under seal.

The defendants in the contempt case, Frederick Oberlander and Richard Lerner, are attorneys whom the government said revealed once-secret court records about Sater's crimes and cooperation. Sater's lawyers, who once included Leslie Caldwell, now the head of the Justice Department's criminal division, have said that Sater's cooperation was vital to national security and disclosures about his past put him in danger.

Oberlander and Lerner said they never revealed sealed records. Some of what they had been ordered not to disclose is already publicly available in the Congressional Record, they said.

"We wish that people could inspect the documents, because it would reveal judicial and prosecutorial misconduct of the highest levels," Oberlander told the AP.

Also at issue in the case are statements that U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch — formerly the top prosecutor in Cogan's district — made about Sater's case before the Senate confirmed her last year. Oberlander and Lerner said the government improperly permitted Sater to use his status as a secret cooperato

tor to commit new crimes and avoid paying restitution to past victims, who are owed millions of dollars. In February 2015, Lynch told Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, of the Senate Judiciary Committee that information about Sater's restitution "remains under seal," and that the Justice Department would never waive victims' right to restitution as part of a cooperation agreement. Court records already publicly available at the time showed that Sater was not ordered to pay restitution and the government never requested it. One of Sater's attorneys said in a statement at the time that the government had waived restitution payments partly out of gratitude to Sater.

A Justice Department spokeswoman, Melanie Newman, told the AP that Lynch's comments were accurate because some documents related to restitution in Sater's case remain under seal.

Oberlander told the AP that the original cooperation agreement Sater signed in 1998, which has been publicly available since 2013, said Sater acknowledged that the penalty for his crime included roughly \$60 million in restitution payments to victims.

The New York judge has twice asked the Justice Department to pursue contempt charges against the two lawyers who revealed Sater's cooperation. In both cases, local federal prosecutors recused themselves over unspecified conflicts of interest after consulting with Justice Department officials in Washington. They referred the case to federal prosecutors in Albany, New York, who likewise did not act.

In his latest order, Cogan again urged prosecutors to go after Oberlander and Lerner.

"One would think that the desire to ensure that further informants cooperate in government investigations should also motivate the government to take swift action against individuals who seek to expose the identity of informants, their proffered criminal history and the details of their cooperation," the judge wrote.

Sater's attorney, Robert Wolf, said the judge was right.

"Mr. Sater shares and supports the court's frustration and outrage as to why these rogue lawyers have not yet been criminally prosecuted," Wolf said in a statement. He credited Sater with providing information that "potentially saved tens of thousands, if not millions, of our citizens' lives."

Sater pleaded guilty in 1998 to one count of racketeering for his role in a broad stock fraud scheme involving the prominent Genovese and Bonanno crime families, according to court records. Five years earlier, a New York State court had sentenced Sater to more than a year in prison for stabbing a man in the face with a broken margarita glass.

Ben Affleck wants to prove he's just another Batman

JOHN CARUCCI, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Ben Affleck hopes the Batman fans who were skeptical of him playing the caped crusader in "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" realize how seriously he took the role.

"The most difficult thing about making this movie, honestly, was the physical aspect," Affleck told The Associated Press Sunday on the red carpet for the film's New York premiere at Radio City Music Hall.

Affleck said he wanted to be in shape, so he worked out hard.

"Having to be in the gym every day, six in the morning ... I wasn't used to that kind of workout regimen," Affleck said. "Fans have come to expect that if you're going to play a superhero, you got to look in the body like a superhero. I knew the camera was going to be looking at me and the guillotine was there so I knew I had to be ready," he said.

When Warner Bros. made the announcement nearly three years ago that Affleck would play Batman, some fans were less than thrilled, and the backlash led to petitions asking the studio to remove Affleck.

Eventually, it blew over, and the two-time Oscar winner feels proud to be part of the Batman legacy.

"I'm really honored to be part of a tradition that Christian Bale and Christopher Nolan, great talents, worked on. Michael Keaton, Val Kilmer, George Clooney, Tim Burton, great talents. So I just wanted to do my best. I think we did something different, but something that is still very much Batman," Affleck said.

His co-star Jesse Eisenberg shared a similar experience when he was cast in the film as Superman's arch-nemesis, Lex Luthor.

But Eisenberg, famous for his role as Mark Zuckerberg in "The Social Network," empathized with his critics.

"I can assure them as critical as they are of me, I'm more critical. No one is more concerned or critical or worried about doing a good job than I am," Eisenberg said.

Amy Adams, who plays Lois Lane in the film, praised both Eisenberg and Affleck.

"I think the audience is going to have to decide for themselves. (I) got to see it, and I was blown away," Adams said. "They both bring something we've never seen before in these characters, but something that really pays homage to the canon, so I think they are going to be really happy."

Before going inside for the screening, Affleck summed it up: "I think people are going to like it. All you can do is do your best."

Apple starts busy week with new iPhone launch

BRANDON BAILEY, AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Apple is kicking off a busy week: Today the giant tech company will host reporters and analysts at its Silicon Valley headquarters for a product launch event. On Tuesday, its lawyers will square off with authorities in federal court over the FBI's demand for help unlocking a San Bernardino killer's encrypted iPhone.

