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Thursday, March 24

School Breakfast: French toast, links, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Spaghetti with meat sauce, garlic toast, green beans, fruit.

Senior Menu: Lasagna rotini, tossed salad with dressing, ambrosia fruit salad, oatmeal spice cookie, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Blake Merkel, Emerlee Darlene Jones, LaVonne Helmer, Sophie Cutler, Kinton Tracy
7:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Worship and 1st Communion for 5th Graders
7:00pm: St. John's Lutheran Maundy service

Friday, March 25

NO SCHOOL - EASTER BREAK

Anniversary: Samantha & Andy Jondahl

Birthdays: Brent Wienk, Keri Pappas, Keri Pi-etz, Laurel McNickle, Murdock McNickle, Patrick Gengerke, Sherri Profeta, Larae Taylor
12:00pm: Community Good Service at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
7:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Tenebrae Service
7:00pm: St. John's Lutheran Good Service

Saturday, March 26

Birthdays: Bob Wegner, Clare Davidson, Jonathan Cutler, Justin Morehouse, Mark Thompson, Noah Thurston, Scott Kettering, Clayton Kurtz, Samantha Menzia

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

Sunday, March 27

Easter Sunday

Birthdays: Dwight Strom, Gail Schinkel, Michelle Walter

7:00am: Emmanuel Lutheran Sunrise Service with Breakfast by League

7:30am: St. John's Lutheran Easter Breakfast

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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Stored Soil Moisture Valuable to 2016 Yields

BROOKINGS, S.D. - When it comes to yields, the importance of stored soil moisture at planting is often overlooked. However, due to above average temperatures this winter stored soil moisture could be an issue making crop water use a consideration when deciding on crop rotation.

"Crop rotation and tillage practices have a huge impact on the amount of soil water depletion from the previous growing season and on the winter water recharge potential," said Chris Graham, SDSU Extension Agronomist.

Table 1 provides a list of common crops grown in the region with average depletion and recharge rates in North Dakota.

"Spring wheat and sorghum averaged the highest rate of recharge, but also had larger soil water depletion rates over other crops like field peas and lentils," he said. "Conversely, the legumes tend to have lower soil water recharge over the winter, largely due to sparse residue left after harvest."

Importance of stored soil moisture

Researchers as far back as the 1930s found that a soil profile to a depth of 3 feet that contained 20 percent stored moisture could dramatically decrease the odds of a wheat crop failure during drought.

Graham explained that crops usually rely on a combination of seasonal rains and stored soil moisture to produce good yields; and a 25 percent decrease in stored soil moisture at planting forces the wheat plant to rely to a much greater extent on in-season rains.

"In semi-arid regions of the Great Plains, winter recharge of the soil profile is extremely important for successful crop production," Graham said.

Above average temperatures this winter led to shallower frost depths in the soil profile. As a result, soils at nearly every location in the state have already thawed through the profile. "This will allow for better infiltration of moisture this spring. However, there is also a potential for increased loss of moisture on warm, windy days," Graham said.

The climate outlook for the spring season continues to project warmer than average temperatures. An area just south of South Dakota is currently favored to be wetter than average in the spring season. This could result in better emergence and stand conditions.

Even after El Niño wanes this spring, warmer than average conditions are predicted throughout the growing season, which Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension Climate Field Specialist said could mean increased water demand from the crop. "Part of the water supply will need to come from the soil. However, if the forecast stands up, timely rains will be critical to meet the demands of crops later in the growing season," Edwards said.

Growing season precipitation often ranges from 12-16 inches in the western part of the state and more than 20 inches in the eastern part of the state. Rapid water uptake in wheat begins shortly after tillering and generally requires between 8 - 12 inches of water to get through heading and then another 6 - 10 inches during the grain fill period.

Crop	Depletion	Recharge	Rank	Rank
	inches		Average Depletion	Average Recharge
Sunflower	5.3	1.2	10	10
Corn	5.0	2.1	9	6
Sorghum	4.3	2.4	8	1,2
Spring Wheat	4.2	2.4	7	1,2
Canola	3.9	2.1	6	5
Millet	3.8	2.2	5	3,4
Buckwheat	3.7	2.2	4	3,4
Chickpea	3.3	1.4	3	9
Lentil	3.2	1.5	2	8
Dry Pea	2.0	1.5	1	7
Average	3.9	1.9	-	-

Modified from Merrill et al., 2007

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Governor Signs Bills Into Law

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed the following bills into law:

SB 58 – An Act to revise certain restrictions for the use of night-vision equipment for hunting under certain conditions.

SB 67 – An Act to establish a postsecondary scholarship grant fund, to make an appropriation therefor, to transfer certain money, and to declare an emergency.

SB 106 – An Act to provide for the collection of sales taxes from certain remote sellers, to establish certain Legislative findings, and to declare an emergency.

SB 168 – An Act to revise provisions related to human trafficking and to provide a penalty therefor.

SB 169 – An Act to revise provisions related to child pornography and to revise the penalty therefor.

HB 1091 – An Act to establish certain requirements regarding insurance for vehicles used to provide rides for a transportation network company and to exempt vehicles used to provide these rides from certain commercial licensing requirements.

HB 1212 – An Act to revise requirements related to pregnancy help centers

HB 1236 – An Act to define a halfway house.

HB 1242 – An Act to authorize certain persons to request a security freeze on the credit report of a protected consumer.

HB 1244 – An Act to revise provisions related to the sex offender registry.

Handiman looking for work

I can do almost anything from building whatever you need, repairing machinery, welding, flooring, installing windows and doors. If you're looking for work to be done around the home or farm, I'm your guy. Call me at 605/228-4172.

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



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NOTICE OF SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 06-6

A School District Election will be held on April 12, 2016, in all the voting precincts in Groton Area School District No. 06-6. If the polls cannot be opened because of bad weather, the election may be postponed one week.

The election polls will be open from seven a.m. to seven p.m. central standard time on the day of the election.

At the election, the following offices will be voted upon:

Three, 3-year terms for school board member between:

Merle Harder
Corey Mitchell
Clint Fjelstad
Deborah Gengerke

The polling place in each precinct of this district is as follows:

Andover Area Precinct #1, (which includes Andover Town, Andover Township and Farmington Township) – Andover Senior Center.

Bristol Area Precinct #2, (which includes Bristol Town, Butler Town, Lily Town, Bristol Township, Butler Township, Kidder Township, Lynn Township, Oak Gulch Township, Scotland Township, Troy Township, Union Township, Valley Township and York Township as well as Clark County residents in Warren Township) – Bristol Community Center.

Columbia Area Precinct #3, (which includes the City of Columbia, Brainard Township #7, Shelby Township #8, Cambria Township #15, and Garland Township #46,) – Columbia Community Center

Groton Area Precinct #4, (which includes the City of Groton, Wards 1, 2, & 3, and Claremont Township #10, Riverside Township #16, Groton Township #17, Henry Township #18, Bath Township #19, Gem Township #24, East Hanson Township #25, Garden Prairie Township #26 East Rondell Township #27, Bates Township #44, Putney Township #48, and West Hanson Township #49 as well as Spink County residents in Beotia Township, Conde Township and Olean Township) – Groton Community Center.

Voters with disabilities may contact the business official for information and special assistance in absentee voting or polling place accessibility.

Michael J. Weber, Business Official
Groton Area School District

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for out patient therapy.

**1106 N 2nd St., Groton
605/397-2365**

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Findings report to be given March 29th

Representatives from Foster, Jacobs, and Johnson, Inc. will be hosting a public meeting on Tuesday, March 29th at 7:00 PM in the Groton Area High School computer lab to share the findings of their Values Definition and Educational Adequacy studies completed as part of the Groton Area School Board's long-range planning commitment. All members of the public are invited to attend.

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.

The Livestream logo features a red and white stylized 'L' icon to the left of the word 'livestream' in a lowercase, sans-serif font.The Dollar General logo consists of the words 'DOLLAR GENERAL' in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font, centered within a yellow rounded rectangular background.

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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Groton Area School March 14, 2016 Meeting Minutes

UNOFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF BOARD OF EDUCATION
GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 06-6
REGULAR MEETING
March 14, 2016

President Steve Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the High School Conference Room. Members present: Hanson, Harder, Kjelden, Nelson, Rix, Smith and Weismantel. Others present were Supt. J. Schwan, Principals A. Schwan and B. Schwan, and Business Official Weber.

Moved by Weismantel, second Nelson to approve the agenda with the following amendments: under New Business Item #8a – approve open enrollment, under New Business Item #8b – approve event pass donations and under New Business Item #8c – authorize SDHSAA membership. Motion carried.

Moved by Harder, second Kjelden to approve the following consent agenda items as presented: North Central Special Ed Coop agenda items, District regular minutes of February 8 and 22, bills, financial reports, agency reports, school lunch reports and transportation reports. Motion carried.

GENERAL FUND: Net Salary – 170,204.29; FIT – 18,534.14; Medicare – 6,434.72; FICA – 27,513.88; American Funds – 702.40; Washington National – 98.40; SD Retirement – 27,328.78; First National Bank-HSAs – 100.00; Waddell & Reed – 1,216.54; Horace Mann – 318.51; Thrivent – 205.80; AFLAC – 2,216.49; Delta Dental – 4,226.10; SD Supplemental Retirement – 830.80; Wellmark – 55,847.00; Reliastar Life – 538.90; A&B Business – supplies, 62.60; Agency Fund – advance pays, 14,224.59; Bahr's Jungle Lanes – supplies, 59.05; M. Blumhardt – refund, 60.00; Brookings School – expenses, 59.97; Carquest – supplies, 81.83; City of Groton – utilities, 13,786.62; Cole Papers – supplies, 2,477.50; Comfort Inn – rooms, 225.98; Dakota Supply – supplies, 675.59; D. Dargatz – meals, 11.00; Days Inn – rooms, 182.00; Dependable Sanitation – services, 1,238.00; DSS Image Apparel – shirts, 165.20; Engel Music – supplies, 38.89; A. Fordham – services, 300.00; Full Circle Ag – gas, 247.95; G&K – services, 430.06; Geffdog – clothing, 1,953.45; GASD – supplies, 161.66; Groton Chiropractic – fees, 190.00; K. Hanson – supplies, 87.20; Hill-yard – supplies, 1,003.96; House of Glass – keys, 10.40; J. Hughes – supplies, 96.99; JW Pepper – music, 630.21; James Valley Teleco. – services, 825.82; J. Lier – refund, 50.00; Locke Electric – services, 2,431.18; Lori's – supplies, 34.95; McGannon Plumbing – services, 374.58; Menards – knobs, 17.88; Mid-American Research – supplies, 1,218.60; North Central SpEd Coop – fees, 3,000.00; Northwestern Energy – natural gas, 4,206.79; QQP/MidStates – paper, 20.00; Riley Bus Service – charter, 1,596.00; S&S Lumber – supplies, 31.43; SD Federal Property – supplies, 80.00; SDECE – fees, 195.00; SDIAAA – fees, 140.00; Sewer Saver – services, 127.20; S. Sippel – expenses, 485.78; Stan Houston – switch, 44.88; Supreme School Supply – receipts, 95.17; Taylor Music – services/supplies, 124.03; Tresona Multimedia – fees, 1,410.00; Twin Valley Tire – services, 1,323.91; University of Oregon – assessments, 282.00; J. Voss – services, 200.00; X-Grain Sportswear – clothing, 2,275.00. Total General Fund - \$375,367.65.

CAPITAL OUTLAY: Acme Tools – tools, 624.89; Agency Fund – adv pmts, 256.30; Connecting Point – laptop carts, 7,580.00; Hauff Mid-America – record board, 1,260.00; House of Glass – part, 46.32; S&S Lumber – water heater, 499.99; Taylor Music – horn case, 95.00; Uniform Warehouse – custodial shirts, 124.95. Total Capital Outlay - \$10,487.45.

SPECIAL ED: Net Salary – 26,978.52; FIT – 2,501.04; Medicare – 1,018.82; FICA – 4,356.20; SD Retirement – 4,450.18; Waddell & Reed – 250.00; AFLAC – 409.66; Delta Dental – 845.22; SD Supplemental Retirement – 200.00; Wellmark BCBS – 11,666.00; Reliastar Life – 207.26; Agency Fund – adv pmt, 124.66; Avera St. Luke's – services, 8,457.60; North Central Special Ed Coop – assessments, 25,665.00; Patron – mileage, 564.48. Total Special Ed - \$87,694.64.

BOND REDEMPTION: First National Bank – agent fee, 300.00.

ENTERPRISE: Food Service - Net Salary – 7,455.41; FIT – 425.95; Medicare – 257.72; FICA – 1,101.82; SD Retirement – 649.00; AFLAC – 54.22; Wellmark BCBS – 1,372.00; Reliastar Life – 1.30; Agency Fund – adv pmt, 107.31; Cole Papers – supply, 44.33; CWD – food/suppl, 2,013.70; Dean Foods – dairy prod-

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ucts, 1,543.21; Earthgrains – bakery products, 346.60; G&K Services – linen services, 260.52; Groton Area School Dist – acct tfrs, 13.30; Reinhart – food, 2,518.13; SDDOE-CANS – processed commodities, 189.41; Sysco – food/suppl, 563.25; US Foods – food/suppl, 3,180.52. Total Food Service – 22,097.70. OST – Net Salary – 1,526.92; FIT – 52.71; Medicare – 52.06; Social Security – 222.60; SD Retirement – 156.48; AFLAC – 135.98; Wellmark BCBS – 604.00; Reliastar Life -- .65; Agency Fund – adv pmts, supplies, 291.37; Menards – supplies, 10.81. Total OST - \$3,053.58. Total Enterprise Funds - \$25,151.28.

