

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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

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

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

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

10:15am: Emmanuel Lutheran Worship

11:00am: United Methodist Church Worship

3:00pm: HBM Easter Worship at Golden Living Center

Monday, March 28

NO SCHOOL - EASTER BREAK

**Senior Menu:** Meatloaf, baked potato with sour

**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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**Sperry Stump Removal** Tyler: 605/216-8431  
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## SEAS Youth present Stations of the Cross

The youth of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton, presented the Stations of the Cross Wednesday evening at the church. Maggie Simon and Carol and Steve Smith directed the program. According to Maggie Simon, they started practicing February 17th and she said, "It was hard work, but a rewarding experience!"

Father Mike Kelly acknowledged that the event helped bring people of all faiths together to a singular event. It was, indeed, a moving experience as the cross hit the floor with a loud noise when Jesus was unable to carry it, the jeers from the people and authority of the roman soliders. Luke Thorson read the narraitve and Emily Locke read the prayer with each station. There was the singing of "Were you there when they crucified my Lord," by the youth and there was other music as well.

Pictured above are: on the cross: Korbin Blackmun, back row left to right: Hannah Lewandowski, Ashley Flieds, Landon Marzahn, Garret Schroeder, Joe Groeblinghoff, Shane Simon, Wyatt Locke, Luke Thorson, Sean Schuring. Middle row left to right: Erika Herr, AnnMarie Smith, Alexis Simon, Emily Thompson, Shyla Larson, Jackson Oliver. Front row: Nicole Marzahn, Emily Locke, Jessica Bjerke, Maggie Simon, Erin smith, Steve Smith.

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## Groton Prairie Mixed

**Team Standings:** Chipmunks 19, Coyotes 16, Shih Tzus 14, Jackelopes 14, Pocket Gophers 13, Foxes 8

**Men's High Games:** Brad Waage 255, 212, 197, Justin Kasperson 209, Steve Giedt 197

**Women's High Games:** Sue Stanley 176, 169, Angie Carlson 172, Lori Giedt 155, Darci Spanier 155

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 664, Justin Kasperson 569, Steve Giedt 507

**Women's High Series:** Sue Stanley 480, Lori Giedt 435, Darci Spanier 428

## 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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## Deadwood Hotel Occupancy Continues Down One Percent in February

DEADWOOD, S.D. - Deadwood Hotel occupancy rates fell slightly again in February when compared with February 2015 numbers, according to monthly data released today by Deadwood's City Finance Office. Hotels in Deadwood had an occupancy rate of 36.69 percent for February 2016, a .97% decrease when measured against February 2015's occupancy rate of 37.93 percent.

"We are disheartened to see that 2016 hotel occupancy rates continued their decrease of 1% for the year again in February," said Mike Rodman, executive director of the Deadwood Gaming Association. "February occupancy shows Deadwood hotels sold 31 less rooms this February when compared to February 2015, despite this year being leap year.

"Deadwood's February occupancy rate trended below the national February hotel occupancy decrease of .8%." Rodman added, "Additionally, Deadwood's overall occupancy was below the national occupancy rate. Nationally, hotels had an occupancy rate of 61.7% in February."

Deadwood's Revitalization Committee continues its mission for business diversification and growth through a series of action items. Construction continues to progress on the new Deadwood Welcome Center located in the lower Main Street parking lot, scheduled for opening in 2017.



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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, black, sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the right of 'GENERAL'. The text is 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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## Flu, Other Respiratory Viruses Still Circulating In SD

PIERRE, S.D. – The calendar might say spring but flu activity is still on the rise, both nationally and in South Dakota, and South Dakotans still need to protect themselves, a state health official said today.

“Flu activity is still widespread in South Dakota and has steadily increased over the last month. Other respiratory viruses like RSV and human metapneumovirus are circulating as well,” said Dr. Lon Kightlinger, state epidemiologist for the Department of Health. “We want to remind people that it’s still important for them to wash their hands often with soap and water, cover their coughs and sneezes and stay home when sick to prevent further spread.”

Kightlinger said South Dakota historically has one of the highest rates of flu vaccination in the nation, which is the best protection against the disease. He noted that this year’s vaccine is a good match with the flu viruses circulating. Even when the vaccine doesn’t prevent the flu, it can minimize the severity of illness.

So far this season there have been 383 laboratory-confirmed cases of flu, 69 hospitalizations and three deaths reported. Additionally, nearly nine percent of rapid tests have been positive for flu.

Find prevention information and updated flu surveillance numbers for South Dakota at the department’s website, <http://flu.sd.gov>.

Preventing and controlling infectious disease is one objective of the Department of Health’s 2015-2020 strategic plan, <http://doh.sd.gov/strategicplan>.

## Groton Area School District #06-6

School Board Meeting March 29, 2016 – 5:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

### AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Presentation – Educational Adequacy, Demographics, Values Definition – Fosters, Jacobs, and Johnson, Inc.

2. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.

3. Program Overview Presentations Grade 4 and 5...J. Guthmiller, S. Fjeldheim, J. Lone, S. Hendrickson  
Wellness and Health Services...B. Gustafson

4. School Board Committee Reports:

a. Building, Grounds, & Transportation: Lars Hanson, Merle Harder, Marty Weismantel

b. Personnel, Policy, & Curriculum: Dorene Nelson, Grant Rix

c. Negotiations: Kelly Kjelden, Steve Smith

5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent’s Report; (b) Principals’ Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve resignation from Greg Kjellsen, Head Boys Basketball Coach, for 2016-2017 school year.

2. Approve resignation from Robin Meier, Part-time Custodian.

3. Review South Dakota Department of Health Food Service Inspection of Elementary facility on 3/21/16.

4. Executive Session pursuant to SDCL 1-25-2(1) for personnel issues.

5. Issue 2016-17 teaching contract to Sarah Honerman with return date of April 8, 2016.

6. Other items, as may be appropriate or as deemed necessary.

ADJOURN

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## Today in Weather History

March 25, 2009: Rapid snowmelt and ice jamming caused the Elm River near Westport to rise -above flood stage on March 20th. The Elm River reached an all-time record level of 22.69 feet on March 25th almost 9 feet above flood stage. The previous record was 22.11 feet set on April 10th, 1969. The flood stage for the Elm River at Westport is 14 feet. The city of Westport was evacuated with the flood waters causing damage to many homes and roads in and around Westport. Also, many other roads and agricultural and pastureland along the river were flooded. The Elm River slowly receded and fell below flood stage on March 30th. The flood waters from the Elm River flowed south and into the northern portion of Moccasin Creek. Subsequently, the Moccasin Creek rose as the water flowed south into the city of Aberdeen. Flooding became a concern for Aberdeen and for areas along the creek north of Aberdeen. The Governor signed an emergency declaration which allowed the state to help with flood response efforts, including sending 50,000 sandbags to the area. Also, the National Guard was activated to move a variety of heavy equipment. Some sandbagging and a falling Elm River kept the Moccasin Creek from causing any significant flooding in and north of Aberdeen. Some township and county roads were flooded by the creek. Click [HERE](#) for pictures of the Elm and Maple Rivers.

1843 - A second great snowstorm hit the northeastern U.S. The storm produced snow from Maine all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Natchez MS received three inches of snow, and up to 15 inches buried eastern Tennessee. Coastal Maine received 204 inches of snow that winter. (David Ludlum)

1901: More than 20 people were killed by an estimated F3 tornado that moved across parts of Birmingham, Alabama. The twister cut a 15-mile path from the south side of the city to Avondale and Irondale.