The tech giant's dispute with the government has commanded headlines for weeks, but it may get scant mention at the company's product event. Instead, CEO Tim Cook is expected to show off some new additions to the current family of iPhone and iPad devices at Monday's gathering.

Apple could use a lift. iPhone sales are levelling off, after surging last year to record levels that made Apple the world's biggest company, by stock market value. And many are wondering if Cook can come up with another big hit.

So far, however, there have been no hints of any dramatic announcements, such as last year's highly anticipated Apple Watch debut, or major initiatives like the company's long-rumored but yet-to-materialize streaming TV service.

And even though Cook has been outspoken about his opposition to a judge's order compelling Apple to write software that overrides iPhone security features, tech analysts say he probably won't risk overshadowing the company's products by discussing the case at Monday's event.

While Apple has been mum about its plans, several analysts expect the company will introduce an upgrade to its older, four-inch iPhone 5S — aimed at consumers who haven't sprung for the bigger-screen

iPhone 6 models that Apple introduced over the last two years. The new phone may come with features like Apple Pay and the company's fastest processor, which have previously been offered only on versions of the iPhone 6.

Analysts and tech blogs say Apple also may unveil a new model of the iPad Pro, which the company introduced last year with several features — like a detachable keyboard and stylus — designed for business users.

A four-inch iPhone isn't likely to see the kind of blockbuster demand that Apple enjoyed with its large-screen iPhone 6 and 6S models, according to several financial analysts, but it could help Apple boost overall sales. The smaller phone might also draw some additional users into the market for Apple's online services, including Apple Music, Apple Pay and the highly profitable mobile App Store.

While shoppers bought a record 74.8 million iPhones in the final three months of 2015, Apple has signaled demand in the current three-month period will fall short of the 61 million iPhones sold in the January-March quarter last year.

Even with new features, analysts say the 4-inch iPhone should sell at a lower price than the larger models, which list at \$549 or more. That means it may appeal to some shoppers, especially in overseas markets, who want a premium phone at lower cost. It may also draw interest from owners of older iPhone 5 models who find the larger models unwieldy.

Many analysts expect Apple will release a more dramatically revamped new iPhone 7 in the fall.

The proliferation of iPhone and iPad models may seem contrary to Apple's traditional focus — espoused by late Apple cofounder Steve Jobs — on producing fewer products that it believes are superior to competitors' offerings. By contrast, Samsung is known for selling a multitude of phones and tablets at various sizes and prices.

But Apple has gradually expanded its family of devices in recent years to reach consumers in different market categories, which also helps the company sell more online goods and services, said Gartner tech analyst Brian Blau.

"Tim Cook has said he thinks there's a lot of life left in the iPhone product line, despite the media and investor community pressuring Apple over the potential decline in premium iPhone sales," Blau said. "I think it's exactly these types of things that he has in mind."

Freed after years in solitary, woman faces jailhouse charges

JAKE PEARSON, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York City woman who spent more than three years on Rikers Island before her trial and served much of it in solitary confinement before being acquitted by a jury last year will stand trial for criminal charges stemming from a jailhouse confrontation with guards.

Candie Hailey's chaotic Rikers stint and subsequent struggle to return to society was documented earlier this year by The Associated Press. She faces a felony charge of criminal mischief on Monday for breaking a metal chair used to scan inmates' body cavities for contraband in May 2013, according to an indictment.

Hailey, who was diagnosed with borderline character disorder, mood disorder and anti-social personality disorder at Rikers, could face up to seven years in prison if convicted. She also faces misdemeanor counts of harassment, obstructing government administration and assault.

"Candie has always maintained that her treatment at Rikers was horrible and these charges are an offshoot of horrible treatment that she received," said her attorney, Patrick Higgins.

Hailey, 32, had an extraordinarily tumultuous time at Rikers, according to interviews as well as medical and jail records obtained by the AP.

Of her first 29 months in jail, she served about 27 of them in 23-hour isolation for breaking jailhouse rules and was frequently involved in confrontations and scuffles with guards. She regularly hurt herself by banging her head against her cell wall or cutting at her wrists with broken light fixtures. And at least eight times during her time in solitary she was hospitalized for suicide attempts that included swallowing a hair remover product.

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Criminal justice experts have said Hailey's defiance to her continued isolation is representative of a common reaction to the continued use of isolation for difficult inmates, especially those with mental health problems. One national expert on mental health care in jails and prisons warned top city officials in a 2014 sworn affidavit that continued use of solitary for Hailey as punishment for outbursts "could lead to her death."

The newly elected Bronx district attorney, Darcel Clark, has vowed to aggressively pursue charges against inmates who assault jail guards. In a letter, Hailey's supporters have urged Clark to exercise restraint and dismiss the charges against Hailey in the interest of justice.

"Here is an opportunity to right a wrong," the letter states. "She should not be prosecuted for incidents that occurred during an ordeal that the city now agrees should not be practiced in our jails."