AGENCY FUND: Total - \$32,623.38.

RECEIPTS: Local Sources, Taxes – 79,576.87 ; Other Local Sources – 103,853.09; County Sources – 4,076.03; State Sources – 44,363.87; Federal Sources – 51,247.07. Total Receipts - \$283,116.93.

Members of the public were allowed five minutes to address the board on any topic of their choice. With no public members present to speak, the board proceeded with their remaining agenda items.

There were no committee reports given.

The board discussed Doney Field signage on the football field. The football field was named after former 1930's football coach Perry Doney. Various locations for signage were discussed. An ad will be placed in the local newspapers asking for donations.

The following topics were addressed in administrative reports: legislative session update, taxation equalization board, long-range facilities planning sessions, Emergency Management Exercises, North Central Special Education Coop reorganization structure, school calendar make-up days, collective bargaining seminars, senior privileges, Teachscape, SBAC Testing, Science Testing, OST update, Family Math Night, one-half natural gas contract locked in at 11% decrease compared to last year, postemployment benefits plan document and bond refinance document.

Superintendent J. Schwan gave a power point presentation projecting impact of the new education funding formula on Groton Area School District.

Moved by Nelson, second Weismantel to approve returned, signed 2016-17 Teaching Contracts. Motion carried.

Moved by Kjelden, second Rix to approve bid specs for 2016 lawn tractor/mower and set bid opening for 2:00 pm, April 11th. Motion carried.

Moved by Harder, second Rix to set summer 2016 Driver's Education tuition at \$250. Motion carried.

Moved by Kjelden, second Weismantel approve summer 2016 Driver's Education Employment Agreement with Shaun Wanner for an additional \$1 per hour for driving time and an additional \$50 for classroom instruction. Motion carried.

The board reviewed the Department of Health Food Service Inspection of the High School facility conducted on February 17th.

Moved by Nelson, second Kjelden to approve resignation of Joel Guthmiller as Assistant Girls Basketball Coach for 2016-17, pending a suitable replacement. Motion carried.

Moved by Harder, second Rix to change start time of the March 29th school board meeting from 7:00 pm to 5:00 pm to hold a facilities planning session with Foster, Jacobs and Johnson, Inc. Motion carried.

Moved by Harder, second Nelson to approve open enrollment #16-17 for a child in grade 7 from the Northwestern Area School District. Motion carried.

Moved by Weismantel, second Nelson to authorize Business Manager Weber to issue two 2016-17 athletic event 10-punch passes and two 2016-17 athletic event annual passes to the Groton Fire Department for the purpose of their silent auction fundraiser. Motion carried.

Moved by Nelson, second Kjelden to authorize membership in the SDHSAA for the 2016-17 school year. Motion carried.

Moved by Kjelden, second Weismantel to go into executive session at 8:50 pm pursuant to SDCL 1-25-2(1) for personnel issues. Motion carried.

President Smith declared the board out of executive session at 9:10 pm.

Moved by Rix, second Kjelden to adjourn. Motion carried.

M. J. Weber, Business Manager

Steven R. Smith, President

The addition of signatures to this page verifies these minutes as official.

Today in Weather History

March 24, 1996: North winds of 30 to 40 mph, gusting to 55 mph, combined with the falling snow and the previous day's snowfall to create blizzard conditions. Travel became extremely difficult. Several cars went into ditches and flights out of Aberdeen were canceled. Schools and activities were either delayed or canceled. Some of the more significant two-day snowfall amounts include 6 inches at Sisseton and Aberdeen, 7 inches at Sand Lake NWR, 8 inches near Veblen, 9 inches at Britton, and 10 inches near Victor.

March 24, 2009: A strong area of low pressure moved out of the Rockies and into the Northern Plains producing snow and widespread blizzard conditions across central and north central South Dakota. Winds gusting to over 60 mph along with several inches of snow caused hazardous travel conditions. Interstate 90 was closed for a time across much of Jones and part of Lyman County. Power was also out in parts of Pierre and Mobridge for a short period of time. Some snowfall amounts included; 2 inches at Pierre; 5 inches in Hayes and Timber Lake; 6 inches in Murdo, McLaughlin, and 6 miles southeast of McIntosh; 7 inches 14 miles northeast of Isabel; 8 inches in Eagle Butte; and 12 inches 8 miles southwest of Keldron.

1912: Residents of Kansas City began to dig out from a storm that produced 25 inches of snow in 24 hours. The snowfall total was nearly twice that of any other storm of modern record in Kansas City before or since that time. A record 40 inches of snow fell during the month of March that year, and the total for the winter season of 67 inches was also a record. By late February of that year, Kansas City had received just six inches of snow. Olathe, Kansas received 37 inches of snow in the snowstorm, establishing a single storm record for the state of Kansas. (23rd-24th)

1926 - A hurricane came inland near Daytona Beach, FL. The hurricane caused 2.5 million dollars damage in eastern Florida, including the Jacksonville area. (David Ludlum)

1929: St. Louis, Missouri soared to 92 degrees; their all-time record high for March.

1939 - The temperature at Lewiston, ID, hit 117 degrees to establish an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1943 - On a whim, and flying a single engine AT-6, Lieutenant Ralph O'Hair and Colonel Duckworth were the first to fly into a hurricane. It started regular Air Force flights into hurricanes. (The Weather Channel)

1975: "The Governor's Tornado" hop-scotched a 13-mile path across the western part of Atlanta, GA during the early morning hours, causing considerable damage to the Governor's mansion. Hundreds of expensive homes, businesses and apartment complexes were damaged. Total losses were estimated at \$56 million dollars. Three people lost their lives and another 152 were injured by the F3 tornado.

1987 - Thunderstorms in Minnesota spawned a tornado which moved in a southwesterly direction for a distance of thirty miles across Rice County and Goodhue County. Trees were uprooted and tossed about like toys, and a horse lifted by the tornado was observed sailing horizontally through the air. Thunderstorms drenched La Crosse, WI, with 5.26 inches of rain, their second highest 24 hour total of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)




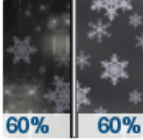



1988 - Hot weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Williston, ND, reported a record high of 108 degrees. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S., and in southeastern Texas. Richland County, SC, was soaked with up to 5.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)


1989 - Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in the southwestern U.S. Yuma, AZ, experienced their most severe thunderstorm of record. Strong thunderstorm winds, with unofficial gusts as high as 95 mph, reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Yuma got nearly as much rain in one hour as is normally received in an entire year. The storm total of 2.55 inches of rain was a record 24 hour total for July. Property damage due to flash flooding and high winds was in the millions. (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Wisconsin and northern Illinois to New England, with 103 reports of large hail and damaging winds through the day. Thunderstorms in Wisconsin produced hail three inches in diameter near Oshkosh, and wind gusts to 65 mph at Germantown. (The National Weather Summary)


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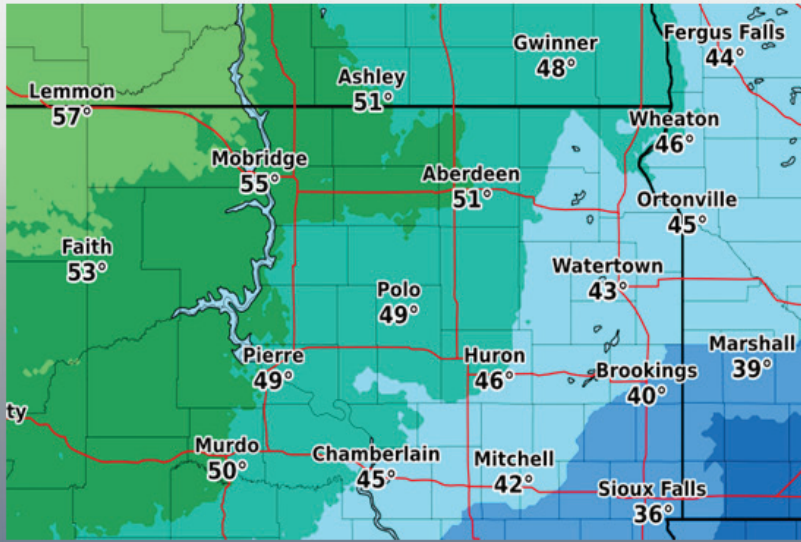
Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Increasing Clouds	Chance Rain	Blustery. Rain/Snow Likely then Snow Likely	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 50 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 51 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 37 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 50 °F



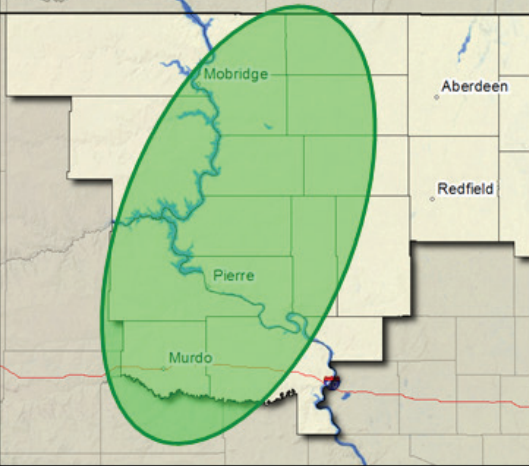
Mild Today – Friday Will See Rain Then Snow



Highs






Ice Potential Friday AM



5am – 8am Chance Of A Light Glaze
Aft 8am: Temps Warm Above 32F

Friday Afternoon – Evening: Rain Changes To Snow Accumulations of 1 to 4 Inches

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD


weather.gov/Aberdeen

National Weather Service Aberdeen

@NWSAberdeen | Updated: 3/24/2016 5:10 AM Central

Published on: 03/24/2016 at 5:17AM

Mild conditions today with temperatures into the 40s and 50s and ample sunshine. Readings will dip into the 30s tonight. A few light rain showers will move into western and central South Dakota by morning. There may be enough moisture to get a glaze of ice if temperatures manage to drop below freezing - but this is not expected to be widespread. Rain will be more widespread during the day Friday - with a changeover to snow during the afternoon and evening. With temperatures tumbling - we will also see winds increase to 20 to 30 mph with gusts to 40 mph.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 40.7 at 5:56 PM

Low: 26.2 at 11:52 PM

High Gust: 28 at 11:08 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 80° in 1939

Record Low: -6 in 1974

Average High: 44°F

Average Low: 23°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.84

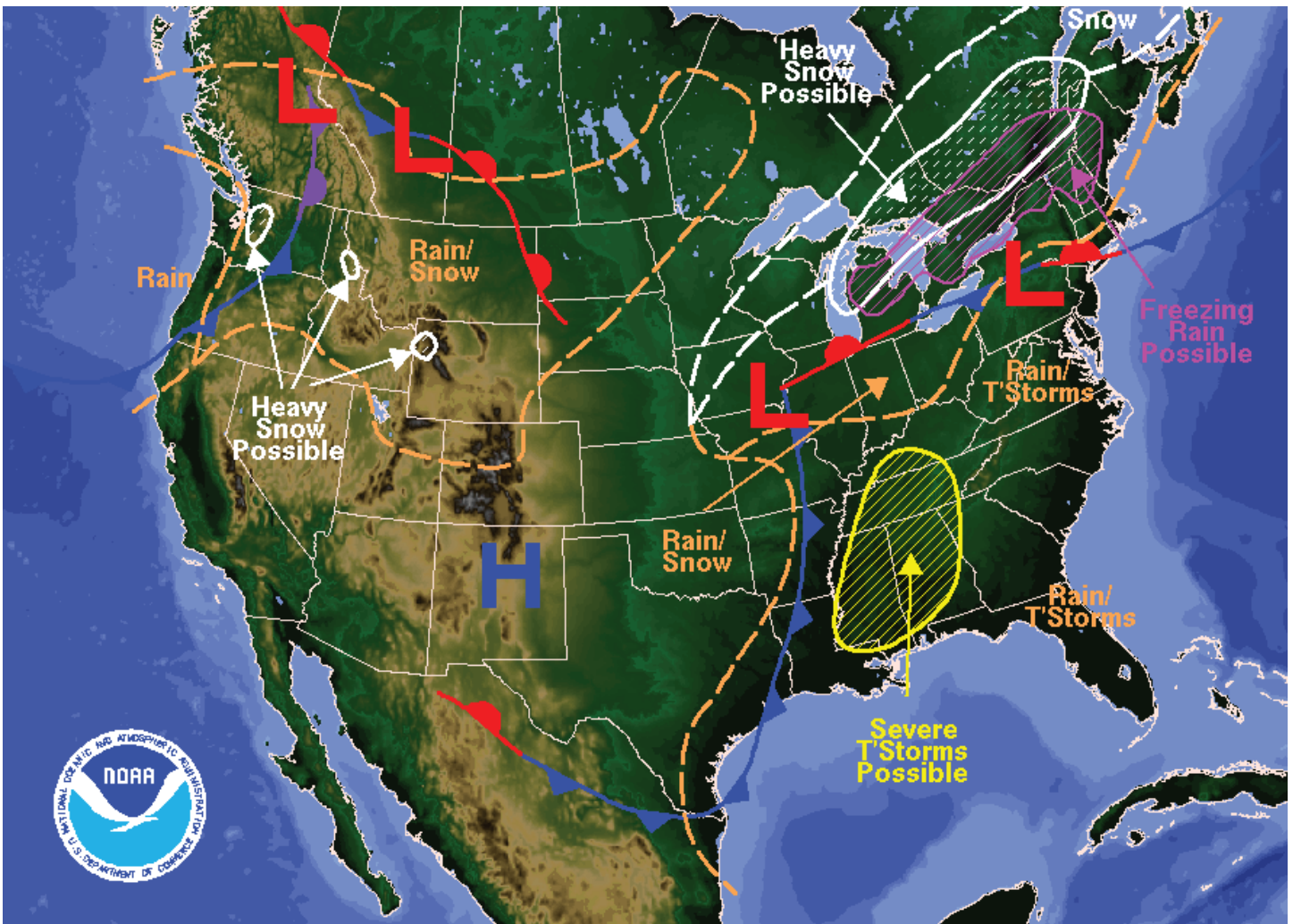
Precip to date in March.: 0.35

Average Precip to date: 1.86

Precip Year to Date: 0.95

Sunset Tonight: 7:51 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:27 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Mar 24, 2016, issued 4:24 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



THE HAPPY MAN

When I was a little fellow, I caught some “lightning bugs” and sealed them in a jar. It was fun watching their tiny bright lights glow in the dark by my bed.