1914 - Society Hill, SC, was buried under 18 inches of snow, establishing a state record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1934 - A spring storm produced 21 inches of snow at Amarillo TX in 24 hours. However, much of the snow melted as it fell, and as a result, the snow cover was never any deeper than 4.5 inches. (David Ludlum)

1935: Suffocating dust storms occurred frequently in southeast Colorado between the 12th and the 25th of the month. Six people died, and many livestock starved or suffocated. Up to six feet of dust covered the ground. Schools were closed, and many rural homes were deserted by tenants.

1948 - For the second time in less than a week airplanes were destroyed by a tornado at Tinker AFB in Oklahoma City OK. A March 20th tornado destroyed fifty planes at Tinker AFB causing more than ten million dollars damage, and the March 25th tornado destroyed another thirty-five planes causing six million dollars damage. The first tornado struck without warning, and caused more damage than any previous tornado in the state of Oklahoma. The second tornado was predicted by Fawbush and Miller of the United States Air Force, and their accurate tornado forecast ushered in the modern era of severe weather forecasting. (The Weather Channel) (Storm Data) (The National Severe Storms Forecast Center)

1975 - The town of Sandberg reported a wind gust to 101 mph, a record for the state of California. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Heavy rain left rivers and streams swollen in Kansas and Nebraska, causing considerable crop damage due to flooding of agricultural areas. The Saline River near Wilson Reservoir in central Kansas reached its highest level since 1951. March rainfall at Grand Island NE exceeded their previous record of 5.57 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - An early season heat wave prevailed in the southwestern U.S. The high of 93 degrees at Tucson, AZ, was a new record for March. Windy conditions prevailed across the central and eastern U.S. Winds gusted to 60 mph at Minneapolis MN, and reached 120 mph atop Rendezvous Peak WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1989 - A Pacific storm brought wet weather to much of the western third of the country, with heavy snow in some of the higher elevations. La Porte CA was drenched with 3.56 inches of rain in 24 hours. Up to 24 inches of snow blanketed the Sierra Nevada Range. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Temperatures dipped below zero in the Northern Rocky Mountain Region. Hardin MT was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 10 degrees below zero. Freezing drizzle was reported in the Southern Plains Region, with afternoon highs only in the 30s from the Southern High Plains to Missouri and Arkansas. (The National Weather Summary)



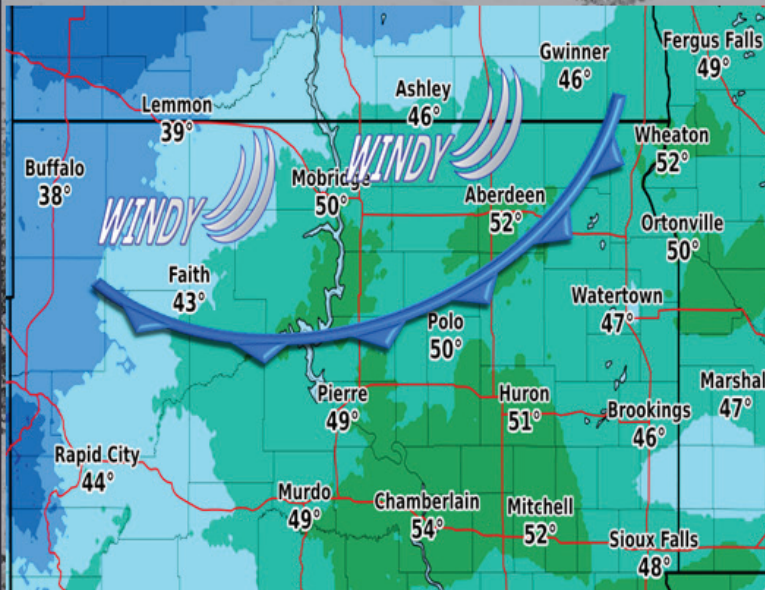
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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
20% → 50%	70%   70%	30%				
Slight Chance Rain then Chance Rain	Blustery. Rain/Snow Likely then Snow Likely	Chance Snow then Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny
High: 51 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 53 °F	Low: 28 °F	High: 59 °F



## Weak System Makes For A Messy End To The Work Week



Rain Becomes Widespread This Afternoon

Falling Temps & Change Over To Snow Late Afternoon/Evening

A Few Inches Possible By Saturday Morning



[weather.gov/Aberdeen](http://weather.gov/Aberdeen)



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

3/25/2016 5:04 AM

Published on: 03/25/2016 at 5:09AM

a weak system will bring rain to the region this afternoon - however as temperatures fall this afternoon and evening we can expect a changeover to snow. forecast confidence is not very high when it comes to snow amounts - but we could be looking at a few inches by early Saturday.

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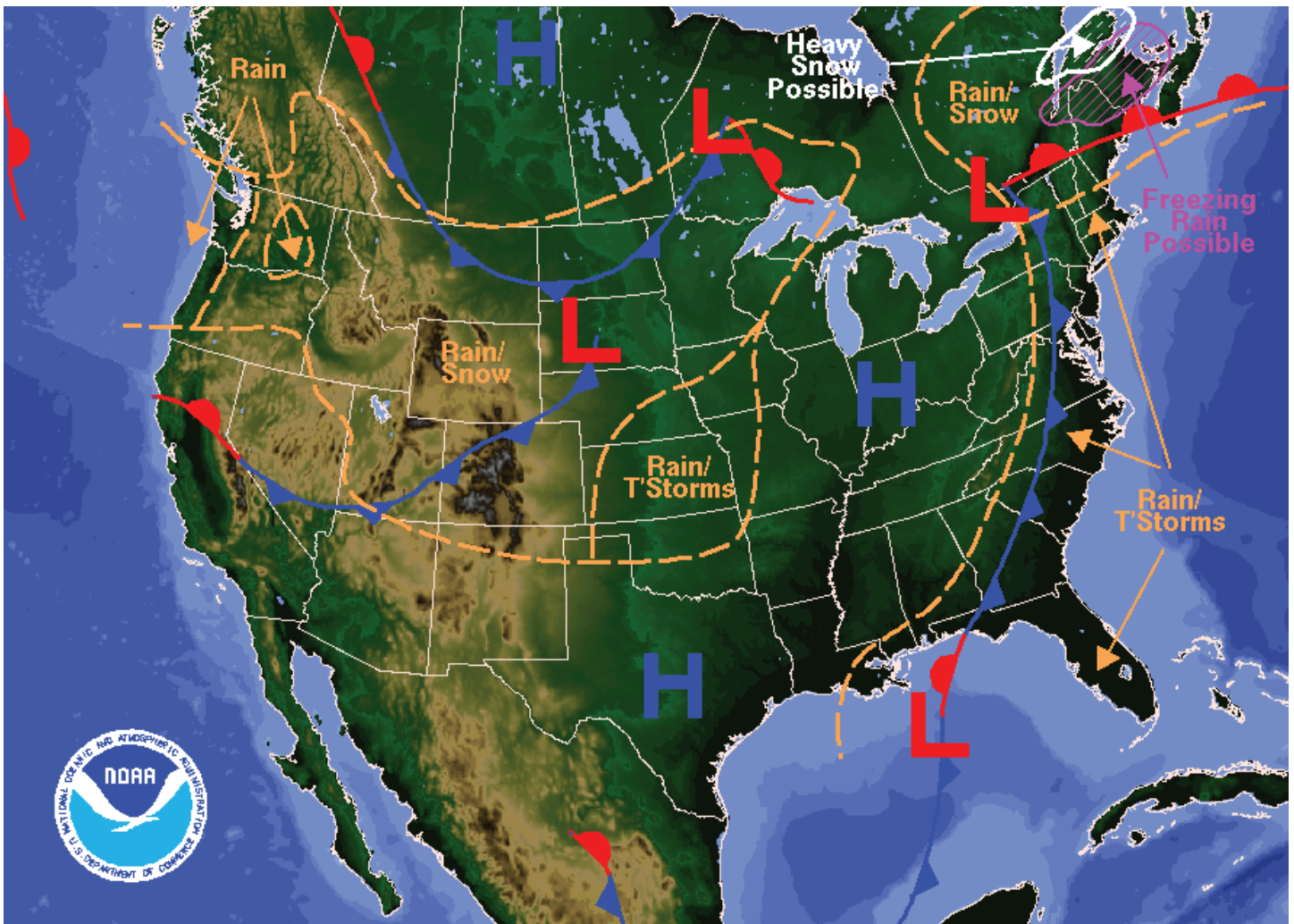
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## Yesterday's Weather