A spokeswoman for Clark refused to comment.

Hailey was charged in 2012 with attempted murder and accused of stabbing a baby following a wild fistfight with three other women in which a 4-month-old girl suffered a hairline skull fracture and received three stitches above her eye. She was acquitted by a jury following a month-long trial.

Since her release, Hailey has struggled to find stability, bouncing between shelters, friends' couches and sometimes the subway to sleep. She lost her public housing apartment and is trying to regain custody of her two children.

Mayor Bill de Blasio has vowed to reform the city's jails, and officials have curbed their use of solitary as punishment to control difficult-to-manage inmates.

A spokeswoman for de Blasio did not respond to a request for comment about Hailey's case.

Only on AP: MLB ups prospect spending, overall pct steady

RONALD BLUM, AP Baseball Writer

Major league teams steeply increased the money spent on young players last year, when several Cuban prospects got big-money deals. Still, the overall percentage of revenue devoted to players has remained relatively stable for a decade.

Financial data released by Major League Baseball to The Associated Press showed the big leaguers' share of net revenue was between 48.5 percent and 51.7 percent each year since 2006.

Dollars spent on amateur players and minor leaguers rose by 29 percent last year — four times the increase in big league compensation. Counting signing bonuses for amateurs and minor league salaries, revenue devoted to players has ranged from 53.7 percent in 2012 to 57.5 percent last year.

"The data shows that the percentage of our revenue that has been paid to players has been fairly consistent," said Dan Halem, MLB's chief legal officer. "Obviously, it's a free market and clubs can spend however much they choose. We've seen an uptick in spending on the amateur side, and on the major league side it fluctuates slightly up and down but it has stayed within a range."

Scott Boras, the most prominent player agent, said at the general managers' meetings in November that the players' share of revenue had dropped to 43 percent. Boras is including gross revenue from Major League Baseball Advanced Media, which formed in 2000, and the MLB Network, which launched in 2009 and is two-thirds owned by MLB. The expenses of running those companies are deducted to determine their net revenue.

During his final season as baseball commissioner, Bud Selig said revenue would exceed \$9 billion in 2014, but that was the gross figure.

"We believe that using net income for MLBAM and the network is appropriate for assessing the percentage of revenue that owners pay to players," Halem said. "Owners only can spend the net profits of those businesses, not gross revenues which they never receive."

MLB said net revenue rose from \$7.16 billion in 2013 to \$7.79 billion in 2014 to \$8.15 billion last year.

Dollars devoted to big leaguers climbed from \$3.59 billion in 2013 to \$3.87 billion in 2014 to \$4.15 billion last year; the amount on amateurs and minor leaguers was \$420 million annually in 2013 and '14, then jumped to \$540 million last year, when several Cuban defectors and young Dominicans received large

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signing bonuses.

Boston agreed to pay \$31.5 million alone to Yoan Moncada, a 19-year-old Cuban second baseman. Three other Cuban prospects agreed to bonuses of \$8 million or more: Arizona pitcher Yoan Lopez, Los Angeles Angels shortstop Roberto Baldoquin and Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Pablo Fernandez.

The Major League Baseball Players Association has access to MLB's figures, and union head Tony Clark described the percentage devoted to players as "fairly constant."

"Two or three percentage points one way or the other is always room for improvement," he said of the fluctuations.

Boras did not want to comment on MLB's figures, but did say he thought gross revenue should be used to determine increases in teams' signing bonus pools for amateur players. The draft figures to be a key discussion matter in talks for a collective bargaining agreement to succeed the labor deal that expires Dec. 1. Under the 2012-16 agreement, the pools increase annually at the rate of the rise in total industry revenue — defined as MLB did in these figures.

"I trust in negotiations of the draft itself, and this is a union matter, that attention is paid to outside sources and expenses affecting the amount of money that teams can spend on drafted players pursuant to a calculation of net versus gross revenues," Boras said.

In other sports, the players' percentage is defined as part of salary caps. NFL players are guaranteed 47 percent of defined revenue, while NBA players receive 49 to 51 percent of basketball related income and NHL players get 50 percent of hockey related revenues.

Despite the lack of a cap, MLB teams appear to be able to successfully match their player spending with predicted revenue.

"They have a pretty good sense depending on team performance of what their revenue streams are going to be over the next three to four years," Halem said, "and they budget accordingly."

Mixed reactions to Trump's border wall along Arizona border

ASTRID GALVAN, Associated Press

BRIAN SKOLOFF, Associated Press

NOGALES, Ariz. (AP) — Donald Trump's ambitious plan to build a giant wall on the border hits close to home for people like Berenice Andrews.

The front door of her family's home is just feet away from a fence separating the U.S. and Mexico. The home is so close to Mexico that the sounds of schoolchildren at play south of the border can be heard. So can buses along a main thoroughfare on the Mexico side.

As the presidential contest shifts to Arizona and its Tuesday primary, Trump's wall stirs up a range of emotions among border-area residents like Andrews. For some, nothing short of a wall will do. For her, the fence that currently divides the U.S. and Mexico is a good enough barrier.