I woke up early the next morning to see their lights but the glow was gone. The lightning bugs were all dead.

It is like that with most people. Some think that happiness and pleasure are synonymous. But they are not a commodity that can be bought. It is a condition.

Others think that happiness and plenty are synonymous. But happiness is not derived from possessions, nor destroyed by poverty. Remember the story of the king who asked for the shirt of the happiest man in his kingdom? They found the man – but he did not have a shirt.

Happiness is not what happens to us, but what happens in us. It is the by-product of a life that is adjusted to the will of God and regulated by the Word of God. Seek God through Christ and let Him have His way, and you will be happy.

Prayer: Jesus, help me to remember that while worldly possessions may bring a temporary type of pleasure, the only true and lasting happiness comes from You. Help me to search the Scriptures daily so that I can understand Your way of life: in Your name. Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 1:1-2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.

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News from the  Associated Press

Augustana men's hoops team in semifinals of Div II tourney

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Augustana University men's basketball team has advanced to the semifinals of the NCAA Division II basketball tournament.

The Vikings beat Tarleton State 86-79 on Wednesday night in an Elite Eight game in Frisco, Texas. Augustana faces Western Oregon in a semifinal game Thursday night.

Powerful snowstorm barrels east to Plains states, Midwest

DENVER (AP) — A powerful spring snowstorm that closed Denver's airport and stranded numerous passengers barreled east Thursday, threatening the Plains states and the Midwest with heavy snow and strong winds.

Denver International Airport was closed around midday Wednesday because wind-whipped snow made it unsafe for planes to land or take off. The airport reopened about seven hours later, but more than 1,300 of Wednesday's 1,500 scheduled flights were canceled.

Hundreds of people with suitcases and duffel bags stood or lay around the terminals, and airport employees handed out blankets and sleeping mats to people who were still stranded Wednesday night.

Alicia Bailey was headed back to Atlanta after a business trip in Colorado Springs. She had a treacherous, white-knuckle, four-hour drive to the airport only to learn her flight was delayed several times and then finally canceled.

"I had a nice little cocktail, and that calmed the nerves down because I was frazzled," she said. "The way I look at it is, it's all God's work. You have to look at the glass half full. I can't change it so I'm just going to tell my boss, 'I'll see you on Friday.'"

Airport spokesman Heath Montgomery said the airport, which was last closed by a blizzard in 2006, will be fully operational by Thursday morning.

The storm, which is moving to the northeast across the Plains and into Michigan, was bringing strong wind gusts to southeast South Dakota, creating hazardous driving conditions and reducing visibility to a quarter of a mile in some areas Wednesday evening.

Forecasters with the National Weather Service said snow accumulations in South Dakota ranged from fewer than 2 inches in Sioux Falls to up to 7 inches north of Humboldt, while gusts reached between 40 mph to 45 mph.

"It's pretty common that we see a couple of big storms in March, certainly not unheard of in this neck of the woods, but it is a high amount," said weather service meteorologist Kerry Hanko.

The fast-moving storm had already moved into Minnesota by Wednesday evening, dropping up to a foot of snow and setting the stage for a treacherous commute in parts of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

The State Patrol is advising drivers in south-central Minnesota to stay at home because of expected heavy snow and blustery winds.

Meanwhile, in neighboring Wisconsin, Gov. Scott Walker declared a state of emergency as the storm approached his state.

Walker called members of the Wisconsin National Guard to active duty to help local authorities as necessary, and forecasters say up to a foot of snow could bury central Wisconsin from River Falls to the Green Bay area.

Earlier, in Colorado and Wyoming, the wind and the heavy, wet snow typical for a spring storm weighed down power lines and snapped them into one another, causing outages and flickering lights.

The storm mainly hit the eastern, flat halves of those states and shut down long stretches of highways before moving east.

Even politics had to take a snow day in Wyoming as Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and former President Bill Clinton both canceled planned campaign events in the state.

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DOT to host public meeting for highway project in Madison

MADISON, S.D. (AP) — The state Department of Transportation is having a public meeting about the reconstruction of a mile of Highway 34 in Madison.

The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, and it starts at 6 p.m.

Construction on the \$6.8 million project is tentatively scheduled to start on March 28. The work includes grading, curb and gutter, traffic signals and concrete surfacing, among other things.

The city of Madison and T & R Contracting are also part of the meeting. In addition to hearing a short presentation about the construction, community members will be invited to ask questions and discuss issues at the gathering.

Written comments about the project will also be presented at that time.

Denver airport reopens after powerful blizzard moves east

COLLEEN SLEVIN, Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A powerful spring blizzard stranded travelers at Denver's airport and shut down hundreds of miles of highway in Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska as it spread into the Midwest on Wednesday.

Snow blown by gusts up to around 50 mph made it unsafe for planes to land or take off at Denver International Airport, leading officials to close it around midday. The airport reopened about seven hours later.

Airport spokesman Heath Montgomery says two of the six runways are open, and the airport will be fully operational by Thursday morning.

More than 1,300 of Wednesday's 1,500 scheduled flights were canceled, he said.

The closure came hours after long flight delays caused by power outages at the airport's fuel depot and deicing supply and the cancellation of about a third of the airport's daily flights.

The last time a blizzard closed the airport was in 2006, for two days.

The system is moving to the northeast across the Plains and into Michigan. The worst effects of the storm were expected later in the day in South Dakota, but strong winds were in the forecast all day.

In Denver, the road to the airport was also impassable for much of the day because of blowing snow. The road reopened Wednesday afternoon, allowing passengers to escape to town, airport spokeswoman Stacey Stegman said.

Meanwhile, restaurants extended hours and some will be open all night for crowds of stranded travelers.

Hundreds of people with suitcases and duffel bags stood or lay around the terminals. Some travelers leaned against walls, bags strewn at their feet, as others charged their phones.

Some passed the time by hanging out at the airport's bars and restaurants.

Alicia Bailey was headed back to Atlanta after a business trip in Colorado Springs. She had a treacherous, white-knuckle, four-hour drive to the airport only to learn her flight was delayed several times and then finally canceled.

"I had a nice little cocktail, and that calmed the nerves down because I was frazzled," she said.

The wind and the heavy, wet snow typical for a spring storm weighed down power lines and snapped them into one another, causing many outages and flickering lights in Colorado and Wyoming.

The storm was mainly hitting the eastern, flat halves of those states, shutting down long stretches of highways.

"It's pretty much kicking our hineys," Tim McGary of the Wyoming Department of Transportation said. "It's bad enough we can't keep up with it. That's why everything is closed."

Highway officials issued a rare order for drivers to stay off interstates in the Denver area unless they have chains, snow tires or four-wheel drive vehicles to avoid causing accidents. Normally, that's a warning issued for drivers in the mountains.

In Wyoming, the Cheyenne Veterans Affairs Medical Center, which serves veterans who live up to 150 miles away, opened its doors late because of the storm.

Even politics has to take a snow day in Wyoming as Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and former President Bill Clinton both canceled planned campaign events in the state.

Wyoming Democratic Party Executive Director Aimee Van Cleave said it's disappointing that the events had to be canceled but she was hopeful that both campaigns could reschedule visits before the April 9 party caucuses.

In Minnesota, the State Patrol advised against unnecessary travel in the south-central part of the state Wednesday afternoon because of low visibility.

Cities expected to see some of the heaviest accumulations include Rochester in Minnesota and La Crosse in Wisconsin. The storm is forecast to track mostly south of the Twin Cities.

Watchdog: Tribe misspent about \$937,000 in federal funds

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The finances of a Native American tribe in central South Dakota have been under the scrutiny of at least three government agencies, according to its response to a federal watchdog's report Wednesday that said tribal officials misspent part of nearly \$2.7 million in Department of Justice grant money.

The audit by the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General found the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe had about \$937,000 in unallowable, unsupported or unreasonable expenses. The tribe's response to the audit also confirms that several federal agencies began questioning its use of taxpayer funds months after an international human rights organization issued a report alleging that tribal leaders had misdirected millions of dollars intended to help impoverished tribal members.

The Justice Department's Office of Inspector General notified the tribe it was auditing its use of the nearly \$2.7 million from seven federal grants in June 2015, according to the response written by tribal finance staff members. That same month and the following one, the IRS and the Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General also began audits into the tribe's finances.

"The expansive demands of these audits have been so great, in fact, that some remain to be completed as of the date of this response," the tribe wrote. "The (Lower Brule Sioux Tribe) has been subjected to requests for thousands of documents and reports by these federal agencies."

The tribe's secretary and treasurer, Orville Langdeau, said in a statement Wednesday that the findings of the Justice Department report seem standard.

In January 2015, the nonprofit Human Rights Watch outlined numerous allegations against then-tribal chairman Michael Jandreau and others, accusing them of diverting money and concealing financial activity. Jandreau, who served as chairman for decades until his death in April, vigorously denied any wrongdoing.

Since Jandreau's death, the tribe's government has experienced a sustained period of legal deadlock with Langdeau and other supporters of Jandreau on one side and tribal leaders pushing for transparency on the other.

Acting tribal chairman Kevin Wright said Wednesday that he was unaware of the audit, which focused on grant money that the Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs issued between 2009 and 2012 for efforts including reducing gang-related activity and juvenile delinquency.

"I'm surprised, shocked and not so shocked," Wright, who was elected as vice chairman, said of the audit.

The report concluded that the tribe spent funds without prior approval and paid for unbudgeted positions with federal money, among other concerns. For example, auditors found roughly \$150,000 in unallowable personnel costs because positions including a chief prosecutor were paid through grant funds even though they weren't approved in the grant budgets.

Langdeau said the tribe looks forward to all the audits being finished and its "exoneration."

"For over a year, there have been allegations made about the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe and our finances. Does this report state anything about any missing money?" Langdeau said. "The more important issue is what is not included."

The Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General said last year that auditors were examining nearly \$20 million in grants to the tribe in response to the Human Rights Watch report. The inquiry is ongoing.

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South Dakota woman gets 25 years in man's stabbing death

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota woman has been sentenced to 25 years in prison for the stabbing death of a man last year.

The 27-year-old Oacoma resident Whitney Renae Turney was sentenced this week after she pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter in January.

Authorities allege that Turney stabbed and killed Calvin James Shields during an argument on Sept. 4 in Oacoma. In an effort to conceal the crime, authorities say, Turney disposed of Shields's body on the Crow Creek Reservation.

The victim's body was discovered three days after the fatal stabbing.

Standing Rock Sioux getting nearly \$3.3M Head Start grant

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota's congressional delegation says the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is getting federal money for early childhood education.

The delegation says the tribe is getting nearly \$3.3 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The money goes toward supporting Head Start programs that aim to provide affordable early childhood education.

The Standing Rock Reservation straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border. It has roughly 18,000 members, and about half of them live on the reservation.

Chair of South Dakota GOP appointed to Board of Regents

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has appointed the chair of the South Dakota Republican Party to the state Board of Regents.

Daugaard on Wednesday announced the appointment of Pierre resident Pamela Roberts.

Roberts is serving her final year of a two-year term as the chair of the state's GOP. She has previously held leadership roles under the administrations of Govs. Janklow, Mickelson, Miller, Rounds and Daugaard.

Daugaard, a Republican, says Roberts has a reputation for "sound management" and will be an "excellent leader" in the state's university system.

Roberts will begin her new role April 4. She will succeed Sioux Falls resident Terry Baloun, who will retire from the board after two six-year terms.