**High:** 51.3  
**Low:** 16.7  
**High Gust:** 20  
**Precip:** 0.00

## Today's Info

**Record High:** 81° in 1925  
**Record Low:** -8 in 1964  
**Average High:** 45°F  
**Average Low:** 24°F  
**Average Precip in March.:** 0.88  
**Precip to date in March.:** 0.35  
**Average Precip to date:** 1.90  
**Precip Year to Date:** 0.95  
**Sunset Tonight:** 7:53 p.m.  
**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 7:24 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Mar 25, 2016, issued 4:32 AM EDT  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



## THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

A teacher asked her class, "What is the shape of the world?" A little boy answered, "My father says it is terrible!"

How true! What is the reason? There is a rebellion against the Lord and the law of the land.

This revolt of evil is reported in the second Psalm "The kings of the earth plot against God." They wanted to break the Spiritual cords and be set free from God.

Today children have cast off their cords of restraint and no longer respect their parents. Citizens have cast off their cords of restraint and no longer respect their policemen. Our homes have been turned into a jungle of robbery and rape, mugging and murder.

We are witnessing an attempt of the godless to snap the cords of Divine control, but it will only bring down destruction on our nation.

Whatever you do, do not turn against the Lord. Live for and worship Him. If you do, it will not matter who is against you.

**Prayer:** Jesus, we need help here on earth. Some people demand that God be excluded from public places. Some have even tried to take "Christ" out of Christmas. Give me courage to be Your witness. Thank You, Lord, that I know I can always talk with You and that You are always with me. Amen.

**Scripture for Today:** Psalm 2:1-3 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."

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News from the  Associated Press

## Augustana men's hoops team in NCAA Div II championship game

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Augustana University men's basketball team will play for a national championship this weekend.

The Vikings beat Western Oregon 74-55 in the semifinals of the NCAA Division II tournament on Thursday to advance to Saturday's title game in Frisco, Texas.

Augustana will take on Lincoln Memorial, which beat West Liberty 103-102 in the semifinals.

## Severe weather sweeps through Midwest as Denver digs out

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Heavy snow, hail and strong winds moved across the Midwest on Thursday as states farther west began digging out of the spring blizzard that shut down the Denver airport, closed hundreds of miles of roads and left cars stranded along highways on the Plains.

The blizzard buried parts of Iowa, South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin as it crawled east, leaving up to a foot of snow in some areas and prompting officials to issue travel warnings and cancel school. In Michigan, power was knocked out because of snow, ice and wind from the early spring storm.

"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," National Weather Service meteorologist Kerry Hanko said.

Several homes were damaged or destroyed and injuries were reported in northwest Arkansas after storms swept through the area around midnight Wednesday. A tornado touched down on the southeast side of Lake Charles in Louisiana, damaging one home, the National Weather Service confirmed Thursday.

In northern Texas, authorities said a hailstorm broke windows in homes and vehicles, while wind gusts reaching 45 mph accompanied snowfall in South Dakota, according to the weather service.

In Minnesota, the Twin Cities' southern suburbs got around a foot of snow and several school districts canceled classes Thursday. Transportation officials in Iowa advised against travel in the northeast portion of the state because roads were covered with snow or blocked by disabled vehicles.

Parts of western Wisconsin saw as much as 13 inches of snow, while the southern third of the state shivered beneath freezing rain. State emergency management officials reported more than 100 crashes on interstates and state highways but no fatalities. Gov. Scott Walker called members of the National Guard to active duty to help local authorities.

Late Thursday, hundreds of homes in western Michigan were without power.

The foul weather was expected to cross through the state's northeastern Lower Peninsula and southeastern Upper Peninsula by midnight, said Mike Boguth, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Gaylord. Some spots could get up to a foot of snow before the storm's wrath ends, he said.

Meanwhile, the Detroit area got only rain.

Denver International Airport reopened Wednesday evening. But by then, most of the day's flights had already been canceled, leaving people to sleep on the floor there or return home and come back and wait to try to get on another flight during an already busy spring break travel week.

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 Wednesday only to learn her flight was delayed several times and 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.'"

Earlier, in Colorado and Wyoming, the wind and 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 before moving farther east. The snow shut down long stretches of Interstates 25, 70 and 80 in Wyoming and Colorado on Wednesday, but they were

back open Thursday, except for portions of I-70 in eastern Colorado.

Even politics had to take a snow day in Wyoming, as Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and former President Bill Clinton canceled campaign events in the state. The weather didn't stop Republican candidate Ted Cruz, who stuck to his plans to appear at two Wisconsin events.

## Short-handed Ohio St. women without Craft against Lady Vols

**ERIC OLSON, AP Sports Writer**

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — It's difficult to imagine Ohio State leaning on Kelsey Mitchell more than it already has this season.

Given the Buckeyes' health situation, they really could use another big game from the high-scoring guard against Tennessee.

Coach Kevin McGuff announced Thursday that starting guard Cait Craft won't play in the NCAA Sioux Falls Regional semifinal Friday night after breaking her left wrist in practice Tuesday. Craft's injury follows the sprained wrist that has limited guard Ameryst Alston for two weeks.

The third-seeded Buckeyes (26-7) have used a seven-player rotation most of the season, and McGuff said he wasn't certain how he would manage his lineup.

Alston, an All-Big Ten guard who averages 18.2 points, scored six in 21 minutes against West Virginia on Sunday. That was after she sat out the NCAA opener against Buffalo. Alston expects to be more effective against the seventh-seeded Lady Vols (21-13).

"I'm making progress every day and feeling a lot better," she said.

Mitchell, the nation's third-leading scorer at 26.3 points a game, is coming off a 45-point performance against West Virginia. It was the most points by a player in an NCAA Tournament game in five years and marked the third time in five games that Mitchell had scored at least 43.

The Lady Vols plan to throw different defensive looks at Mitchell and guard her "by committee," coach Holly Warlick said.

"If she gets close to the bench, I'm going to maybe trip her, I'm not sure," she said, smiling. "No, I watched her in high school. She's got a great gift. She knows the game. The ball is a part of her hand. I haven't seen too many, male or female, come around like her."

Mitchell is shooting 40.3 percent on 3-pointers and her 124 3s are second most in the country.

"We're probably going to start out in a zone defense because Kelsey Mitchell is their main threat," guard Andraya Carter said.

"Obviously she has a ton of offensive power. They have a dribble-drive. They have threats from other angles as well. We're going to play zone and really extend out on her. We really have to focus on shutting her down."

The 5-foot-8 Craft averages only 4.6 points, but her absence will be significant. She's perhaps the Buckeyes' most versatile player, capable of scoring from the perimeter and defending much bigger players.

Several other Ohio State players have been slowed by injuries. Mitchell said she's ready to pick up the slack.

"Make sure you focus on what the team needs," she said. "Try to move on, turn the page, try to just play hard, go out as hard as you can regardless of the situation."

Here are some things to know about Tennessee-Ohio State:

**PERIMETER PROBLEMS:** Tennessee's 25.3 percent shooting from 3-point range ranks 331st out of 344 teams. The Lady Vols caught a break when second-seeded Arizona State stuck with its usual man-to-man defense instead of going with a zone in the second round. Tennessee shot 52 percent overall in the 75-64 upset and only attempted four 3-pointers.