"For him to even propose something like that is complete insanity," Andrews said.

Trump has not provided specifics the wall but says it would cost between \$10 billion and \$12 billion, and has said he would make Mexico pay for it. Mexico has scoffed at the idea.

There are already about 650 miles of fencing, including the steel fence that divides the sister cities of Nogales in Arizona and Mexico and ranges from 18 feet to 26 feet tall. Much of the border was built in the last 15 years as immigration surged. The cost has been in the billions.

The Associated Press interviewed people who live on the border to get their perspective on Trump's border wall plan:

GUNS AT THE READY

Everywhere Jim Chilton goes on his sprawling cattle ranch along the Mexican border in Arizona, he has a gun at the ready. Guns at his front door. Guns in his pickup truck. Guns on his horse's saddle.

For Chilton, illegal immigration and drug smuggling isn't just something he hears about on the news. He lives with it every day as smugglers routinely cross the border on his property. He supports just about anything to stop it, including Trump's plan to build a wall from one end of the border to the other.

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"We need a wall. We need forward operation bases. We need Border Patrol to be down there all the time," Chilton said. "We just need to secure that international boundary at the border, period."

While Chilton hasn't decided who he'll vote for in the presidential election, he certainly supports the idea of building a wall.

"I'm tired of having thousands of people coming through my ranch. I worry about running into a guy with an AK-47 and a bunch of druggers behind him," Chilton said. "The United States needs to secure its international boundary."

BOTHERED IN BISBEE

Artist Kate Drew-Wilkinson lives in Bisbee, AZ, where she owns a gallery a few miles north of the border. Drew-Wilkinson opposes Trump and his wall proposal, saying he's a bully who is dangerous to the United States.

"I don't think he has a real understanding of the geography or the sheer difficulty of building a wall of that kind," she said. "And it's ugly. The whole thing is really ugly."

Drew-Wilkinson, an England native who moved to the U.S. in the late 1960s, wouldn't reveal who she would be voting for but said it definitely wouldn't be Trump.

RANCHER WANTS A WALL, TRUMP

John Ladd is a cattle rancher whose roughly 15,000 acre ranch abuts the border near Naco, Arizona. Immigrants and drug smugglers frequently sneak into the country on his property, cutting his barbed-wire fences and leaving behind garbage.

He is sick of politics as usual and finds Trump's lack of political correctness refreshing. He isn't bothered by Trump's lack of specifics about how he'd build a wall.

He simply likes that Trump has been talking about illegal immigration since the beginning of his campaign.

"That really rang a bell with me and a lot of the ranchers, that finally we had somebody in the political arena that wasn't worried about being politically correct and talked about the problem that is actually happening," he said.

Ladd said he isn't sure the wall will ever actually be built but said he believes Trump will enforce immigration laws.

CONFLICTED REPUBLICAN

Hector Orozco has a unique perspective on the border debate because of his occupation and past party affiliation.

He manages manufacturing company south of the border with offices on the American side, making campaign debates about foreign trade especially relevant. He is also an immigrant from Mexico who became a U.S. citizen and traditionally voted Republican.

As of late, though, Orozco said he can't get behind the party and its ideology. To him, America's biggest challenge is the deficit and the economy, not illegal immigration.

"It's like they're trying to distract us from the bigger problems," he said. "(Illegal immigration) is a problem but it's not the biggest problem."

And he said a wall wouldn't resolve immigration problems in any way.

"People will find a way to improve their lives," Orozco said. "Regardless of how big the wall is, they're gonna look for a way because they're gonna want to make a better life for their family. Not all who cross are criminals."

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TIPPING OFF: What just happened, and what's coming next

EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

A region-by-region look at what you might have missed last week and what you shouldn't miss next week, as the NCAA Tournament heads into the Sweet 16.

EAST

GOING TO FORM: Not that it's unusual for a No. 1 seed to encounter very few problems in its first two games. But given all the talk about parity, upsets and the rest of the twists and turns during this unpredictable season, North Carolina's dominance was impressive. Two wins by a total of 45 points. And the second-round game, against Providence, was actually competitive for the first half. Just enough to keep the Tar Heels sharp — and then they ran away. "I probably think we've played our best basketball the entire season in the last couple of weeks," coach Roy Williams said. Hard to disagree.

WHO WAS THAT?: Give the bracket-buster award in the East to No. 14 seed Stephen F. Austin, which took apart West Virginia in the first round and came one point short of the Sweet 16, in a 76-75 loss to Notre Dame. It took a tip-in from unheralded Rex Pflueger of the Irish with 1.5 seconds left to send the Lumberjacks home. "They've set a new standard for SFA basketball," coach Brad Underwood said of his seniors, who have three tournament appearances and two NCAA wins in their careers.

CHECK IT OUT: Hooking up Friday, it will be North Carolina and Indiana. Plenty of history here, just not with each other. This is their first meeting in the tournament since 1984, when Steve Alford scored 27 points to headline an upset against the top-ranked Tar Heels. The loss ended Michael Jordan's college career.