Roberts says she looks forward to helping the board continue its "record of academic quality and student success."

Gov. Daugaard appoints interim agriculture secretary

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard has appointed an interim state secretary of agriculture.

Daugaard says Dr. Dustin Oedekoven (OH'-deh-koh-ven) will be responsible for the state agency while the search continues for a permanent replacement for Lucas Lentsch, who is ending his tenure as secretary of agriculture on Wednesday.

Oedekoven has served as state veterinarian since 2009. He is also the head of the Animal Industry Board.

Daugaard says Oedekoven is well respected throughout the agriculture industry.

Lentsch, who served as agriculture secretary since April 2013, last month announced that he is taking a job in the private sector.

Lady Vols reach Sweet 16 after disappointing regular season

STEVE MEGARGEE, AP Sports Writer

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — During a season in which little else has gone according to plan for Tennessee, the Lady Volunteers are right where they usually are this time of year: Back in the Sweet 16.

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Tennessee (21-13) set a school record for losses, fell out of the Top 25 for the first time since 1985 and posted its lowest seed ever in the NCAA Tournament. That's unfamiliar territory for a program with eight national championships.

Yet the Lady Vols are in the Sweet 16 for the 34th time in the tournament's 35-year history. The only year Tennessee didn't get this far was 2009, when it lost in the first round to Ball State.

"We may be considered one of the worst teams in Lady Vol history to some," guard Diamond DeShields said. "Some people are selling their tickets. Some people are just doing a lot of things that we see and that we can't avoid. So, yeah, we are playing with a chip on our shoulder. Nobody expects us to win, yet we're still here."

The seventh-seeded Lady Vols face No. 3 seed Ohio State (26-7) on Friday in a Sioux Falls Regional semifinal. No. 1 seed South Carolina (33-1) meets No. 4 seed Syracuse (27-7) in the other semifinal.

If the Lady Vols can scratch out two more wins they would return to the Final Four for the first time since their 2008 national championship. Tennessee football coach Butch Jones gave the squad a pep talk before Wednesday's practice as the Lady Vols prepared to head to South Dakota.

"We talked a lot about how we're 0-0 beginning the NCAA Tournament, Tennessee coach Holly Warlick said. "Your record, your ranking, all that doesn't matter. ... Did you learn from your experience in what you did and where you came from? I think we did learn from our experience."

Tennessee's disappointing regular season caused the Lady Vols to take a different path than usual to the regional semifinals.

The Lady Vols typically play the first two rounds of the NCAA Tournament at home because they've been a No. 1 or No. 2 seed 27 of the last 30 years. Tennessee went on the road this time and upset No. 2 seed Arizona State on the Sun Devils' home floor in the second round.

"Being an underdog is fun, especially in March," guard Jordan Reynolds said.

Tennessee's surge coincides with the emergence of DeShields, who has averaged 19.7 points over her last six games. The North Carolina transfer had been held scoreless in two of the three games leading up to that stretch.

DeShields has dealt all season with a leg injury that the team has described as shin splints, and she also acknowledges she put too much pressure on herself. DeShields said she benefited from a dinner conversation with assistant coach Jolette Law after going scoreless in a late-season loss to Alabama, the first time the Crimson Tide had beaten Tennessee since 1984.

"She just had a talk with me about how I just needed to get myself out of this box and just be Diamond," DeShields said. "Ever since that night, I feel like I've been more myself. Not only coach Law, but all my coaches, they've kind of just allowed me to play through a lot of my mistakes and just kind of get back to playing freely like I usually do."

Tennessee still faces a tough road to the Final Four as the lowest seed left in its regional. The Lady Vols have the difficult task of slowing down Ohio State's Kelsey Mitchell, who scored 45 points Sunday against West Virginia.

If the Lady Vols win that game, they'd have a rematch with South Carolina or Syracuse. Tennessee beat Syracuse 57-55 at home on Nov. 20. The Lady Vols have lost three straight games to South Carolina over the last two seasons, including a 62-56 decision in Knoxville on Feb. 15.

"We still have our eyes set on a national championship, a Final Four," DeShields said. "In order to do that, we have to continue to play the way we've been playing, which is with a chip on our shoulder."

1-vehicle crash in Grant County kills 23-year-old man

MILBANK, S.D. (AP) — A sport utility vehicle crash in Grant County killed a man.

The Highway Patrol says the 23-year-old lost control of the SUV on a road northwest of Milbank, and the vehicle went in the ditch and rolled. It happened about 2:15 p.m. Tuesday.

The driver was thrown from the SUV and pronounced dead at the scene. Authorities did not immediately identify him. He was alone in the vehicle.

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Rapid City apartments get water back after 4 days without

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A dispute between Rapid City and an apartment building's out-of-state landlord over payment of a \$7,000 water bill left tenants without water for four days.

The city shut down the water to Idlewild Apartments on Friday because landlord Gerald Henning hadn't paid the water bill since late last year. Tenants complained, and Henning told KOTA-TV from his home in Oregon that he had offered partial payment to the city but his offer was rejected.

City Water Superintendent John Wagner issued a statement Tuesday saying the delinquent water bill was an ongoing problem and that the decision to cut off the water wasn't made hastily. The city worked with the American Red Cross to provide water to the building's tenants, who pay for water and electricity through their rent.

"We've been without water for four days now," tenant Ralph Bear Killer said Tuesday morning. "It's hard to haul water. I don't know what's going on. We pay our rent and everything but (have) no water."

Allender stepped in later Tuesday and ordered the water service restored "for humanitarian reasons." He said the city will continue to seek payment from Henning.

Annual prep all-star football game moving to Vermillion

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — The annual high school all-star football game in South Dakota is moving from Aberdeen to Vermillion.

This year's game will be July 9 in the University of South Dakota's DakotaDome. Games in following years will be in early June.

The game had been played in Aberdeen since 1987, but the South Dakota All-Star Games board of directors announced last summer it was discontinuing its involvement in football, basketball and volleyball due to waning interest. The future of each game was left up to that sport's coaches' association.

"Once we heard of the opportunity that a new community could host this great event, we were excited," Nate Welch, executive director of the Vermillion Area Chamber and Development Co., said in a statement.

Sanford Health is sponsoring the game, enabling officials to eliminate the annual \$300-per-player fee.

Langford Area head football coach Paul Raasch told the American News that he's happy the football game will continue.

"I think it gives guys one more chance to play," he said. "Especially guys that aren't going to (play in) college. It gives them a chance to get on the field one more time."

Groton head football coach Shaun Wanner said he believes having the game in the DakotaDome will be an incentive for players to take part.

The volleyball coaches' association held its all-star event in December in Harrisburg. The all-star games for basketball will be April 10 in Sioux Falls.

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. A SECOND ATTACKER IS SUSPECTED OF TAKING PART IN THE BOMBING OF BRUSSELS SUBWAY TRAIN

Belgian and French media report that a man filmed by surveillance camera in the Brussels metro alongside suspect Khalid El Bakraoui may be at large.

2. WHERE THE U.S. IS NOT SEARCHING FOR THE REMAINS OF ITS KOREAN WAR DEAD

An AP investigation finds that in at least one construction project, North Koreans have dug up and reburied dozens of sets of remains along with boots and helmets but no one is trying to find out if they belong to American soldiers.

3. IRAQ SAYS IT HAS LAUNCHED OFFENSIVE TO RECAPTURE IS-HELD MOSUL

An Iraqi military spokesman says Iraqi forces retook several villages east of Mosul, with the U.S.-led international coalition providing air support, but there is skepticism that such a complex military operation

is ready for full execution.

4. REPUBLICANS AIRING MORE ATTACK ADS AGAINST TRUMP THAN AGAINST HILLARY CLINTON

The Republicans are providing Democrats with ads that could be recycled verbatim and slapped with the tagline, "Hillary Clinton approves this message."

5. SOME QUESTION AMERICA'S SUPPORT FOR NATO AS A THROWBACK TO THE COLD WAR ERA

But the Brussels attacks have underscored the need for the U.S. and its European allies to work together to counter threats.

6. WHY THE ECONOMIC FALLOUT FROM THE ATTACKS IN BRUSSELS WILL LIKELY BE MINIMAL

Financial markets barely registered the bombings because recent history shows the business community keeps its cool and daily life resumes relatively quickly after such attacks.

7. FEDERALLY FUNDED EFFORTS TO COMBAT EXTREMISM IS OFF TO A SLOW START IN 3 U.S. CITIES

Few local programs have been created by the initiative, announced more than a year and a half ago in Boston, Los Angeles and Minneapolis.

8. AUSTRALIA: MOZAMBIQUE DEBRIS 'HIGHLY LIKELY' FROM FLIGHT 370

The two pieces believed to be from the missing Malaysian jetliner were found separately in the Indian Ocean by an American adventurer and a South African teenager.

9. WHAT PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA HAS PLANNED FOR HIS SECOND DAY IN ARGENTINA

Obama will confront a dark chapter of America's history in Latin America when he pays tribute to victims of Argentina's "Dirty War."

10. NEW ZEALANDERS VOTE TO KEEP ITS CURRENT FLAG WITH BRITISH UNION JACK

About 57 percent voted to keep the 114-year-old flag, rather than replace it with a silver fern.

Australian authorities tight-lipped on Qantas pilot death

ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Authorities in Australia were tight-lipped Thursday about the circumstances surrounding the death of an experienced Qantas Airways Boeing 747 pilot, who crashed a small plane off the country's coast this week.

Paul Whyte, a first officer on the Australian airline's international flights, was the only person aboard a rented Cessna 172 when it vanished from radar late Monday over the Pacific Ocean 11 kilometers (seven miles) northeast of Byron Bay, near Australia's most easterly point, Northern Rivers Aero Club president Wally Soward said.

Whyte had hired the single-engine plane from the club and had taken off about 30 minutes before the crash, Soward said.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau, which investigates fatal air crashes and is currently leading the search for missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which vanished in the Indian Ocean two years ago with 239 people aboard, said Thursday it was not investigating Whyte's death. The bureau would not explain why.

"Based on information available, the ATSB has assessed that this isn't a transport safety matter," it said in a statement.

New South Wales Police said they were preparing a report for a state coroner who would make an official finding on the cause of Whyte's death. Police said there were no suspicious circumstances surrounding the crash, but would provide no further details.

Whyte's body and the plane wreckage have not yet been recovered.

Geoff Dell, discipline leader of accident investigation at Central Queensland University, said the official language suggested investigators had evidence of suicide.

"ATSB has for a long time had a policy of not wasting taxpayers' money on investigations of things that they already know," Dell said.

"If there's evidence of suicide, like he left a message or something, then it's a police matter," he added.

Qantas said in a statement that it "won't be commenting on speculation" about the cause of the tragedy while the coroner's investigation is underway.

Qantas chief pilot Richard Tobiano noted that Whyte was off duty when the crash occurred.

"As you can imagine, this is a very upsetting time for his family, friends and colleagues, and we're providing them with as much support as we can," Tobiano said in a statement.

Concerns about airlines' screening of commercial pilots' mental health were heightened after co-pilot Andreas Lubitz deliberately crashed Germanwings Flight 9525 into the French Alps one year ago, on March 24, 2015, killing all 150 people on board. Pilot suicide is also a theory behind the mysterious disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 after it flew far off course during a flight from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Beijing on March 8, 2014.

Since the Germanwings disaster, Qantas joined with many international airlines in ensuring that at least two crew members remain in cockpits if a pilot leaves for any reason.

North Korea claims more progress in missile development

HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Thursday that it had successfully conducted a high-powered, solid-fuel rocket engine test, which if confirmed would be a major step forward in boosting its missile attack capability against South Korea and the United States.

North Korea uses liquid propellants for its main ballistic missiles that target South Korea and U.S. bases in the Asia-Pacific region. A long-range rocket that sent a satellite into orbit last month, whose militarized version can theoretically reach the U.S. mainland, also uses liquid fuel.

Such missiles need to be fueled before they are launched, so it is relatively difficult to use them on short notice. The use of solid propellants, already loaded inside missiles, reduces launch preparation time and increases the mobility of the weapons, making it harder to detect signs before they are launched.

The North's state media said that leader Kim Jong Un expressed delight after observing the successful testing of a "large-output solid fuel rocket engine," which made an "earth-shaking" sound as it spit out a large beam of fire.

Kim said that the test will enhance a missile capability that will "mercilessly" strike enemies, an apparent reference to South Korea and the United States.

It is not possible to independently confirm the North's statement or other high-profile announcements from the secretive, tightly controlled country.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said Thursday it needs to analyze the statement.

The North's test appears intended to use solid propellants for missiles with a range of 400-500 kilometers (250-310 miles) that can place entire South Korea in its striking range, and Pyongyang will likely try to do the same on medium- and long-range missiles, according to analyst Chae Yeon-seok at South Korea's state-run Korea Aerospace Research Institute. Chae said the North already uses solid propellants for some short-range missiles.

In recent weeks, North Korea has launched missiles and other weapons into the sea and escalated threats of attacks in response to ongoing annual South Korea-U.S. military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal. The drills are the biggest, and come after North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test and launched a long-range rocket earlier this year.

South Korea's president ordered a heightened security posture on Thursday, a day after North Korea threatened to launch artillery bombardment on her presidential palace.