"You know, I hope Ohio State watched Arizona State and takes that lead. I hope they play us man," Warlick said.

**NEED FOR SPEED:** Ohio State loves to pressure opponents and play fast, and that won't change against a Tennessee team that has a size advantage. The Buckeyes are third in the nation in scoring at 86.8 points a game, and they converted West Virginia's 27 turnovers into 40 points Sunday.

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LADY VOLTS HEALTHY: Unlike Ohio State, Tennessee is as healthy as it's been all season. Jaime Nared missed the first nine games because of a broken hand, Diamond DeShields has been bothered by a nagging leg injury, and there was a run of ankle injuries.

"Right now we're healthy and we've got a strong bench," Warlick said. "That helps. It helps down the line if you want to press, do a lot of things. It has helped us the last month."

MOVING ON? A win would send Ohio State to the Elite Eight for the first time since 1993. Tennessee is trying to make a regional final for the fifth time in six years.

PROGRAM PRESSURE: Making the Sweet 16 is a cause for celebration at most schools. At Tennessee, the achievement barely takes the edge off what was the worst regular season in a program whose history includes eight national titles and 18 Final Four appearances.

"When you decide to come to the University of Tennessee, you know the expectations," Bashaara Graves said. "Our goal is always to get to a Final Four or win a national championship. You know that coming in. If this is where you want to go, this is our goal. That pressure is going to be on you."

## Powerful storm exits state, but more snow, rain in forecast

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A spring snowstorm has moved out of South Dakota, but more snow and rain are in the forecast.

A foot of snow fell in some parts of the region Wednesday, with lesser but still significant amounts in other areas. Numerous schools delayed the start of classes on Thursday, and the state Transportation Department temporarily closed Interstate 29 between the Vermillion exit and Sioux City, Iowa.

Temperatures in southeast South Dakota reached the low 40s Thursday afternoon, but temperatures are expected to drop during the weekend.

The National Weather Service in Sioux Falls says a cold front will move through the area bringing a mix of rain and snow starting Friday evening and into Saturday morning. Temperatures are expected to reach the upper 50s by Tuesday.

## Syracuse's press will be challenge for South Carolina women

ERIC OLSON, AP Sports Writer

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Carolina's game plan against Syracuse basically comes down to five words.

Take care of the ball.

The top-seeded Gamecocks (33-1) will be facing a pressure defense the likes of which they haven't seen this season in the Sioux Falls Regional semifinal on Friday night. The fourth-seeded Orange (27-7) have forced 24.5 turnovers a game, the most of any team in the nation, and a total of 46 in their wins over Army and Albany in the women's NCAA Tournament.

"For us, it's handling their press, making sure we're not turning it over as much as they turn people over," Gamecocks coach Dawn Staley said Thursday. "We've got to get the ball inside no matter what they're in."

South Carolina, averaging 14.4 turnovers, will rely on senior guards Tiffany Mitchell and Khadijah Sessions to break the press and feed Southeastern Conference player of the year A'ja Wilson and Alaina Coates. The 6-foot-5 Wilson and 6-4 Coates have combined for 28 points and 19 rebounds a game this season.

South Carolina knocked Syracuse out of the tournament in the second round last year, winning 97-68. The teams also played earlier last season, with the Gamecocks winning 67-63.

This is the highest-stakes meeting, with Syracuse in the Sweet 16 for the first time and South Carolina looking almost unstoppable so far in its bid for a second straight trip to the Final Four.

"Any time you can play an opponent twice and they're not in your conference, you can build some familiarity, kind of know what to expect," Syracuse's Alexis Peterson said.

The Orange's Briana Day said, "I'm thinking third time's the charm."

Turnovers were no issue for South Carolina in the two games last year. The Gamecocks committed just five in the first meeting and 12 in the second.

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"I definitely feel like they've upped their level of aggression, especially in their press," Coates said. "Last year, just from watching film to how they are now, they've definitely caused issues for other teams with getting the ball down the floor."

Things to know as Syracuse and South Carolina prepare for their third meeting in 17 months:

**FUELING THE FIRE:** Some of the Gamecock faithful bristled after reading Day's remark about South Carolina in the Syracuse Post-Standard. The Orange's junior center told the newspaper Sunday the Gamecocks "are pretty good. But I don't think there's much of a challenge."

Asked if South Carolina still lacks the respect of UConn or Notre Dame, Wilson said, "I'm not sure. I just feel like it kind of is what it is. People are going to say things. People will think the way they think... We can't really dictate what people say. We have to stay true to ourselves. We're just going to go out there and play."

Day said Thursday that "things get misconstrued. They're a very good team, and so are we. I'm not saying that they're terrible... We know who South Carolina is. Everyone knows who South Carolina is."

**REISS-STALEY REUNION:** Old Virginia teammates and roommates Tammi Reiss and Staley will be on opposite benches, with Reiss hired as a Syracuse assistant last June. The two played on three Cavalier teams that reached the Final Four in the early 1990s.

"We made incredible memories together," Staley said. "Obviously, we put ourselves in a position to make another memory. I just hope it's a good memory for us."

**HOT STREAKS:** Syracuse has won 13 of its last 14 games, with its only loss coming to Notre Dame in the ACC Tournament on March 6. The Gamecocks have won 11 in a row since its only loss of the season, against UConn on Feb. 8.

**SIZE ADVANTAGE:** Syracuse counters South Carolina's size advantage with dynamic guards in Alexis Peterson, Brianna Butler and Brittney Sykes. Peterson averages 15.4 points and is a big playmaker, Butler is a 3-point sharpshooter and Sykes, like the other two, has more than 1,000 career points.

"We can't allow them to get easy buckets," Staley said. "Everything they do must come under duress."

**TOSSING AND TURNING:** Syracuse coach Quentin Hillsman said he was so confident before his team played Albany in the second round that he went to bed at 10:30 the night before. South Carolina, however, is keeping him up at night. "Haven't slept yet," he said.

## **AG Jackley: Deputy justified in Rapid City fatal shooting**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley says a sheriff's deputy was justified when he shot and killed a motorist during a struggle after a traffic stop in Rapid City.

Jackley says Pennington County deputy Robert Schoeberl was "justified in firing his weapon and using lethal force" against 35-year-old Abraham Mitchell Fryer of Sturgis.

The shooting occurred on Feb. 26. Authorities said a struggle ensued minutes into the traffic stop, and that the deputy fired his duty weapon multiple times.

The shooting investigation was done by the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation.

## **Buffer bill: What to know as Daugaard mulls whether to sign**

**JAMES NORD, Associated Press**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard is weighing whether to sign a bill that would offer farmers tax breaks for taking cropland along waterways out of production and putting in buffer strips of vegetation.

The Republican governor has until Saturday to decide how to act on the bill. State lawmakers will return to Pierre on Tuesday to consider any vetoes that Daugaard may issue.

Here's a look at what people are saying about the measure:

### **HOW STUFF WORKS**

The bill would allow farmland along a lake, river or stream that has been turned into a 50-foot buffer strip of vegetation to be classified as non-cropland for property tax purposes, which would mean a lower

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tax burden for landowners. The measure is voluntary, but anyone who seeks a change and misrepresents the land's use would be subject to a monetary penalty.

## WHY DO PEOPLE WANT IT?

The answer is simple: to improve water quality. Buffers help trap fertilizers, pesticides and sediments before they reach the water. If a farmer is growing crops right up to the edge of a waterway uses manure or commercial fertilizer and it rains, there isn't much stopping runoff from hitting the water, said Barry Berg, with the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts.