SOUTH

GOING TO FORM: Almost everything. This region is sending seed Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5 to the Sweet 16. They are Kansas, Villanova, Miami and Maryland.

WHO WAS THAT?: No. 13 seed Hawaii notched the program's first NCAA victory — but there was no repeat in Game 2, and there won't be a repeat next year, either. The Rainbow Warriors, who lost to Maryland on Sunday, are banned from next year's postseason because of infractions committed under former coach Gib Arnold. The current coach, Eran Ganot, said it's something in the back of everyone's mind. "But there's always opportunity from those kind of things and it was an opportunity for us to send a message of how we can lock in and fight through adversity and get better and try to do something special," he said.

CHECK IT OUT: The Villanova-Miami game Thursday in Louisville will be an interesting contest between the guards. Angel Rodriguez and Sheldon McClellan of Miami are about as quick as they come, and Villanova's Josh Hart and Ryan Arcidiacono will be hard-pressed to stop them.

MIDWEST

GOING TO FORM: Virginia and Iowa State are both where they're "supposed" to be — a 1 and 4 facing off in the Sweet 16.

WHO WAS THAT?: Syracuse was one of the most hotly debated bubble teams, but has responded by winning games by 19 and 25. Coach Jim Boeheim was glad to say that anyone who thought the Orange didn't belong didn't know anything about basketball — and maybe he was right. Runner up: Josh Hagins of No. 12 Little Rock, who did — well — just about everything en route to 31 points and a come-from-behind win over Purdue in the first round.

CHECK IT OUT: No. 10 Syracuse meets No. 11 Gonzaga on Friday. They've played a combined four games. Nobody has come closer than 16 points of either team. This was widely viewed as the weakest of the four regions, and there's no doubt the winner of the other game — Virginia-Iowa State — will have its hands full with whichever double-digit seed makes the Elite Eight.

WEST:

GOING TO FORM: For only the 16th time since the field expanded in 1985, a region is sending seeds

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1-4 to the Sweet 16. But to say things went to form wouldn't be telling the whole story. No. 3 Texas A&M somehow overcame a 12-point deficit in the last 44 seconds — yes, 44 seconds — of regulation to force overtime with Northern Iowa en route to an eventual win. Though Oregon, Oklahoma and Duke all had their own moments of drama, nothing compared to that.

WHO WAS THAT?: Northern Iowa may not be a newcomer to the tournament, but the 11th-seeded Panthers certainly came up with new ways to put the madness in March. From Paul Jespersen's half-court game-winner at the buzzer against Texas to the entire team's meltdown against Texas A&M, these guys will serve as Exhibit A the next time anyone says, "It's never over 'til it's over."

CHECK IT OUT: Oregon was a surprise No. 1 seed. The Ducks struggled against St. Joe's, before coming out on top, 69-64. Next up, the defending national champions. Though Duke isn't nearly as deep or talented as it was last year, Grayson Allen is a force. And, as we all know, both the program and its coach, Mike Krzyzewski, are very comfortable on the big stage.

Fears in Iraqi government, army over Shiite militias' power

HAMZA HENDAWI, Associated Press

QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — It was a tense confrontation between two forces supposed to be on the same side in Iraq.

First, heavily armed police, led by the interior minister, waded into a Shiite militia base south of Baghdad and arrested its deputy commander, accused of organizing attacks on Sunni mosques. They loaded the man, Ali Reda, into an armored SUV.

Then militia reinforcements descended, surrounded the police and demanded Reda be freed. Weapons were drawn. The minister, Mohammed al-Ghabban, the highest figure in Iraq's police force, frantically called Baghdad from inside his SUV.

In the end, al-Ghabban surrendered his prisoner and left empty-handed, angry and humiliated.

The standoff in mid-January, described to The Associated Press by six different officials and militia leaders, was a stark example of the power that Shiite militias have accrued in Iraq and their boldness in wielding it.

These militias, many of them backed by Iran, mobilized in 2014 to fight Sunni extremists from the Islamic State group. However, they are now showing no intention of standing down after the battle, demanding instead to be a major force shaping Iraq. That prospect worries not only Iraq's Sunni minority but also officials in the military and the Shiite-led government, who fear the militias will dominate Iraq the way the Revolutionary Guard does Iran and the guerrilla group Hezbollah does Lebanon.

Two top generals warned that the army could eventually come to blows with the militias, known collectively as the "Hashd," Arabic for "mobilization."

"They (the militias) have now infiltrated the government and are meddling in politics," said Ali Omran, commander of the army's 5th Infantry Division and a veteran of numerous battles against IS. "I told the Hashd people that one day I and my men may fight them."

The more than 50 Shiite militias in Iraq have between 60,000 and 140,000 fighters, according to estimates from the government and the Hashd itself. They are backed by tanks and weapons, and have their own intelligence agency, operations rooms and court of law.

The larger militias, like Asaib Ahl al-Haq, the Hezbollah Brigades, Badr and the Peace Brigades, have been in place since soon after the 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein. They are linked to political parties, effectively forming armed branches for politicians.