In an apparent effort to prove its claims of boosted nuclear capability, North Korea has also disclosed purported mock-up of a nuclear warhead and claimed to have developed a re-entry vehicle for a missile that is needed to return 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.

Biden to point to record in Supreme Court fight

KATHLEEN HENNESSEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Joe Biden on Thursday will point to his years as Senate Judiciary Committee chairman to cast Republicans' election-year Supreme Court blockade as a dangerous new escalation of partisanship — hoping to put the focus on his record on high-court nominations and not his much-discussed remarks.

In a speech at Georgetown Law School, Biden will note that as chairman and ranking Democrat on the committee he helped usher eight Supreme Court nominees through the committee. All of those nominees got a hearing and a vote on the Senate floor, Biden says, according to excerpts of the speech released in advance.

"Not much of the time. Not most of the time. Every single time," he says.

The high-profile speech is Biden's latest attempt to explain and move past the 1992 remarks that have recently come back to haunt him and his boss, President Barack Obama.

In the Senate floor speech, then-committee Chairman Biden seemed to endorse the notion of blocking any Supreme Court nominee put forward in the throes of the election season, a version of the strategy now thwarting Obama nominee Merrick Garland.

Republicans have branded their election-year blockade the "Biden rule" and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has used Biden's comments to suggest the strategy is a standard Senate practice. Biden, meanwhile, has defended the remarks by saying Republicans are distorting his meaning.

The White House said Biden's Thursday speech to law professors and students is an attempt to go on offense. Biden plans to warn of the danger of allowing the diminished court to deadlock on major issues, kicking cases back to regional lower court and threatening to "fragment our national unity."

"The longer this high court vacancy remains unfilled, the more serious a problem we will face — a problem compounded by turbulence, confusion, and uncertainty about our safety and security, our liberty and privacy, the future of our children and grandchildren," Biden will say, according to excerpts.

It is not surprising that Biden is eager to weigh in. After more than 15 years on the Judiciary Committee, eight as chairman, few in Washington can match the vice president's experience with judicial nominations. Facing perhaps the last big political fight of his career, it's unlikely he'd let his past remarks keep him from a debate he has spent his career preparing for.

Biden, who has acted as a stealthy liaison to the Senate in past negotiations, has begun some of that work. He has reached out to some Republican senators since Obama nominated Garland, chief judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, for the high court. And he's pressed the issue as he's campaigned for Democrats in Seattle and Ohio. His role is likely to increase as the process moves forward.

But Republicans won't make it easy.

As Democrats pound GOP senators to "do their jobs," the argument that their blockade is part of a long history of partisan maneuvering on confirmations has particular resonance with the base — the voters most adamantly behind the GOP plan.

Biden's June 1992 speech lends needed ammunition.

Amid talk that a sitting justice might retire, then-Sen. Biden warned President George H.W. Bush to hold off on a nomination. Supreme Court confirmations had become "dominated by the right" and hearings the summer before a presidential election would only lead to a "conflagration," he said.

"Senate consideration of a nominee under these circumstances is not fair to the president, to the nominee, or to the Senate itself," Biden argued.

If Bush went ahead with a nomination, "the Senate Judiciary Committee should seriously consider not scheduling confirmation hearings on the nomination until after the political campaign season is over," he said.

The vice president has focused on another part of his 1992 remarks. Biden went on to say he hoped to usher in changes to the confirmation process in the next administration and would consider a moderate nominee.

"If the president consults and cooperates with the Senate or moderates his selections absent consultation, then his nominees may enjoy my support," he said.

Indonesia says Taiwanese vessels ignored repeated warnings

ALI KOTARUMALOS, Associated Press

NINIEK KARMINI, Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia says one of its patrol ships fired shots at two Taiwanese vessels suspected of illegal fishing only after they ignored repeated warnings to leave Indonesian waters in the Strait of Malacca.

Coordinating Minister for Politics, Legal and Security Affairs Luhut Pandjaitan said Thursday that the fisheries patrol ship involved in the incident followed all standard procedures for dealing with foreign vessels.

He vowed that Indonesia will stick to its policy of taking firm action against illegal fishing. Yunus Husein of the Illegal Fishing Task Force said the Taiwanese vessels were sailing without flags off Lhoksemawe in Sumatra's Aceh province. He said no one was injured.

Taiwan has demanded an explanation from Indonesia. A statement by its Foreign Ministry condemned the use of force and asked for evidence of any wrongdoing by the Taiwanese boats that could justify the shooting.

Pandjaitan said Indonesia abided by "international standard procedures in dealing with foreign ships entering our territory, including by providing warnings through raising flags, voices and warning shots in the stern of the ship."

Indonesia has taken strong action in the past year against illegal fishing, destroying dozens of captured vessels.

In the past week, the Indonesian government has also butted heads with Beijing after the Chinese coast guard helped a Chinese fishing vessel escape from Indonesian control. The ship was caught fishing illegally off Indonesia's Natuna islands, which overlap the southernmost reaches of the South China Sea.

Indonesia's assertive response in that case has suggested it is adjusting its stance of always staying at arms-length from the territorial disputes other Southeast Asian nations have with China over its expansive claims to the South China Sea.

The Taiwanese tuna long-liners were docked at Singapore's Jurong Fishery Port on Thursday. Associated Press reporters saw crew members on deck but were not allowed to approach.

The Singapore newspaper Straits Times said the two captains and their 25 crewmembers were tired but in good condition.

Lin Nan-yang, the captain of the Sheng Te Tsai, told the newspaper that the early Monday morning shooting occurred without warning and he was unable to understand what the Indonesian crew was saying over the radio.

Taiwanese media reported the crews of the ships were unharmed.

AP EXCLUSIVE: US remains in N. Korea lost in political limbo

ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

RYONGYON-RI, North Korea (AP) — The village elder put his shovel aside, stooped down by a scraggly bush and pulled a sack from the freshly turned dirt. Spreading open the sack, he reached in to reveal femurs, skull and jaw fragments, boots and a rusted green helmet.

"These are your American GIs," Song Hong Ik said at a burial mound near the top of a small hill.

Perhaps they are. But for more than a decade, no one has been trying to find out.

"Until They Are Home" is one of the most sacred vows of the U.S. military, yet Washington has long suspended efforts to look for 5,300 American GIs missing in North Korea whose remains are potentially recoverable. The countries' abysmal relations suggest that no restart is coming soon.

In the meantime, possible remains and recovery sites are being lost as North Korea works to improve its infrastructure with projects such as the Chongchon River No. 10 Hydroelectric Power Station. The bones Song revealed came from that project's construction site.

His village, the hamlet of Ryongyon-ri, is nestled among low rolling hills in the heart of a Korean War

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battleground about 150 kilometers (almost 100 miles) north of Pyongyang. The 90-minute drive from the capital runs through mostly flat land covered by rice paddies or fields of corn and potatoes. The scene is quietly rustic. Farmers use ox carts to transport produce and villagers can be seen walking in the distance on narrow dirt roads.

Not far from the highway that leads past the village, a shallow river runs through a wide valley. Song, polite but to the point, explained as he climbed the hill that the valley will be flooded when the dam is completed.

Song said construction on the plant, which involved a lot of digging, began in earnest four years ago.

That's when the bones started piling up, he said. Enough, he added, to fill a half-dozen makeshift burial mounds on the hill, maybe 70 or 100 sets in all.

He dug up a few other mounds to make his point. Then, after a smoke break, he and the plant's construction supervisor put the bones back in their bags and reburied them.

Between 1996 and 2005, joint U.S.-North Korea search teams conducted 33 joint recovery operations and recovered 229 sets of American remains. Washington broke them off because it claimed the safety of its searchers was not guaranteed. Critics of the program argued the North was using the deal to squeeze cash out of Washington — "bones for bucks," they said.

Talks to restart recovery work resumed in 2011, only to fall apart after North Korea launched a rocket condemned by the U.S. as a banned test of ballistic missile technology. There has been no progress since.

With distrust between the two countries chronically high, it took months of requests before The Associated Press was allowed to go to Ryongyon-ri, first last May with a Korean People's Army escort and again in December.

The AP made the requests because North Korea's state-run media have repeatedly said — without giving details — that with construction, agricultural and other infrastructure projects going forward, time is running out for the U.S. military to collect its Korean War dead.

In Washington, such claims are often seen as a not-so-subtle jab at the U.S. government for halting the searches, or an effort to guilt the U.S. into formal talks it has refused to engage in as long as Pyongyang continues its nuclear weapons program.

Pyongyang's approval of The AP's visits to Ryongyon-ri may have had similar political motivations. That's often how things work in North Korea, though an army official and villagers angrily denied that their reasons for allowing The AP to see the remains were anything other than humanitarian.

In any case, Washington isn't biting. And its war dead are not being brought home.

More than 7,800 U.S. troops remain lost and unrecovered from the Korean War. About 5,300 were lost in North Korea.

According to the Pentagon's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, most died in major battles or as prisoners of war. Others died "along the wayside or in small villages" and many of the losses from aircraft crashes also occurred near battle zones or roads connecting them. "So," it says, "it is possible that major concentrations of human remains are located in these areas."

The DPAA lists Kujang County, where Ryongyon-ri is located, as part of a prime search area that could potentially yield 1,600 remains. The Chosin Reservoir, where another major campaign was fought, and POW camp burial grounds near the Chinese border are also priority sites.

"The Department of Defense is committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting," Lt. Col. Holly Slaughter, a DPAA spokeswoman, told The AP. "U.S. efforts to recover Korean War remains are a humanitarian effort for our missing servicemen, their families and the American people."

Even so, Maj. Natasha Waggoner, another spokeswoman for the agency, said there is no schedule "at this time" to hold talks to send any search teams back.

Until they do, the jury will remain out on the Ryongyon-ri remains.

It's impossible to judge the veracity of remains simply by looking at them. Only expert eyes and a long and difficult forensic identification process can do that. There were no dogtags, unit insignia or other identification clues mixed in with the remains seen by The AP.

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Villagers acknowledged the remains were gathered haphazardly as construction progressed. It is quite possible, they said, the remains could include animal bones or the remains of combatants from other countries.

Villagers old enough to have witnessed the battle have sketchy memories, at best.

By the time the fighting came to their backyard, from mid-November to December 1950, most of the village, a scattering of about 30 households, had already been evacuated. Those who remained were mostly women, children and old people. The village was then known as Sangpyong.

"My aunt, uncle and grandfather were caught by the U.S. enemies, who beat them so they got sick and died," said Kim Ri Jun, who was then 13 years old.

Kim and Song had no information about specific units the troops were attached to. They did remember that many U.S. soldiers were African-American, and that troops from other countries, taking part in U.S.-led United Nations forces, were involved in the fighting as well.

The location and timeframe coincide with a major clash between the U.S. and its allies and the Chinese "volunteer" forces fighting on Pyongyang's side. The push north was known as the "Home by Christmas" campaign because Gen. Douglas MacArthur thought the war would be won by Christmas. Instead, it would last two and a half more years, end in a stalemate and claim 36,500 American lives.

The U.S. government has estimated as many as 270 sets of American remains are likely recoverable in Kujang County alone. Searching for them was one of the top priorities when the U.S. missions were still going to North Korea. Nearly a dozen joint searches were conducted in the area from 1998-2000.

But they ended long before the real digging in Ryongyon-ri began.

That any joint searches were held at all was almost miraculous. That they would break down seems much more predictable.

North Korea and the United States remain technically at war because the 1950-53 fighting ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. Remains recovery is the only project their militaries have ever worked on together.

Relations were much better when the missions began.

Under President Bill Clinton, the two countries had signed an agreement for the North to freeze its illicit plutonium weapons program in exchange for aid. But that deal unraveled in 2002, the same year President George W. Bush declared North Korea part of the "axis of evil." The searches continued for a few more years, but bilateral relations took a nosedive. North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in 2006 and meaningful contact between the two countries has since been minimal.

Slaughter, of the DPAA, said the total cost to the U.S. to carry out the joint missions was \$19.5 million. Of the 229 remains recovered, 110 have been identified. The recovery of remains has since ground to a halt — to only six, all unilaterally handed over to the U.S. by Pyongyang in 2007.

The impasse on a humanitarian — not political — issue doesn't sit well with some Korean War veterans.

"Those of us who fought there really feel it's a travesty that we haven't been able to get there and try to find those that were killed or died in the prison camps," said Larry Kinard, who fought in Korea with the Army's 3rd Infantry Division and is now president of the 15,000-member Korean War Veterans Association. He noted that since 1982 only 332 Korean War remains have been identified and accounted for.

Kinard told the AP from his home in Texas he is in regular contact with the DPAA and feels it is doing the best it can with limited resources and the challenges it faces of getting into North Korea to conduct searches.

But he added that is of little consolation to the families of the missing.

"Approximately 5,300 of our comrades still lie in the ground in North Korea and little or no effort is currently underway to recover them," he said. "The KWVA members, who average nearly 85 years old, want to see their fellow brothers-in-arms found, identified, brought home, and laid to rest in our country."

Song, meanwhile, said he had mixed feelings about gathering the bones of his enemy and moving them to the hill so that they wouldn't be lost when the valley is flooded.