Berg said the measure would be an attractive tool to use with farmers and would complement existing conservation programs. "I really believe that this bill would help out," he said.

## SOME WORRIED ABOUT THE UNKNOWN

The governor's administration expressed concerns during the legislative session about the potential tax implications of the bill, but a spokeswoman for Daugaard would only say that his position will be announced when he takes action on the bill.

The South Dakota Corn Growers Association opposed the measure because it would create a tax shift, and the full fiscal impact is unknown, said Teddi Mueller, legislative and industry affairs director. The group supports conservation efforts, Mueller said, but she noted that there are other programs available to farmers.

"It's going to be bigger than what we think," she said.

## POLITICS

If Daugaard decides to reject the buffer bill, supporters still have a shot at getting it into law when legislators head to the Capitol for veto day. During its trip through the Legislature, the measure passed unanimously through the Senate and secured more than the two-thirds margin in the House required to override a veto.

"You've got to be the optimist if you're going to Pierre," said Democratic House leader Spencer Hawley, a main sponsor of the bill.

## NEIGHBOR TO THE EAST

Officials in Minnesota are working to implement the state's buffer strip law, which will require farmers to leave vegetation buffers of up to 50 feet along streams and ditches. A state department will produce final maps by July of public waters and ditch systems that will require buffers.

Minnesota's minimums previously called for filter strips of 16.5 feet along public drainage ditches and 50 feet along shorelines on designated waters. Enforcement was left up to counties, and was sporadic at best.

## **Shots fired at home, vehicle near Hartford; no one hurt**

HARTFORD, S.D. (AP) — The Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office is investigating a report of shots fired at a home and vehicle north of Hartford.

Deputies who responded Wednesday afternoon discovered the home and vehicle had been hit by what appeared to be shotgun pellets. No injuries were reported.

The person who reported the incident said the shots came from a pickup truck on a nearby roadway.

## **Powerball lottery ticket sold in Custer worth \$50,000**

CUSTER, S.D. (AP) — A Powerball ticket worth \$50,000 was sold in Custer.

South Dakota lottery officials say the ticket matched four of five white ball numbers and the Powerball to win the game's third prize in Wednesday's drawing. The odds of winning it are 1 in about 913,000.

The winner has about six months to claim the prize.

Powerball is played in 44 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The jackpot sits at \$101 million for Saturday's drawing.



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## **Authorities ID Milbank man killed in Grant County crash**

MILBANK, S.D. (AP) — The Highway Patrol has identified a Milbank man who died in a sport utility vehicle crash in Grant County.

Authorities say 23-year-old Jacob McCray lost control of the SUV on a road northwest of Milbank, and the vehicle went in the ditch and rolled about 2:15 p.m. Tuesday.

McCray was thrown from the SUV and died at the scene. He was alone in the vehicle.

## **Steve Martin, Edie Brickell perform at Broadway opening**

**JOHN CARUCCI, Associated Press**

NEW YORK (AP) — Broadway fans were treated to a surprise performance by Steve Martin and Edie Brickell at the end of their new musical, "Bright Star."

The cast had taken their bows to a standing ovation when part of the set was rotated to reveal Martin and Brickell to thunderous applause at the show's opening Thursday night at the Cort Theater. After they took their bows, director Walter Bobbie walked onstage and handed Martin a banjo. After Martin strapped it on, he launched into "Sun's Gonna Shine," with Brickell and the show's star, Carmen Cusack, trading verses as the audience clapped along.

Martin and Brickell have recorded two albums together, including the Grammy-winning "Love Has Come for You," but "Bright Star" is their first musical. The idea was sparked by the common love they share for musical theater. Martin joked about their tastes at the show's after-party.

"For Edie, it was 'The Sound of Music,' and for me it was 'Music Man' and 'West Side Story.' I have better taste," he said.

Martin talked about how musical theater influenced him and why he wanted to write "Bright Star" with Brickell.

"When you think of 'Carousel' — with songs like 'My Boy Bill,' or 'Soliloquy' as it's called — or 'Oklahoma,' I grew up on those songs, and I thought everything was here," Martin said raising his hand above his head. "And the rest of the music world was down here. They were so emotive and expressive, and we had a longing to give it a shot."

The pair complement one another nicely, but at this point, Martin feels like he's the only one using his words.

"I'm talking a lot, and you're nodding," he says to the soft-spoken Brickell, who tells him: "But I agree with you."

Then she adds: "We wanted to honor the musicals we know and love, and try to write on in the tradition that we love."

## **US official says 2 Americans perished in Brussels attacks**

**MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer**

BRUSSELS (AP) — At least two American citizens have been confirmed killed in this week's attacks in Brussels, a U.S. official said Friday, as Secretary of State John Kerry is visiting the city to express his condolences to the Belgian people.

Speaking after meeting with Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel, Kerry said the "United States is praying and grieving with you for the loved ones of those cruelly taken from us, including Americans, and for the many who were injured in these despicable attacks."

He did not give a specific number but a senior official said the families of two Americans had been informed of their deaths in Tuesday's attacks. The official, who was not authorized to speak to the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, did not have further details.

"The United States stands firmly with Belgium and with the nations of Europe in the face of this tragedy," Kerry said, adding that the world will not relent in its fight against the Islamic State group, which has claimed the attacks.

"We - all of us representing countless nationalities - have a message for those who inspired or carried

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out the attacks here or in Paris, or Ankara, or Tunis, or San Bernardino, or elsewhere: We will not be intimidated," he said. "We will not be deterred. We will come back with greater resolve - with greater strength - and we will not rest until we have eliminated your nihilistic beliefs and cowardice from the face of the Earth."

Talking to reporters, Kerry said the reason the Islamic State group "is resorting to actions outside the Middle East is that its fantasy of a caliphate is collapsing before their eyes; it's territory is shrinking. Its leaders are decimated. Its revenue sources are dwindling, and its fighters are fleeing.

Michel thanked Kerry for his visit, calling it a powerful message of solidarity. "It is very important for us today to receive your support," he said. He offered condolences for the American victims and vowed to step up counter-terrorism cooperation with the U.S. and others.

Kerry said he offered the prayers of the American people for "these people who have suffered inconceivable losses."

"Those whose lives were torn apart this week were not combatants in any conflict," the secretary said.

Kerry landed earlier Friday at the still-closed Brussels airport for a brief, hastily scheduled stop from Moscow, where he said the attacks underscored the urgency of unity in the fight against the Islamic State group. The group has claimed responsibility for Tuesday's bombings at the airport departure terminal and a downtown Metro stop that killed 31 people and wounded 270.

The Belgian Embassy, not long after Kerry's arrival, sent a Twitter message calling his stop here an example of "the solidarity of the American people which goes right to our heart."

## Filipino nailed to cross prays for Belgium, Philippines

**RENE CASIBANG, Associated Press**

SAN PEDRO CUTUD, Philippines (AP) — A Filipino devotee was nailed to a cross for the 30th time in an annual Good Friday ritual, which he dedicated to peace in Belgium and other countries targeted by Islamic extremists.

Ruben Enaje and 14 other men, some screaming in pain, were nailed to wooden crosses by actors dressed as Roman centurions in San Pedro Cutud and two other rice farming villages in Pampanga province north of Manila, according to organizers.

Thousands of foreign and local tourists snapped pictures of the devotees, who re-enacted Jesus Christ's suffering and death in scorching heat. Other devotees flogged their own bloodied backs with whips while walking barefoot around the dusty villages.

The gory spectacle reflects the Philippines' unique brand of Catholicism, which merges church traditions with folk superstitions. Many of the mostly impoverished penitents undergo the ritual to atone for sins, pray for the sick or for a better life, and to give thanks for what they believe were God-given miracles.

Enaje, a 55-year-old sign painter, began the annual ordeal after he fell from a three-story building in 1985 and survived nearly unscathed.