But the ranks of the militias swelled dramatically after IS overran nearly a third of Iraq in the summer of 2014 and Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's top Shiite cleric, called on able-bodied males to fight IS. At the time, tens of thousands turned out.

Those same militias now want to remain a permanent, independent armed force and are resisting attempts to integrate them into the military or police, the AP found from interviews with more than 15 government officials, army generals and militia leaders and visits to Tikrit and Samarra, Sunni-majority

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areas where the militias now hold power. The militias insist they have earned a special status, pointing to the 5,000 militiamen killed and 16,000 wounded fighting IS.

"Those who sacrificed more are entitled to more," said Hamed al-Jazaeery, head of the al-Khorasani Brigades militia. "What is written with blood cannot be removed. It is not ink on paper."

Al-Jazaeery wears the black turban of a cleric and the camouflage fatigues of a fighter. The walls of his office are adorned with photos of the leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and its current supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Other photos show al-Jazaeery posing with Iranian Gen. Qassem Suleimani, the powerful Revolutionary Guard figure who helped organize the Iraqi militias against IS.

"We want to be a third power in Iraq," alongside the army and police, al-Jazaeery said. "Why can't the Hashd be like the Revolutionary Guard in Iran?"

The model of the Revolutionary Guard, often cited by militia leaders, would be a dramatic change for Iraq's militias. In Iran, the Guard is an elite force independent of — and better armed than — the military, tasked with "protecting" the Shiite cleric-led power structure. It is effectively a state within a state, rivaling the political strength of Iran's supreme leader.

Sunnis fear such militia power would enforce Shiite domination of Iraq. Sunnis already accuse militias of targeting them with abuses. Hundreds of green and red Shiite banners and images of imams — historic religious leaders revered by the Shiites — are posted all over Sunni areas under militia control north and east of Baghdad, in a blatant challenge to sectarian sensitivities.

The militias call themselves "holy" or "glorious," and often talk of their battle as a fight for Shiism rather than Iraq. They give Shiite names to major offensives, only for the government to ban their use.

"I joined the Hashd for the imams, not for the government," said one militiaman, Mohammed al-Azghar, in the central city of Samarra.

The official agency created to oversee the fighters, the Popular Mobilization Commission, has instead become the militias' political lever in the machinery of power. The government now funds the militias, but some of them refuse to even give officials the names of their fighters, citing security concerns.

"People fear and trust us more than they fear and trust the government," boasted Ahmed al-Assady, a Shiite lawmaker and spokesman for the Mobilization Commission. "They fear us because we act, not just talk."

Advisers from Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Lebanon's Hezbollah have helped Iraq's militias in the battle against IS. Billboards around Baghdad announce the "martyrdom" of fighters, alongside images of Iran's Khamenei and Khomeini and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. Militia TV channels and newspapers also accuse the government of corruption and cast the militias as the true protectors of Iraqis.

In Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown north of Baghdad, the extent of the militias' prestige is on display: The headquarters of a senior militiaman, Jassim al-Husseini, is located at one of the late dictator's opulent palaces along the Tigris River.

The chain-smoking al-Husseini wears a military brown jacket and walks with a cane because of a leg injury sustained while fighting IS last year. He confidently spoke of the flaws of Iraq's government and said the militias cannot be integrated into its security forces.

"Integrating us in the security forces and the military is not an idea that will help build our nation," he said.

Now the militias demand to participate in a long-expected offensive to retake largely Sunni Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city and the main stronghold of IS rule in Iraq — something the military and armed Sunni groups oppose.

"The Hashd will take part in the battle to liberate Mosul no matter what," said senior Shiite politician Hadi al-Amry, who is also commander of the Iranian-backed Badr militia. "No one can stop us from entering Mosul."

In Samarra, Sunnis say they already experience what is feared could happen if the militias enter Mosul. The city has a Sunni majority but is home to one of the most revered Shiite shrines, blown up by al-Qaida 10 years ago. In 2014, Shiite militias successfully prevented IS from taking Samarra and have kept their

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grip on the city since.

Local dignitaries and officials air a flood of grievances blamed on militias, including killings of Sunnis, takeovers of schools and the forcing of Sunnis to sell property in the prime real estate area close to the shrine. To the thud of artillery shelling in the distance, the city council's deputy chairman, Muzher Fleih, said 650 Sunnis have disappeared, believed abducted and killed by the militias. Among them was his brother, who disappeared last year and was found dead soon after.

"The city is oppressed," he said.

Militia leaders insist any abuses are isolated incidents. "We are not angels," said al-Assady, the Mobilization spokesman. "It is only natural that we make mistakes."

Some in the government and military are beginning to see the militias as a danger to the state itself. In a sign of wariness over the militias' autonomy, Shiite Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi charged recently that government funds to the Hashd were being mismanaged. One of his close aides told the AP that the comments were directed at Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, the Hashd's most powerful figure, who is wanted by the United States in connection with the 1983 bombing of the American and French embassies in Kuwait.

There has also been friction with the military. Last month, militiamen refused orders to vacate a building in a military base north of Baghdad, and the army sent troops to take it over. They found the militiamen ready for a fight, with snipers stationed on the roof and in sandbagged positions around it. The dispute was resolved when a substitute building was found for the militiamen.