"Frankly, I don't care if the Americans come or not," he said. "But they owe us a thank you for taking care of their dead."

Fern spurned: New Zealanders vote against changing flag

NICK PERRY, Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand has voted to keep its current flag by a margin of 57 percent to 43 percent in a nationwide poll that ended Thursday.

More than 2 million people voted in the ballot to decide whether to keep the British Union Jack on their flag or replace it with a silver fern.

The current flag has been the national symbol since 1902. It was up against a new design that was winnowed from more than 10,000 entries submitted by the public.

Those advocating change argued the flag was a relic of the nation's colonial past and too similar to Australia's flag.

But the alternative design failed to gain the momentum it needed to win. While many liked it and people across the country began flying it from their homes and businesses, some considered it garish, a design better suited to a beach towel.

The vote had been orchestrated by Prime Minister John Key who was an eager proponent of change. But some saw the endeavor as an effort by him to create a legacy. Others were put off by the cost: 26 million New Zealand dollars (\$17 million).

In the end, the vote represented a rare political defeat for Key, who has won three straight elections and led the country for eight years.

"Naturally I'm a little bit disappointed the flag didn't change tonight," Key told reporters.

He said, however, that every schoolchild had become involved in the debate, which had been good for the nation. He said he was proud to see so many flags flying over recent weeks and would now support the current flag even though it wasn't his first choice.

Organizers said deciding the issue by popular vote represented a world first, with other countries changing flags by revolution, decree or legislation.

John Burrows, a law professor who led a panel who chose a shortlist of alternative flag designs, said the process had been challenging from the start and the panel was breaking new ground. He said one thing they learned was that everyone has different tastes and there's no such thing as a perfect flag.

Opposition leader Andrew Little said the next time the flag issue will be discussed will likely be after Queen Elizabeth II dies, as part of broader debate about the nation's constitution, including whether it should become a republic.

Voter turnout in the mail ballot was 67 percent, with 2.1 million votes cast from the country's 3.2 million registered voters. The official result will be announced next week.

Reports: 2nd suspect believed in Brussels subway attack.

Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — A second attacker is suspected of taking part in the bombing this week of a Brussels subway train and may be at large, according to Belgian and French media reports, amid growing signs that the same Islamic State cell was behind the attacks in Brussels and bloodshed in Paris last year.

The chief suspect in the Paris attacks, Salah Abdeslam, is facing a hearing in Brussels on Thursday morning after his arrest last week in the Belgian capital. Belgian authorities have charged him with terror offenses, and French authorities are seeking his extradition.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attacks in Brussels and Paris, which have laid bare European security failings and prompted calls for better intelligence cooperation.

Belgian prosecutors have said at least four people were involved in Tuesday's attacks on the Brussels airport and a subway train, including brothers Ibrahim and Khalid El Bakraoui, identified as suicide bombers. European security officials identified another suicide bomber as Najim Laachraoui, a suspected bombmaker for the Paris attacks.

Prosecutors have said another suspected participant in the airport attack is at large. Belgian state broadcaster RTBF and France's Le Monde and BFM television reported Thursday that a fifth attacker may also

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be at large: a man filmed by surveillance cameras in the Brussels metro on Tuesday carrying a large bag alongside Khalid El Bakraoui. RTBF said it is not clear whether that man was killed in the attack.

Prosecutors did not immediately respond to the reports.

Attention turned Thursday to Paris attacks suspect Abdeslam, who evaded police in two countries for four months before Friday's capture in the Molenbeek neighborhood where he grew up. He was shot in the leg during the arrest.

A car believed to be carrying Abdeslam left the prison in Bruges where he's been held and arrived Thursday morning at the main Brussels courthouse, followed by a car carrying Belgian federal prosecutor Frederic Van Leeuw. A helicopter circled overhead, and the area was under extraordinarily heavy security, as are many parts of the Belgian capital. Abdeslam's lawyer, Sven Mary, also arrived at the court but refused to speak to reporters.

A judge is to decide whether Abdeslam should be held in custody another month. France is seeking his extradition to face potential terrorism charges for his involvement in the Nov. 13 attacks on a Paris rock concert, stadium and cafes, which killed 130 people. Several attackers were also killed.

Abdeslam, 26, a French citizen who grew up in Brussels' heavily immigrant Molenbeek neighborhood, slipped through police fingers on multiple occasions, including the day after the attacks.

Evidence is mounting that the extremists may have launched this week's attacks in Brussels in haste because they feared authorities were closing in on them after Abdeslam's arrest.

Later Thursday, European Union justice and interior ministers are holding an emergency meeting prompted by the Brussels attacks.

North Carolina reins in local governments, transgender rule

GARY D. ROBERTSON, Associated Press

EMERY P. DALESIO, Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina legislators decided to rein in local governments by approving a bill that prevents cities and counties from passing their own anti-discrimination rules. Gov. Pat McCrory later signed the legislation, which dealt a blow to the LGBT movement after success with protections in cities across the country.

The Republican-controlled General Assembly took action Wednesday after Charlotte city leaders last month approved a broad anti-discrimination measure. Critics focused on language in the ordinance that allowed transgender people to use the restroom aligned with their gender identity.

McCrory, who was the mayor of Charlotte for 14 years and had criticized the local ordinance, signed the legislation Wednesday night that he said was "passed by a bipartisan majority to stop this breach of basic privacy and etiquette."

Although 12 House Democrats joined all Republicans present in voting for the bill in the afternoon, later all Senate Democrats in attendance walked off their chamber floor during the debate in protest. Remaining Senate Republicans gave the legislation unanimous approval.

"We choose not to participate in this farce," Senate Minority Leader Dan Blue of Raleigh said after he left the chamber.

Senate leader Phil Berger of Eden said the Democrats' decision to leave was a "serious breach of their obligation to the citizens that voted to elect them."

Republicans and their allies have said intervening is necessary to protect the safety of women and children from "radical" action by Charlotte. There have been arguments that any man — perhaps a sex offender — could enter a woman's restroom or locker room simply by calling himself transgender.

"It's common sense — biological men should not be in women's showers, locker rooms and bathrooms," said GOP Rep. Dean Arp of Monroe before the chamber voted 82-26 for the legislation after nearly three hours of debate.

Gay rights leaders and transgender people said the legislation demonizes the community and espouses bogus claims about increasing the risk of sexual assaults. They say the law will deny lesbian, gay, bisexual

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and transgender people essential protections needed to ensure they can get a hotel room, hail a taxi or dine at a restaurant without fear.

"McCrory's reckless decision to sign this appalling legislation into law is a direct attack on the rights, well-being and dignity of hundreds of thousands of LGBT North Carolinians and visitors to the state," Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin said in a statement. Civil liberties groups pledged to push for repeal and were weighing legal options. A Thursday evening rally was planned.

GOP leaders scheduled the one-day session at the cost of \$42,000 because Charlotte's ordinance was set to take effect April 1. Otherwise, the legislature wouldn't have returned until late April.

Current Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts, who pressed to get the anti-discrimination ordinance approved, said she was appalled by the legislature's actions.

"The General Assembly is on the wrong side of progress. It is on the wrong side of history," Roberts said in a statement. But McCrory said in a release "the basic expectation of privacy in the most personal of settings" was violated by "government overreach and intrusion" by Roberts and the city council.

The law bars local governments statewide from prohibiting discrimination in public places based on sexual orientation and gender identity. A new statewide nondiscrimination law included doesn't contain those specific protections. It directs all public schools, government agencies and public college campuses to require bathrooms or locker rooms be designated for use only by people based on their biological sex. They can offer single-occupancy facilities.

Transgender people who have transitioned to the opposite sex wouldn't be affected if they get their birth certificate changed.

Democrats said the measure makes North Carolina less inclusive and interferes with local governments. They say the state could also risk billions in federal education dollars with the school policy.

Ordinance supporters and opponents spoke to legislators in House and Senate committees. They included Skye Thompson, 15, of Greenville, who was born female but now identifies as male. He told senators they were putting him in danger by requiring use of a women's restroom.

"I've dealt with bullying my whole life and now I worry that my own state lawmakers are bullying me as well. I feel bullied by you guys," Thompson said.

Donna Eaton of Cary said everybody deserves to be treated with dignity and respect but is worried that without Wednesday's legislation "it's going to open the door for people with malicious intent who would masquerade as transgenders to come in and actually take advantage and have access to our kids."

Legislation requiring transgender students to use bathrooms corresponding with their birth gender have failed recently. South Dakota's legislature failed to override Gov. Dennis Daugaard's veto and a similar bill in Tennessee bill died Tuesday.

The new law also would also make clear local governments can't require area businesses to pay workers above the current minimum wage, with some exceptions. McCrory said that although items beyond the bathroom-related provisions in the legislation should have waited until later this spring for debate, he signed it anyway because it doesn't change existing rights under state or federal law.

Amnesty urges Suu Kyi government to end cycle of repression

ESTHER HTUSAN, Associated Press

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Amnesty International urged Aung San Suu Kyi and her party's new government to release all political prisoners when they take office next week, saying Thursday that Myanmar's historic transition is an opportunity to break away from the repression of the former junta rule.

"Myanmar's legal framework reads like a textbook of repression, and authorities have in recent years increasingly used it to silence dissent," Champa Patel, Amnesty International's Southeast Asia director, told reporters.

Serious questions remain unanswered about the new government's power to improve human rights given that the constitution keeps several key institutions under the military's control, including the ministries of home affairs, which oversees the police, defense and border affairs.

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Amnesty's report, based on interviews with human rights defenders, activists, lawyers, and prisoners of conscience and their families, documents the widespread crackdown on political opponents in the past two years. It said the government has relied on draconian laws and other intimidating tactics to silence dissent.

Suu Kyi led her National League for Democracy party to a historic win in the Nov. 8 elections, and will replace a nominally civilian, military-backed government that has been in power since 2011. Before that, Myanmar was ruled by the military since 1962.

During that time, the junta kept Suu Kyi under house arrest for several years, and jailed hundreds of her supporters and other critics. While the government has released more than 1,100 detainees over the years, some remain in jails.

Amnesty International says it knows of almost 100 political prisoners still behind bars, while hundreds of other activists are in detention or waiting for their trials to end.

The outgoing government and Suu Kyi's party have not yet commented on the report.

Amnesty also called on the new government to review all cases and ensure no peaceful activists are imprisoned and to amend or repeal all laws used to crack down on human rights.

The NLD's willingness to free prisoners of conscience is not in doubt, but it may not be able to do so: The Corrections Department is under the military-controlled Ministry of Home Affairs.

Even after "we have the new government and parliament, they will not have the full authority to manage the country," said Bo Kyi of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. "The Constitution says the commander-in-chief is the most powerful person in the country."

The laws themselves have also been applied in ways that add to their severity against dissenters and activists. In one such case, Htin Kyaw is serving 13 years and 10 months for distributing leaflets criticizing the government. He was charged with the same offence separately in all 11 townships where he handed out the leaflets.

"It would have been really graceful if (outgoing) President Thein Sein had released all the political prisoners before the end of his term," said Robert San Aung, an advocate for political activists on trial.

No underdogs, but still some folks to cheer for in Sweet 16

EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

VCU: Vanquished.

Yale: Back to class.

Hawaii: Said Aloha.

Stephen F. Austin: History.

Looking for that only-in-March underdog to cheer for in the Sweet 16? Not gonna find them.

Instead, the tally of teams left in the NCAA Tournament reads like a Who's Who list of college basketball's best program: All four No. 1 seeds advanced, and even the so-called underdogs — No. 10 Syracuse and No. 11 Gonzaga — aren't looking or acting like them.

Most casual fans (whose brackets are already obliterated) would naturally gravitate toward the underdog. Sans that, here's a quick look at the 16 teams left, and why you just might want to pull for them anyway. (Seeding in parenthesis)

KANSAS (1 SOUTH)

Heartstrings: Wayne Selden wears a white-and-pink wristband as a shout-out to 9-year-old Karis Selk, who has been diagnosed with brain cancer.

Underdog cred: It's a reach here, but their two best players, Selden and Perry Ellis, are upperclassmen who will not be NBA lottery picks.

NORTH CAROLINA (1 EAST)

Heartstrings: It's almost a sure deal that the coach, Roy Williams, will cry at some point, publically, in the next two weeks.

Underdog cred: Before this year, they had gone a whopping four seasons without getting their hands on the ACC regular-season or tournament titles.

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VIRGINIA (1 MIDWEST)

Heartstrings: Coach Tony Bennett's father, Dick, was a coaching lifer who came up with the vaunted "Pack Line Defense" that befuddles opponents to this day. Can Tony win the title that eluded his dad?

Underdog cred: There was a lot of headshaking when the Cavaliers got a No. 1 seed. And let's face it — this team has not lived up to the hype the two seasons before this. Seeded first or second three years straight and still looking for a Final Four.

OREGON (1 WEST)

Seed: No. 1 in West

Heartstrings: Phil Richmond is the son of former NBA star Mitch Richmond. Phil was a team manager who asked coach Dana Altman if he could walk on this year. Altman said yes. If Richmond steps foot on the court in the next two weeks, especially if the Ducks are cruising to a victory, it'll be a nice moment.