Asked what he was praying for this year, Enaje said he was saddened by the recent bombings at the Brussels airport and subway station and other attacks in the Middle East that hurt innocent people.

"What are they fighting for?" Enaje asked, referring to Islamic State group militants who have claimed responsibility for the Brussels attacks. "Even the innocent are not spared. They want to lord over the world but that can't be allowed to happen."

He expressed concern over reports that Islamic State extremists may have already influenced Muslim militants in the southern Philippines.

The Lenten rituals are frowned upon by church leaders in the Philippines, Asia's largest Roman Catholic nation, especially if the religious spectacle is used to boost tourism. The event, however, has persisted and has become an awaited tourist attraction in San Pedro Cutud village, about 70 kilometers (45 miles) north of Manila.

After 30 years, Enaje said he has thought of ending his involvement in the crucifixions in the next few years, although he remains physically fit to endure the experience, which has deepened his faith.

The intensity of the pain, he said, has never changed in each of the year that the four-inch stainless

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steel nails were hammered through the same spot in his palm and feet. When the cross is hoisted up, the movement adds to the suffering, he said.

"The only thing in my mind is that God went through worse," Enaje said.

## Lawyer for Russian officer in Ukraine found dead

MOSCOW (AP) — A lawyer for one of two Russian servicemen on trial in Ukraine has been found shot to death, officials said on Friday.

Yuri Grabovsky was representing Alexander Alexandrov, who was captured along with another Russian last year in rebel-held eastern Ukraine. The two men admitted they were Russian officers but Moscow said they had resigned from active duty. Russia has repeatedly denied it was supplying the separatists with equipment or recruits.

The Ukrainian National Bar Association said in a statement Friday that Grabovsky, who was declared missing earlier this month, was found dead. The group said suspects have been detained.

Hearings in the trial of the two Russians were adjourned in early March when Grabovsky did not show up in court

Anatoly Matios, chief military prosecutor, told reporters on Friday that Grabovsky's body with a gunshot wound was found in the early hours on Friday buried south of the capital Kiev after a suspect had told prosecutors about the location. Another suspect in the killing was detained later, he said.

The prosecutor would not immediately identify the motive for the killing or reveal the names of the suspects.

## 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. MAN DETAINED IN PARIS SUBURB RAID WANTED SINCE JANUARY

Officials say Reda Kriket, 34, has connections to the suspected ringleader of the Paris attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud.

#### 2. UN: 'NO DRAMA, NO WALKOUTS,' BUT NO PROGRESS IN SYRIA PEACE TALKS

While a shaky truce continues to hold in the war-torn country, there is also no visible progress on a lasting settlement.

#### 3. WHY SEATTLE IS SANDERS COUNTRY

The presidential candidate's brand of democratic socialism may take some explaining in some parts of the United States, but not in this Pacific Northwest city.

#### 4. BLASPHEMY CASES ON THE RISE IN EGYPT

Egyptian Christian teens satirizing the Islamic State group are convicted and given prison sentences for mocking Islam.

#### 5. PROSPECTS OF TALIBAN PEACE TALKS DIM AS FRONT LINES SHIFT

Recent battlefield gains by insurgents and a Kabul government suspicious of Pakistan's intentions in facilitating such negotiations are creating pessimism.

#### 6. 'HELICOPTER MONEY' MAY BOOST ECONOMY

The term was coined by economists who theorize that if global central banks just print money and hand it to people it could get the economy going.

#### 7. WHAT IS HOLDING UP FLINT WATER DEAL

A bipartisan congressional effort to solve the water crisis in in this Michigan city is being stalled by the objections of a single senator from Utah.

#### 8. SEEING HOLES IN EFFORT TO BRIDGE 'WORD GAP'

It remains unclear if a Rhode Island city's high-tech experiment to improve the vocabularies of poor children is a national model or just an interesting concept.

#### 9. 'THE WALTONS' CREATOR DIES

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Earl Hamner Jr., who drew upon his Depression-era upbringing in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia to create one of TV's most beloved family shows, is dead at 92.

10. TOP SEEDS WIN AT NAAs

No. 1 seeds Oregon and Kansas and second-seeded Oklahoma and Villanova all advance to the Elite Eight.

## Fighting against IS rages in central Syrian town of Palmyra

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Syrian state media and opposition activists say heavy fighting is underway between government troops and Islamic State militants on the outskirts of Palmyra, with the two sides exchanging artillery and gunfire.

The historic town in central Syria has been controlled by the extremist Islamic State group since May. The militants have destroyed and blown up some of its most famous archaeological relics. The Syrian army, backed by Russian airstrikes, is pushing to recapture the town.

An unnamed military official cited by state-run news agency SANA said Friday that troops seized the so-called SyriaTel Hill near the Palmyra Citadel. Troops have also captured several hills around the town.

They briefly entered the town the previous day but were pushed back. Fighting is now taking place around the entrances of the town.

## Anti-discrimination law elicits rebukes from businesses

**EMERY P. DALESIO, Associated Press**

**GARY D. ROBERTSON, Associated Press**

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Corporations expressed disappointment and the NCAA vowed to monitor what North Carolina does next now that the state has banned any local government measures protecting people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

American Airlines, which operates its second-largest hub in Charlotte; IBM and Biogen, which have facilities in the state's Research Triangle; and payments processor PayPal, which had announced plans to hire 400 people in Charlotte only last week, were among major employers condemning the new law Thursday.

The legislature called a special session Wednesday to void a Charlotte ordinance that would have enabled transgender people to legally use restrooms aligned with their gender identity, and would have provided broad protections against discrimination in public accommodations in the state's largest city.

The new law now prevents the state's cities and counties from passing their own anti-discrimination rules, and instead imposes a statewide standard that leaves out sexual orientation and gender identity.

North Carolina is the first state to require public school and university students to use only those bathrooms that match their birth certificates, according to the National Conference on State Legislatures.

The state law "is a clear step backwards. Sad day," tweeted Jim Whitehurst, chief executive of Raleigh-based open-source software company Red Hat.

The economic impact will take time to quantify. There were no immediate threats to withdraw business from the state, which has seen booming growth and an influx of "knowledge workers" in Charlotte and Raleigh, even as rural towns lag behind economically.

Other businesses have voiced support for the measure. Republican Gov. Pat McCrory signed into law late Wednesday, a spokesman for his re-election campaign said. Spokesman Ricky Diaz did not respond when asked which businesses backed the governor's decision.

About 200 protesters blocked a downtown Raleigh street in front of the state's Executive Mansion Thursday evening. Police said in a statement that five people were arrested after they sat down in the street and refused orders to disperse.

McCrory, a former Charlotte mayor, stays in the mansion while in the state capital but was not there at the time of the protest, spokesman Josh Ellis said.

Demonstrators like Alex Berkman complained that lawmakers acted quickly before Charlotte's example could be adopted by other communities.

"The way that these things work is that one place will pass a law and then another place will pass a law and then we start to build momentum," said Berkman, 29, of Raleigh.

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Democrats warned that North Carolina risks losing billions in federal education dollars by conflicting with Title IX anti-discrimination regulations that apply in public schools. Republican lawmakers downplayed the threat Wednesday.

The NCAA, which is scheduled to hold men's basketball tournament games in Greensboro in 2017 and Charlotte in 2018, said it takes diversity into account when it chooses its event sites. The National Basketball Association said it is too early to know if the new law will affect Charlotte hosting the league's all-star game in 2017.

Supporters say the new law protects all people from having to share bathrooms with people who make them feel unsafe. Advocates for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender rights say it demonizes them with bogus claims about bathroom risks.

"The disappointment, anger and fear many are feeling today is beyond words. What's worse is this will likely not be our last defeat," Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin wrote in an online column Thursday.