Since its 2014 collapse, the military has been slowly recovering. But Gen. Abdul-Wahab al-Saadi, deputy commander of the army's elite counterterrorism force, said the militias don't want the military to regain its strength.

"They may be tempted to take on the army if they don't have their way," he said.

News Guide: Cruz trounces Kasich in presidential fundraising

JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — John Kasich, Ted Cruz and Donald Trump, the final three Republican candidates running for president, began this month with drastically different campaign fortunes, new fundraising reports show.

In one month, Cruz raised what Kasich has collected over the entire course of his longshot bid. Trump, a billionaire, has raised relatively little money as he "self-funds" his effort.

On the Democratic side, Bernie Sanders outraised Hillary Clinton for the second month in a row. But the Vermont senator still started March with about half as much cash on hand as the former secretary of state.

The presidential candidates — current and former — must file their February campaign finance reports to the Federal Election Commission on Sunday, as they look ahead to the next series of nominating contests — in Arizona, Idaho and Utah on Tuesday.

What we've learned on the money front:

KASICH MONEY STRUGGLES

Kasich, the Ohio governor, had about \$1.3 million in available campaign cash as this month began.

That's far less than the \$8 million in cash that Cruz's campaign had on hand as of the last day of February, although millions of those dollars are under lock until the general election.

Cruz, a Texas senator, continued to lap Kasich in fundraising. His \$12 million in February roughly equals Kasich's entire campaign haul, dating to last summer.

Kasich's home-state win last week convinced him to stay in the race in the hope of emerging as a "consensus candidate" during a contested convention this summer. That could be triggered if Trump does not win enough delegates in the remaining primaries. Kasich has no mathematical path for winning the nomination outright.

Both candidates also benefit from outside groups known as super PACs. Several of Cruz's boosters reported beginning March with a collective \$10 million left to spend. Add to that another donor-led super

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PAC funded by a \$10 million contribution that remained mostly intact.

Kasich's super PAC, New Day for America, reported raising \$3.2 million in February and ended the month with \$2.5 million cash on hand.

TRUMP DIGGING DEEPER INTO HIS POCKETS

The billionaire businessman loaned himself another \$6.9 million, bringing the total amount he's loaned to himself to \$24.4 million. Trump's campaign manager has said the candidate has no intention of trying to recoup the money he loans himself.

And while Trump continues to boast about self-funding his campaign, he collected about \$2 million in new contributions in February, bringing his total raised this cycle to \$9.5 million.

He continues to spend big on private airfare, including more than \$640,000 to his own airline. And he spent \$3.5 million on placed media, including Twitter and Facebook ads.

TRUMP FIGHTERS

Three billionaires supplied more than 80 percent of the cash last month for a super political action committee dedicated to derailing Donald Trump. The group is called Our Principles.

February fundraising reports show the Ricketts family — who own the Chicago Cubs and whose patriarch founded TD Ameritrade — gave another \$2 million last month, adding to their earlier \$3 million investment. Paul Singer, a New York hedge-fund billionaire who backed Rubio, gave \$1 million, and Arkansas investment banker Warren Stephens also chipped in \$1 million.

The group has reported raising \$7.8 million since its inception. FEC documents show the group has spent at least \$16 million attacking Trump — so far with little impact. The gap between reported income and expenditures means the majority of the donations to Our Principles arrived this month. Those donors will be disclosed next month.

GOING BROKE FOR RUBIO

Wealthy donors handed over \$25 million last month to a super PAC backing then-Republican presidential candidate Marco Rubio. And the candidate's official campaign had its best month yet, raising about \$9.6 million.

It still wasn't enough. Rubio, a Florida senator, ended his bid after an embarrassing loss to Trump last week in his home state.

Conservative Solutions PAC raised about \$58 million in support of Rubio and it attracted a surge of donors in the days after one-time rival Jeb Bush, a former Florida governor, dropped out on Feb. 20.

Poultry magnate Ronald Cameron was Conservative Solution's top donor in February, contributing \$5 million. Cameron had previously given \$3 million to a group backing former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, also once a 2016 presidential hopeful.

The insurance executive Hank Greenberg's C. V. Starr & Company Inc. and Starr International companies gave a total of \$5 million to Conservative Solutions. Last year, C.V. Starr gave \$10 million to a group backing Bush.

DEMOCRATIC CASH

Sanders' campaign reported raising more than \$43 million in February, outraising Clinton by about \$14 million, federal fundraising reports show.

Sanders, whose online fundraising in small increments has set records, continued to draw substantial support from low-dollar donors. In February, more than 60 percent of his campaign's money came from people who had given \$200 or less to federal candidates in this election cycle.

But the Vermont senator also reported spending about \$41 million last month. He started March with about \$17 million in cash, about half as much as Clinton's \$31 million in available cash.

Clinton's supportive super PAC, Priorities USA, reported raising a little less than \$5 million in February,

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half of its January haul. Still, the group began this month with \$44 million to spend; representatives say they are preserving much of it for the general election.