Underdog cred: Like Virginia, the Ducks were widely disputed as a No. 1 seed. Unlike Virginia, the Ducks actually came out and played down to expectations — falling behind by seven late to St. Joe's before pulling out the win and trip to the Sweet 16.

OKLAHOMA (2 WEST)

Heartstrings: Backup center Akolda Manyang missed last Sunday's game, and will miss Thursday's game against Texas A&M, because of the death of his brother, Ater. "We're playing for AK right now," Oklahoma's Khadeem Lattin said.

Underdog cred: Two meetings with Kansas, including one when the teams were ranked 1-2 in the AP Poll, have resulted in two close losses for the Sooners. A third meeting would not be the worst thing for the Final Four.

VILLANOVA (2 SOUTH)

Heartstrings: Coach Jay Wright and his star guard, Ryan Arcidiacono, are each from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and went to rival high schools. That's why the coach-player relationship might feel a bit more like father-son.

Underdog cred: Playing the try-try-again card. 'Nova failed to get out of the first weekend as a 1 or 2 seed the last two years.

TEXAS A&M (3 WEST)

Heartstrings: Coach Billy Kennedy has Parkinson's disease. "The biggest challenge I've ever had," he calls it.

Underdog cred: They were down 12 to Northern Iowa with 35 seconds left and are still here. Need we say more?

MIAMI (3 SOUTH)

Heartstrings: If you see guard Angel Rodriguez blowing a kiss skyward after another big win, know that the kiss is going to his father, who was killed in Puerto Rico when Rodriguez was 2.

Underdog cred: Easy. The coach is Jim Larranaga, who brought George Mason to the Final Four in 2006 as an 11 seed, which makes us ask every year: "Who is this year's George Mason?"

DUKE (4 WEST)

Heartstrings: The letter from the 3-year-old Duke fan, tweeted out on the official team website @duke-blueplanet, from a young boy lauding the team for bouncing back nicely from the loss of forward Amile Jefferson.

Underdog cred: Jefferson's loss certainly left the Blue Devils short-handed and put them in the second

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tier of title contenders.

IOWA STATE (4 MIDWEST)

Heartstrings: In addition to having to replace coach Fred Hoiberg and fire his football coach, athletic director Jamie Pollard is a little more than a year removed from a heart attack and open-heart surgery.

Underdog cred: This team's only Final Four appearance came in 1944 — before it was known as the Final Four, and when the tournament started with only eight teams.

INDIANA (5 EAST)

Heartstrings: Athletic director Fred Glass shaved his head before the tournament to show support for the St. Baldrick's Foundation, a leader in pediatric cancer research.

Underdog cred: Not that anyone thinks "Underdog" when they think "Indiana Hoosiers," but they did beat Kentucky to get to this point, and next face North Carolina. Enough said.

MARYLAND (5 SOUTH)

Heartstrings: Maryland cheerleader Kathryn Brown is a liver transplant survivor after suffering from a rare form of liver cancer. "She's like a miracle child. Every time I see her, I get chills," Brown's mom, Leslie Savary, told The Baltimore Sun.

Underdog cred: First trip to Sweet 16 since 2003 and Terrapins aren't making it look easy: They struggled in wins over No. 12 South Dakota State and No. 13 Hawaii.

NOTRE DAME (6 EAST)

Heartstrings: A couple recently endowed the coaching position at Notre Dame with a \$5 million gift. Why? Among the charities that have honored coach Mike Brey are: The March of Dimes, the American Heart Association and the V Foundation.

Underdog cred: This team came painfully close to knocking off Kentucky in the Elite Eight last year in what was probably the tournament's best game.

WISCONSIN (7 EAST)

Heartstrings: Assistant coach Lamont Paris had to leave the team earlier this month to be with his mother in the hospital. "A very emotional time, obviously," Paris told the team website. "This arena, basketball in itself, has always been a place where I've been able to kind of lose myself."

Underdog cred: OK, they're the national runners-up from last year. Still, how many teams faced with rebuilding have their coach retire in midseason and still make it this far?

SYRACUSE (10 MIDWEST)

Heartstrings: "It was crushing. My heart was broken for him, and during the games, I couldn't even look at him," Juli Boeheim told The New York Post, about the nine-game suspension for NCAA infractions that her husband, Jim, served to start the season.

Underdog cred: Only one of the 16 teams left that shouldn't have been in the tournament at all, according to most Bracketologists.

GONZAGA (11 MIDWEST)

Heartstrings: Gonzaga's effort to keep center Przemek Karnowski, out since December with a back injury, involved with the team has been a tender story line for this team — the trials and travails of which have been documented on HBO's inside-the-locker-room documentary, "The March to Madness."

Underdog cred: There's still something painfully heartwarming about watching coach Mark Few try to do that handstand-whatever-it-is thing in the locker room after wins. #dothefew.

2 Palestinians stab Israeli soldier, then are shot, killed

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military says two Palestinians stabbed and lightly wounded an Israeli soldier before troops shot and killed the pair.

The military says the attack took place at a military checkpoint in the West Bank city of Hebron on Thursday. It says the soldier was taken to hospital for treatment.

The assault is the latest in a six-month wave of stabbings, shootings and car-ramming attacks that has killed 28 Israelis and two Americans. Over the same time, about 187 Palestinians have died by Israeli fire. Israel says most of them were attackers, and the rest died in clashes with Israeli security forces.

Israel blames the attacks on Palestinian incitement by leaders and on social media. Palestinians say the violence stems from frustration at nearly five decades of Israeli military occupation.

GOP ads give Democrats anti-Trump playbook

JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press

CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — “Bimbo. Dog. Fat pig,” disgusted women say, looking straight into the camera. Another explains, “Real quotes from Donald Trump, about women.”

Flip the channel. “I know words. I have the best words,” Trump says. That commercial proceeds with a 30-second, bleeped-out tour of his coarsest comments.

Both ads — and dozens more that portray Trump as a selfish, deceptive buffoon — are sponsored by fellow Republicans trying to derail the political outsider from capturing their party’s presidential nomination.

But these ads are also providing Democrats with attacks that could be recycled verbatim for the general election and slapped with the tagline, “Hillary Clinton approves this message.”

An Associated Press review of political ads tracked by Kantar Media’s Campaign Media Analysis Group found 68 different anti-Trump commercials have been shown some 40,000 times across the country on broadcast television.

About one of every 10 presidential ads shown over the past year has taken a shot at Trump, a rate that has picked up this month as polls suggest the billionaire’s already low favorability ratings with the general public are deflating. And Democrats say they’re closely monitoring the Republican hit-pieces.

“It’s interesting to watch Republican super PACs as a kind of test run for the kinds of things we would do,” said David Brock, who steers several outside efforts to help Clinton.

Justin Barasky, spokesman for Priorities USA, the best-financed of the pro-Clinton groups, said Republicans are “saving us money by beating him up. It’s certainly not unhelpful.” Priorities is reserving \$70 million in commercial time for the general election starting late summer, and Barasky said the group anticipates it will begin spending against Trump even sooner.

For his part, Trump has said the attack ads aren’t working, pointing to his decisive victory in Florida in the face of a multimillion-dollar effort there to tear him down. Responding to the ad featuring his comments on women, Trump told CNN this week that “half of that was show business.”

Trump’s Republican attackers argue their efforts are worth it — even if they ultimately weaken the GOP nominee.

“I don’t see the ads as the risk; he is the risk,” said Tim Miller, a spokesman for Our Principles, which has spent more than \$16 million this year on TV, radio and digital ads, including the spot featuring women reading Trump comments. “That’s the point we’re trying to make. Don’t nominate someone this vulnerable to attacks from the Democratic Party.”

Our Principles embraces its role as potential spoiler: One online advertisement begins by warning viewers that what they are about to see would be repeated by Democrats if Trump is the GOP nominee.

A similar scenario played out four years ago with Mitt Romney.

At the start of the 2012 GOP primaries, more voters had a favorable than unfavorable view of Romney. During the primaries, though, the super PAC backing Newt Gingrich portrayed him as an unfeeling busi-

nessman.

By the time Romney earned the nomination in April, his numbers had flipped, with more voters viewing him negatively than positively. Over the summer, Priorities USA built on the Gingrich group's volleys to attack Romney in the general election.

Events could unfold similarly for Trump.

Ratings of Trump among the general public have been consistently negative, but recent surveys have suggested those views have grown stronger since the contentious primaries began.

An NBC News-Wall Street Journal poll conducted in March found a slight increase in negative ratings of Trump among registered voters since their previous survey in February, from 59 percent to 64 percent, with "very negative" ratings going from 49 percent to 54 percent.

Trump is also facing a heavier onslaught of attacks from his own party than Clinton, the Democratic front-runner. The AP found just one in 33 ads dings Clinton, most coming from Republican groups. Her primary opponent, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, never mentions her by name, but his ads take oblique jabs at her for accepting Wall Street money.

March has also seen a proliferation of anti-Trump advertising, according to AP's analysis of more than 250 political advertisements on broadcast TV and national cable over the past year. Ads were classified as opposing Trump or Clinton based on whether they attacked either candidate by name or by displaying his or her photo.

Conservative Solutions PAC, which backed Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, painted Trump as clownish and condescending. One ad from the group plays a clip of Trump saying, "I love the poorly educated."

Our Principles also uses Trump's words against him. One new commercial spins through news clips of violence at his rallies, and it plays a clip of the front-runner saying to a protester, "I'd like to punch him in the face."

NATO breeds frustration, but is vital tool in IS fight

LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's substantial support for NATO, both in money and military aid, has long been a source of frustration for U.S. leaders, and questioned by some as a throwback to the Cold War era.

Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump, in interviews this week, suggested the U.S. should scale back its role in the alliance nearly seven decades after it was launched in the aftermath of World War II. Complaining that America is spending too much money on NATO, Trump said that the financial burden has to change.

But as attacks by extremists ripped through Brussels this week, NATO rose again as a rallying point and key player in the expanding fight against Islamic State militants. The attacks underscored the need for the U.S. and its European allies to work together to counter threats ranging from groups targeting the West to the growing Russian aggression in the region.

Created in 1949, NATO has expanded from 16 members at the end of the Cold War to 28 today.

"Given this attack, I think you will see more willingness from NATO nations to join in the coalition in real and practical ways," said James Stravidis, the retired Navy admiral who served as NATO's top military commander in Europe from 2009 to 2013. As an example, he said Belgium may look to participate in coalition airstrikes against Islamic State in Iraq or Syria, and other nations may step up their contributions of military advisers or special operations forces.

Trump's criticism, however, echoed persistent complaints from some U.S. leaders, who balk at bearing as much as 22 percent of the NATO budget.

"NATO is costing us a fortune and yes, we're protecting Europe but we're spending a lot of money," Trump told The Washington Post this week. "I think the distribution of costs has to be changed. I think NATO as a concept is good, but it is not as good as it was when it first evolved."

And while he did not fully advocate pulling out of the alliance, he said the U.S. can't afford the high price anymore.

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The argument has dogged U.S. military and defense officials for years, as they pour millions of dollars of money, troops, equipment and other infrastructure into Europe. There are about 62,000 active duty U.S. forces permanently stationed in Europe, and several thousand more rotate in and out for short-term deployments for military exercises, training and other programs.

In recent years, the Pentagon reduced its permanent troop presence in Europe. But as the threats from Russia and the Islamic State grew, the military expanded its rotational deployments in a broad effort to reassure European allies and send a message to Russia that threats against NATO allies would not be tolerated.

The Pentagon has made it clear through the years that while the U.S. bears a heavy financial burden for NATO, America remains staunchly committed to its European allies, and is frequently dependent on them.

"This has been a debate in the alliance going back 50 years," said Stavridis. "The allies will never spend as much as we want them to. The trade-off is, yes, we spend more than they do, but they stand with us on these operations."

The U.S., he said, counted on NATO in Afghanistan, where allies provided thousands of troops throughout the warzone. And they have done the same in Libya, Iraq, the Balkans, and in the effort to contain piracy off Africa. The allies also make up the bulk of the nations involved in the airstrikes and training operations in Iraq and Syria.

"It's not perfect, but it's better than the alternative," said Stavridis, now dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He said it makes no sense to drop out of NATO. And, rather than yelling at the allies about what they won't do, he said the U.S. should help them figure out the ways they can help.

Evelyn Farkas, former U.S. deputy assistant defense secretary, said that faced with threats from Russia and the Islamic State, NATO is improving and doing more.

"They are our allies of first resort. And in terms of return on the dollar, it's a pretty good return," said Farkas, who is a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C. "Now I think they are much more motivated. I think they are trying to find the money."

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates delivered a brutal assessment nearly five years ago, warning that NATO faced a "dim if not dismal" future and that the U.S. would no longer carry the alliance as a charity case.

Since then, a number of European allies have moved to increase their spending on NATO, or pledged to do so in the coming years. And, faced with Russia's invasion of Ukraine's Crimea region and its support for separatists along the country's eastern border, NATO nations are participating more aggressively in their regional defense.

The alliance has fielded a NATO response force that can respond quickly to threats in the region, and recently announced plans to expand it. And just last month, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's secretary-general, announced that the alliance ordered three warships to the Aegean Sea to help end the deadly smuggling of asylum-seekers across the waters from Turkey to Greece.