Bathroom use has proved to be a potent wedge issue across the country since Houston's anti-discrimination law was overwhelmingly voted down in a referendum last year, but LGBT advocates have had some victories, too. South Dakota's legislature failed to override Gov. Dennis Daugaard's veto of a bill requiring students to use bathrooms corresponding to their birth gender, and a similar bill in Tennessee bill died Tuesday.

The LGBT movement won't likely table the bathroom issue to focus on other areas of discrimination, said Katherine Franke, a Columbia university law professor and director of the school's Gender and Sexuality Law center.

"The issues of discrimination and violence against transgender people in the context of bathrooms are so overwhelming, that to them it is a cutting-edge problem," she said. "Overwhelmingly, it's transgender people who are the victims of violence in the bathroom setting. ... This is a basic human need."

Instead, advocates will likely try to win more acceptance from society about transgender people and their particular challenges, said Dru Levasseur, director of Transgender Rights Project at the civil rights group Lambda Legal. "The LGBT movement is right now focusing its efforts on educating people about who transgender people are, and that is the antidote to this battle," Levasseur said.

The issue won't likely go away as North Carolina's Democratic Attorney General, Roy Cooper, tries to unseat McCrory in November. Republicans see the law as protecting business owners who have a religious objection to gays and lesbians, and political differences with liberal local governments. Democrats see the law as proof that the GOP won't protect minorities.

But corporate America could tip the scale, said Michael Bitzer, political science professor at Catawba College in Salisbury, northeast of Charlotte.

"If businesses are starting to look at North Carolina and says this is not the environment we want to be in, that could have some blowback, and McCrory would be in the bull's-eye," Bitzer said.

Thursday evening, state and national gay-rights advocates joined about 400 people at a Raleigh church to vow to fight on when the General Assembly reconvenes next month and in November at the ballot box to elect Cooper and throw out legislators who voted for the law.

There also will be legal challenges. "We are going to court as soon as possible," said Sarah Preston with the American Civil Liberties Union in North Carolina.

## Blasphemy cases rise in Egypt and Christians bear the brunt

**MAGGIE MICHAEL, Associated Press**

NASSARIYA, Egypt (AP) — In the video, the Egyptian Christian teens laugh playfully as a couple of them kneel down, imitating Muslim prayers, then another slides his hand under one boy's neck, imitating the trademark beheadings of the Islamic State group.

The boys were playing around, satirizing the extremist group, and their school supervisor just happened to be videoing them, their defenders say. The result has been catastrophic: they were sentenced to prison

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under Egypt's blasphemy laws — they were mocking Muslim prayers, prosecutors said — and have fled into hiding, leaving behind shattered families.

"My son was sentenced to five years for a laugh," Iman Aziz, weeping, said in the teens' home village of Nassariya in southern Egypt. Her son, Muller Atef, was seen in the 32-second video laughing but not joining in the "prayers."

The verdict last month points to an irony in Egypt. Two years ago, the military ousted the Muslim Brotherhood from power, and since then the government has been waging a harsh crackdown on Islamists.

Yet in the past three years, prosecutions on charges of insulting Islam have risen dramatically. From three such cases in 2011, there were 21 cases in the courts in 2015, around half targeting Christians, according to Ishaq Ibrahim, a researcher with the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.

Nine of the 2015 cases led to convictions and prison sentences, while the rest are still in the courts.

Part of the rise is connected to the spread of social media over recent years, Ibrahim said, with people feeling freer to express controversial opinions online. Many of the cases have originated in comments or videos posted on the Internet that Muslims raised court cases over. One Christian was even sentenced to six years in prison in 2014 for insulting religion after his Muslim neighbors discovered he had "liked" a Facebook page supporting Muslims who convert to Christianity.

But also, prosecutors and judges have aggressively pursued the cases, aiming to show that the state is still "protecting Islam" even as it cracks down on Islamists. It isn't necessary a government policy — "I still don't think this is a systematic campaign, but there is a pattern," Ibrahim said. But it is one factor in the "overall shrinking of freedom of expression and thought" in Egypt, he said.

The cases have fallen predominantly on members of Egypt's Coptic Christian minority, who make up around 10 percent of the country's 90 million people. Christians have been among the strongest supporters of President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, who as army chief organized the 2013 ouster of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi and the Brotherhood. When el-Sissi attended Copts' Christmas Mass in Cairo's main cathedral — the first Egyptian president to do so — he was given a rock-star greeting by thousands of cheering worshippers.

But in some ways, little has changed under el-Sissi for Christians, who long complained of discrimination.

Large-scale attacks on churches that flared in revenge for Morsi's ouster have waned. But on a local level, frictions continue to erupt between Christians and Muslims in villages and small towns. Attempts to build or renovate churches, for example, are still often met by protests or violence by local Muslims, said Ibrahim.

In disputes, authorities tend to side with Muslims, said Nader Shukry, a Copts' rights advocate. Christians blamed for actions deemed insulting to Muslims often face eviction from their hometown or swift trials with heavy sentences. But if Christians are victims of actions by Muslims, police officers bring the two sides in to informal reconciliation meetings in which the Christians are pressured into dropping any legal action, Shukry said.

Under el-Sissi, it is "the same game," Shukry said. "The president's talk is something and what is happening on the ground is something else."

Also problematic are the laws against insulting religion. A 1982 law sets a punishment of up to five years in prison and fines for anyone who "exploits religion" or promotes "extremist thought" to "spark sedition, insult or blaspheme the heavenly religions ... or harm the national unity." Any Muslim can raise a complaint over a perceived insult to religion, giving a free hand for lawsuits.

"The worst is that it is vague and has no ceiling," said Maher Naguib, the teens' lawyer. "If you send one case to two judges, judges would differ on defining what is an insult."

Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's pre-eminent institution, which el-Sissi has empowered to lead his "revolution" against extremist, backs the blasphemy law.

In February, an online activist Mustafa Abdel-Nabi was sentenced to three years in absentia for postings about atheism on his Facebook page. A writer, Fatma Naoot, was sentenced to three years in prison in January over Facebook postings criticizing the slaughter of animals for Muslim holidays. A prominent TV host, Islam Behery, received a one-year prison sentence after calling for passages he said supported terrorism to be removed from books of Islamic religious interpretation.

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In the case of the teens, their video didn't even go on line. The teens didn't distribute the video, but Muslim acquaintances happened to see it on their phones a couple of months later.

An uproar spread among the town's Muslims, and angry villagers attacked the families' homes.

To assuage their anger, the parents and the church slaughtered cows and turkeys for a banquet for the villagers. When prosecutors announced charges against the boys, the parents handed them over to the mayor to give to the police, confident it would all be cleared up. Some Muslim neighbors showed solidarity with the parents, testifying to prosecutors that the teens are known as good boys.

In its investigation report, the prosecutor described the video but did not mention the part where they mocked the Islamic State group's beheadings, the part that proves who was the real target of their laughter, the defense argues. The video came shortly after 21 Christian migrant workers from a village near Nassariya were beheaded by IS militants in Libya. The report said the case is "packed with evidence," including the fact that one of the suspects was "smiling."

Naguib said that judges refused to watch the video despite his requests. When one judge finally did, he ordered the teens' release pending trial.

The four teens and their supervisor, who was forced to leave the village with his family, were all convicted. Though all the defendants are under 18, three were sentenced to adult prison for five years and one to a juvenile detention facility for three years. The supervisor received a three year prison sentence.

"They are witch-hunting. There is arrogance, intolerance to others," Naguib said.

When asked why he believes authorities pressed the case so aggressively, he said: "Extremism, an attempt to appease the masses at the expense of the young men."