The biggest donor last month to Priorities was Chicago media executive Fred Eychaner, who gave \$2 million.

CARSON CASH CONTINUED

One hallmark of a failing presidential candidate is the struggle to raise money.

That's why Bush had to lend his campaign hundreds of thousands of dollars last month, fundraising documents show. And it's why New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie appeared to end his bid owing roughly \$200,000 more than he had in available cash.

Not so with political newcomer Ben Carson.

The retired neurosurgeon never won any of the early primary contests, and he suspended his campaign at the beginning of this month. Even so, in February he raised \$5.7 million, and he had almost \$5 million in cash at the start of March.

Carson was the top Republican fundraiser of the 2016 contest at the time he dropped out, but he also maintained above-average costs for raising that money.

Texas A&M downs N Iowa with historic last-minute comeback

KURT VOIGT, AP Sports Writer

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Northern Iowa appeared all but ready to book its plane tickets to California for next week's Sweet 16.

That was before Texas A&M put together the biggest last-minute comeback in NCAA Division I history.

Led by Alex Caruso's 25 points and 22 more from Danuel House in the second half and overtimes, the third-seeded Aggies (28-8) rallied from 12 points down with 44 seconds remaining in regulation — 10 down with less than 30 seconds — to defeat the Panthers 92-88 in double overtime on Sunday night.

"Craziest game I've been a part of from beginning to end," Caruso said. "Just an amazing game. This is what March is about."

The previous NCAA record for coming back from a deficit in the last minute was 11 points, done by UNLV in 2005 and Canisius in December.

Crazy is a mild way to put the finish, something the Panthers (23-13) were accustomed to after reaching Sunday's second-round matchup thanks to Paul Jespersen's buzzer-beating halfcourt winner against Texas two nights earlier.

However, this time around it was Texas A&M putting together the last-second heroics on its way to reaching the Sweet 16 for the third time in school history — the first since 2007.

More precisely, it was a last 44 seconds in which the Aggies were able to atone for what had been a dismal previous 39 minutes and 16 seconds.

Down 69-57 after Jeremy Morgan hit two free throws with 44 seconds remaining in regulation, Texas A&M proceeded to outscore the 11th-seeded Panthers 14-2 from there — capped by Admon Gilder's steal and layup with 1.9 seconds remaining that tied the game at 71-71 and sent it to the first overtime.

That 44 seconds included four turnovers by Northern Iowa, which was without its main inbounds passer Matt Bohannon because of a left knee injury, and a resurgence by House — who missed his first nine shots of the game and was scoreless until 5:14 remaining in regulation.

"We knew it was kind of impossible, man, but we just said that we were going to fight until the end," House said.

Once into overtime, it was Caruso who sent the game to a second with a drive and layup with 5.9 seconds left in the first extra period, tying the game at 83-83.

And in the second, the surging Aggies finally wore down a hobbled and short-handed Northern Iowa team missing two of its starters after fouling out. It was House who capped the scoring with a free throw

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with 12.6 seconds remaining to give Texas A&M a 92-88 lead, with a most unexpected and euphoric celebration following moments later on the Chesapeake Arena court.

The Aggies have now won 10 of their last 11 games entering next week's Sweet 16, but few — if any — will top Sunday night.

"I've never been a part of a game like that, never saw one," Aggies coach Billy Kennedy said. "(I) still really don't know what happened."

For Northern Iowa, the dramatic turn of fortunes in the final minute was a difficult blow to handle after Friday night's last-second miracle against the Longhorns.

Morgan had career highs of 36 points and 12 rebounds, while Klint Carlson matched his career high with 17 points, but all of the positives of the first 39 minutes of the game were lost amid the postgame tears.

"It's just tough," Bohannon said. "It's the NCAA Tournament, though, that's what happens."

The Panthers, seeking their second Sweet 16 appearance in school history, led by as many as 15 points in the second half. However, they were unable to overtime the series of last-minute miscues that left them on the opposite end of emotion compared to their opening-round win.

"It shouldn't have ended tonight," said Northern Iowa coach Ben Jacobson, who added the loss was "no question" the toughest to handle of his career.

TIP-INS

Northern Iowa: Morgan's previous career high for points was 21 against Missouri State on Feb. 10, while his previous best rebounding effort was 10 against Dubuque last November.

Texas A&M: Caruso was 10 of 20 from the field for the Aggies, who recovered from their slow start — shooting 6 of 27 (22.2 percent) in the first half — to shoot 62.1 percent (18 of 29) in the second half and 7 of 15 (46.7 percent) in the overtimes.

TRIPLE THREAT

Before fouling out in the first overtime, Washpun did a little of everything for the Panthers. The point guard was a primary reason for House's offensive struggles for Texas A&M, and he finished with nine points, 10 assists and six rebounds.

SURGING CARLSON

Carlson scored 15 of his 17 points in the second half and overtimes, including a stretch of 10 straight points during one stretch in the second half.

UP NEXT

Texas A&M faces second-seeded Oklahoma in the Sweet 16 next week.