Obama to mourn Argentina coup victims as US ponders its role

JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

PETER PRENGAMAN, Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Confronting a dark chapter in Latin America's history, President Barack Obama will pay tribute to victims of Argentina's "Dirty War," as he works to bring closure to questions about the U.S. role in one of the region's most repressive dictatorships.

This week marks the 40th anniversary of the 1976 coup that opened a period of military rule still haunting Argentina, where millions are spent each year prosecuting perpetrators and searching for remains of the thousands who died or disappeared. Closing out his South America trip, Obama planned to use his visit to Remembrance Park in Buenos Aires Thursday to lay the groundwork for the U.S. to come clean about any involvement.

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Though much remains unknown, rights groups believe U.S. backing for authoritarian regimes in Latin America extended to Argentina during the 1976 to 1983 period known as the "Dirty War." As controversy mounted ahead of Obama's visit, he announced the U.S. would declassify military and intelligence records shedding light on what happened, granting a request from new President Mauricio Macri's government.

Yet that step, while welcomed by Macri, hasn't quelled concerns. Even as Obama met with Macri on Wednesday, protesters gathered in Buenos Aires to protest his visit, while some prominent rights groups threatened to boycott Obama's visit to Remembrance Park.

"We are absolutely determined to do our part as Argentina continues to heal and move forward as one nation," Obama said. Of his pledge to release documents, Obama said: "I hope this gesture also helps to rebuild trust that may have been lost between our two countries."

For his part, Macri has been criticized for de-emphasizing the need for U.S. accountability as he pursues closer ties with Washington. Macri declined to say what he expects the records will reveal.

"Let's wait, study the documentation, and then we can do some comments on it," he said.

Some 13,000 people were killed or disappeared during the "Dirty War," Argentina's government estimates, though rights groups put it closer to 30,000.

At the sprawling park honoring victims, Obama was to lay a wreath and speak about the painful period. Then Obama and his family planned to fly to Bariloche, a picturesque city in southern Argentina, for a few hours of leisure before departing late Thursday for Washington.

Australia: Mozambique debris "highly likely" from Flight 370

KRISTEN GELINEAU, Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Two pieces of debris recently discovered along the coast of Mozambique are "highly likely" to have come from missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, Australian and Malaysian officials said Thursday.

An analysis of the parts by an international investigation team showed both pieces are consistent with panels from a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 aircraft, Transport Minister Darren Chester said in a statement.

"The analysis has concluded the debris is almost certainly from MH370," Chester said.

The dimensions, materials and construction of both parts conform to those of a 777, and the paint and stenciling on both parts match those used by Malaysia Airlines, Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said in a separate statement.

The discovery of the two pieces provides another piece of the puzzle into the plane's fate, and bolsters authorities' assertion that the plane went down somewhere in the Indian Ocean. But whether the debris can provide any clues into exactly what happened to the aircraft and why is uncertain.

Flight 370 disappeared on March 8, 2014, with 239 people on board and is believed to have crashed somewhere in a remote stretch of the southern Indian Ocean about 6,000 kilometers (3,700 miles) east of Mozambique. Authorities had predicted that any debris from the plane that isn't on the ocean floor would eventually be carried by currents to the east coast of Africa.

Until now, the only other confirmed piece of debris from the Boeing 777 was a wing part that washed ashore on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion last year.

Given the vast distances involved, the variability of winds and the time that has elapsed, it is impossible for experts to retrace the parts' path back to where they first entered the water. And chances the debris itself could offer any fresh clues into precisely where the plane crashed are slim.

"Close examination of the debris might possibly give some additional information relative to the search, but it's unlikely," said Dan O'Malley, spokesman for the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, which is leading the hunt for the plane off Australia's west coast.

In a bid to glean whatever information they could, investigators from Australia, Malaysia, and Boeing spent several days scrutinizing both pieces. The parts were rinsed, submerged and agitated in water to capture any loose marine life. The water was then sieved and any potential biological material that was captured will be examined to see if it can be identified.

Experts will also likely examine the debris to see if it can offer any hints about what happened on board,

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such as structural deformities that could show the angle at which the plane entered the ocean or markings that could indicate a mid-air explosion.

Still, that would take some luck as the wing part found on Reunion Island has not yet yielded any significant revelations into the plane's fate.

What investigators really need to find is the main underwater wreckage, which would hold the plane's coveted flight data recorders, or black boxes. The data recorder should reveal details related to the plane's controls, including whether aircraft systems that might have helped track the plane were deliberately turned off, as some investigators believe.

But prospects for finding the debris field are running thin: Crews have already covered more than 70 percent of the search zone, and expect to complete their sweep of the area by the end of June. No trace of the underwater wreckage has been found.

One of the parts in Mozambique was discovered by American lawyer and part-time adventurer Blaine Gibson, of Seattle. Gibson, who has been searching for Flight 370 over the last year, found the piece on a sandbank.

Gibson said he hopes the part can provide investigators some leads into where and how the plane crashed, but that he felt little joy over the news that his discovery almost certainly came from Flight 370.

"I do not use the word 'happy,'" Gibson said by telephone from Myanmar, where he was visiting friends. "Because 'happy' — that is how I would feel if I arrived on that sandbank and found all the passengers and crew alive, sipping on coconuts and grilling seafood and saying, 'What took you so long?' That would make me happy. However, we're after the truth — whatever it is."

Soon after Gibson's find was publicized earlier this month, a South African teenager realized a piece of debris he'd found on a beach during a family vacation in Mozambique might also be from the plane. Liam Lotter came upon the grey piece of debris while strolling on a beach in southern Mozambique in December and thought it might be from an aircraft.

His parents dismissed it as trash that may have come from a boat, but the teen insisted on bringing it back to South Africa to research it further. Once back at home, the piece ended up in storage alongside the family's fishing gear and was nearly forgotten. It was only when Lotter read about Gibson's find about 300 kilometers (186 miles) from where he had made his discovery that the family alerted authorities.

Earlier this week, an archaeologist walking along South Africa's southern coast found a piece of debris with part of an aircraft engine manufacturer's logo. Liow, Malaysia's transport minister, said there is a possibility it came from an inlet cowling of an aircraft engine. Authorities will examine the part to see if it, too, came from Flight 370.

Liow said Malaysia is awaiting approval from South African authorities to comb the area for more possible debris. If approved, a Malaysian team will be sent to conduct the search along the coast of South Africa and Mozambique, Liow said.

Asian markets fall for 2nd day after oil decline

JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets fell for a second day Thursday after declines in prices of oil and other commodities pulled Wall Street lower.

KEEPING SCORE: The Shanghai Composite Index lost 1.0 percent to 2,978.93 points and Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 1.1 percent to 20,383.63. Australia's S&P ASX 200 tumbled 1.0 percent to 5,151.30 and Seoul's Kospi shed 0.3 percent to 1,989.80. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 edged 0.1 percent lower to 16,992.27. Benchmarks in Taiwan, Singapore and Jakarta also declined while New Zealand advanced.

U.S. INTEREST RATES: Traders reconsidered risk levels after a member of the Federal Reserve's rate-setting team was quoted as saying it should consider raising interest rates at its next meeting. James Bullard, president of the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, pointed to a broadly unchanged economic outlook and said a case could be made for action next month if the next round of jobs data exceeds official targets.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "Clear messaging from U.S. Federal Reserve board members that U.S. interest rates

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will rise faster than current market expectations has forced the U.S. dollar higher. Shares fell in a re-pricing of interest rate risk," Michael McCarthy of CMC Markets said in a report. "Gold slumped and industrial commodities tanked after a higher than expected weekly build in oil stocks," said McCarthy.

OIL: Overnight, the U.S. Energy Information Administration reported that crude stockpiles rose 9.4 million barrels last week in further confirmation of substantial supplies. That helped to push benchmark U.S. crude below \$40.

WALL STREET: Falling commodity prices pulled U.S. stocks lower, nudging the Standard & Poor's 500 index into the red for the year. Energy and mining companies led the decline, while consumer staples and utilities stocks bucked the broader downward trend. The Dow Jones industrial average fell 79.98 points, or 0.5 percent, to 17,502.59. The S&P 500 lost 13.09 points, or 0.6 percent, to 2,036.71. The Nasdaq composite dropped 52.80 points, or 1.1 percent, to 4,768.86.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude shed 5 cents to \$39.74 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract plunged \$1.66 on Wednesday to close below \$40 at \$39.79. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 14 cents to \$40.61 in London. It lost \$1.32 in the previous session to \$40.47.

CURRENCY: The dollar gained to 112.74 yen from Wednesday's 112.44. The euro edged down to \$1.1175 from \$1.1181.

Today in History The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, March 24, the 84th day of 2016. There are 282 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 24, 2015, Germanwings Flight 9525, an Airbus A320, crashed into the French Alps, killing all 150 people on board; investigators said the jetliner was deliberately downed by the 27-year-old co-pilot, Andreas Lubitz, who had a history of depression and mental illness.

On this date:

In 1765, Britain enacted the Quartering Act, requiring American colonists to provide temporary housing to British soldiers.

In 1832, a mob in Hiram, Ohio, attacked, tarred and feathered Mormon leaders Joseph Smith Jr. and Sidney Rigdon.

In 1913, New York's Palace Theatre, the legendary home of vaudeville, opened on Broadway.

In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a bill granting future independence to the Philippines.

In 1944, in occupied Rome, the Nazis executed more than 300 civilians in reprisal for an attack by Italian partisans the day before that had killed 32 German soldiers.

In 1955, the Tennessee Williams play "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" opened on Broadway.

In 1958, rock-and-roll singer Elvis Presley was inducted into the Army in Memphis, Tennessee.

In 1975, Muhammad Ali defeated Chuck Wepner with a technical knockout in the 15th round of a fight in Richfield, Ohio. (Wepner, a journeyman known as the "Bayonne Bleeder," inspired Sylvester Stallone to make his "Rocky" films.)

In 1976, the president of Argentina, Isabel Peron, was deposed by her country's military. British war hero Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, 88, died in Alton, Hampshire, England.

In 1989, the supertanker Exxon Valdez (vahl-DEEZ') ran aground on a reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound and began leaking an estimated 11 million gallons of crude oil.

In 1995, after 20 years, British soldiers stopped routine patrols in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

In 1999, NATO launched airstrikes against Yugoslavia, marking the first time in its 50-year existence that it had ever attacked a sovereign country. Thirty-nine people were killed when fire erupted in the Mont Blanc tunnel in France and burned for two days.

Ten years ago: Thousands of people across the country protested legislation cracking down on immigrants who were in the U.S. illegally. In Selmer, Tennessee, Mary Winkler was charged with shooting to

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death her minister-husband, Matthew Winkler, in the parsonage of their church. (Mary Winkler, who said she'd been abused by her husband, was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and received a three-year prison sentence, but was granted probation for most of it.)

Five years ago: The Census Bureau released its first set of national-level findings from the 2010 count on race and migration, showing that Hispanics accounted for more than half of the U.S. population increase over the previous decade, exceeding estimates in most states as they crossed a new census milestone: 50 million, or 1 in 6 Americans. A private funeral was held at Forest Lawn Cemetery for Elizabeth Taylor (the service began 15 minutes behind schedule in accordance with the actress' wish to be late for her own funeral).

One year ago: President Barack Obama received Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at the White House, where Obama agreed to slow the U.S military pullout from Afghanistan at the request of its new government but insisted the delay would not jeopardize his commitment to end America's longest war before leaving office.

Today's Birthdays: Poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti is 97. Actor William Smith is 83. Fashion and costume designer Bob Mackie is 77. Actor R. Lee Ermey is 72. Movie director Curtis Hanson is 71. Former Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire is 69. Rock musician Lee Oskar is 68. Singer Nick Lowe is 67. Rock musician Dougie Thomson (Supertramp) is 65. Fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger is 65. Comedian Louie Anderson is 63. Actress Donna Pescow is 62. Actor Robert Carradine is 62. Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer is 60. Actress Kelly LeBrock is 56. Rhythm-and-blues DJ Rodney "Kool Kollie" Terry (Ghostown DJs) is 55. TV personality Star Jones is 54. Country-rock musician Patterson Hood (Drive-By Truckers) is 52. Actor Peter Jacobson is 51. Rock singer-musician Sharon Corr (The Corrs) is 46. Actress Lauren Bowles is 46. Actress Lara Flynn Boyle is 46. Rapper Maceo (AKA P.A. Pasemaster Mase) is 46. Actress Megyn Price is 45. Actor Jim Parsons is 43. Christian rock musician Chad Butler (Switchfoot) is 42. Actress Alyson Hannigan is 42. NFL quarterback Peyton Manning is 40. Actress Olivia Burnette is 39. Actress Jessica Chastain is 39. Actor Amir Arison is 38. Actress Lake Bell is 37. Rock musician Benj Gershman (O.A.R.) is 36. Neo-soul musician Jesse Phillips (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 36. Actress Keisha Castle-Hughes is 26.

Thought for Today: "Either you think, or else others have to think for you and take power from you, pervert and discipline your natural tastes, civilize and sterilize you." — F. Scott Fitzgerald, American author (1896-1940).