When the verdicts were announced, the teens fled, fearing their parents would hand them over to police again. One mother, Fadya Shehata Moussa said her son, Bassem Amgad Hanna, lashed out at her as he left, saying he would throw out his mobile phone chip and cut off all contacts with her.

Iman Shaker Hanna, the mother of 16-year-old Albert Hanna, said her whole family erupted in screams at the verdict. Except her, she was too shocked.

"I sat silently for hours... people were telling me to cry but there were no tears," she said. "I asked God: Is it over, is there no hope?"

## South Carolina: Potholes abound, but no tax hike for roads

**JEFFREY COLLINS, Associated Press**

NEESES, S.C. (AP) — South Carolina's roads are in rotten shape — pretty much everyone who drives on them agrees about that.

Since 2010, the state has paid \$40 million in claims for vehicle damage cause by road problems.

A coalition of frustrated business leaders has encouraged drivers to tweet pictures of potholes and linked them with dozens of yellow flags and red triangles on a state map, in an effort to pressure lawmakers for support.

And in an ominous message from industry, the chairman of Michelin North American has said his company likely can't expand its South Carolina operations unless roads improve.

But the gas tax, South Carolina's source of road building and maintenance money, will remain at one of the lowest rates in the nation this year — unchanged for more than three decades in a state where tax is the political equivalent of a dirty word.

Lawmakers, most recently in the state Senate, have been unwilling to raise it, even though business leaders, county managers and ordinary drivers say they'd be willing to pay a higher gas tax to help pay for road repairs.

Instead, legislators are offering a one-time \$400 million road improvement shot from this year's state revenues, made possible because of economic growth.

But critics say it's dwarfed by the \$1 billion a year the state Department of Transportation says it would need to get almost all state roads back to good condition and expand and build new highways to keep up with population growth.

It's the kind of quandary that arises in states where lawmakers are philosophically opposed to raising

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any taxes, yet must somehow find revenues to keep basic services like transportation intact.

During a gas tax debate, State Sen. Lee Bright said the government has plenty of money to pay for its needs without ever raising taxes, but lawmakers lack the courage to cut spending in other areas.

"I'm not going to vote for a tax increase. I think we can live within our means. Families do it every day," said Bright, a Republican from Spartanburg.

State Sen. Vincent Sheheen and other Democrats call the GOP roads proposal the "patch act" because it does nothing for roads in the long term.

"Our roads still suck. Our roads are going to suck next year," Sheheen said after the Senate passed the \$400 million one-time bill.

Regardless of how much lawmakers set aside for roads this year, advocates say South Carolina needs an adequate, ongoing stream of road maintenance money.

"Our roads need help now. But they are going to need help later too. There has to be a dedicated source of money," said Orangeburg County Administrator Harold Young, whose county has 2,600 miles of rural roads.

Potholes in Orangeburg County are everywhere, said Bryan Maxwell, who drives a truck for B & J Ice Co. in Orangeburg. One day earlier this month he was unloading bags at the Piggly Wiggly in Neeses at the intersection of two-lane U.S. 321 and two-lane state Highway 4.

"As soon as they patch one, it seems like two more pop up. The roads are getting so bad they can't get to everything," Maxwell said.

And Orangeburg County is one of the luckier ones. Although it lacks the tax base of the rapidly growing coastal counties, voters there have approved a penny local sales tax for roads, allowing it to pave 300 miles of the 1,100 miles of dirt roads, Young said.

"Now we're down to just enough dirt roads to drive from here to New Jersey," the county administrator said.

Statewide, about 46 percent of the 41,400 miles of state roads in South Carolina are in poor condition. Laid end-to-end, that would be enough miles for four round trips from Columbia to Los Angeles.

And South Carolina roads are deteriorating fast. Nearly 6,000 miles of state-maintained roads have fallen into poor condition from 2008 to 2014, according to figures from TRIP, a transportation research group.

Before last year's legislative session began, an impressive coalition appeared to be assembling the clout to fix roads. The chairman of Michelin North America, which employs 8,500 people in seven plants, called South Carolina roads a disgrace and issued his near-ultimatum linking roads to expansion. The state Chamber of Commerce touted a poll saying Republican voters would support a 10-cent, 10-year gas tax increase.

But conservative senators filibustered the gas tax hike in 2015.

By 2016, the state had extra money from economic growth. Republican senators decided instead of raising the gas tax, they would use that growth money to send \$400 million to roads. The House plans to agree, but warned it's just a one-year deal.

And an extra \$400 million is only enough to smooth out the potholes on the interstates and fix about half of the state's structurally deficient bridges. It won't expand any highways, leaving Interstate 95 to clog from beach traffic heading back north where the highway shrinks from three lanes in Georgia to two in South Carolina.

Eighty percent of major, non-interstate highways in South Carolina are in such disrepair that South Carolina is coming close to having to rebuild many of them instead of repaving them, DOT Secretary Christy Hall said.

Young's biggest fear is that the state will burden counties with more and more road funding responsibility. That especially hurts in a place like Orangeburg County, where the administrator was trying to figure out how badly the closing of the buffet restaurant Ryan's was going to hurt his budget.

Maxwell is ready to pay more in gas tax because he is tired of dodging potholes in the ice truck.

"Fixing roads is something simple the government should do," Maxell said. "It's like police or firefighters."



## Shandling's 'The Larry Sanders Show' changed comedy

JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — From 1992 to 1998, the six-season run of Garry Shandling's "The Larry Sanders Show" was little-watched, little-rewarded and yet became one of the most influential TV shows of the last 25 years.

It was a quiet landmark, airing on HBO before "The Sopranos" or any other shows more famously revamped television. But reverence for it — a near perfect piece of comedy, radical in its unadorned portrait of a nightly late-night show and the damaged men behind it — steadily grew from cult to canon in the years that followed.

Shandling's death Thursday in Los Angeles sent fans everywhere reaching for DVDs, YouTube clips or remembered catch phrases from the 66-year-old comedian's masterpiece. "The Larry Sanders Show" was the forerunner to a new kind of painfully awkward, hysterically authentic comedy that would inspire "The Office," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Freaks and Geeks," "Arrested Development" and a generation of comics.

Debuting just months after Johnny Carson signed off, "The Larry Sanders Show" signaled a new era. Shandling, who had guest-hosted for "The Tonight Show," was offered other late-night hosting gigs, but turned them down. Coming off his meta, fourth-wall breaking "It's Garry Shandling's Show," Shandling was more interested in what happened behind the scenes of a talk show and in the moments in between jokes.

In a time when laugh tracks were still ubiquitous, the multi-camera "Larry Sanders Show" went for realism instead of punchlines.

"I was asking everybody to go beyond what was TV comedy at that time," Shandling once told The Los Angeles Times. "I knew we were headed into different territory. I knew the philosophy of a creative process in which people were allowed to make mistakes and to play real moments and to risk. And that takes courage, the courage that I needed to find, and I think that everyone on the show needed to find. And that's really the bond that we have: It's that we were all in this lab experiment to find the courage just to be, not to make a 'TV series.'"

Shandling played the neurotic, insecure and spineless host with the catch phrase "No flipping" and a regular habit of watching his show in bed at night. He was flanked by two comedy hall-of-fame performances in Rip Torn and Jeffrey Tambor. Torn played Artie, Sanders' hard-drinking, undyingly loyal bulldog producer; Tambor the agonizingly desperate, eager sellout sidekick Hank Kingsley.

With remarkably accuracy, the show was split between on-air and off, artifice and authenticity. The wide grins for the camera vanished during commercial breaks when the vain backbiting of show business came rushing back. On "The Larry Sanders Show," life was funnier off-stage.

"This show is like every day of my life," David Letterman once told Shandling.

But the satire didn't diminish the fictional late-night show, either, which saw a parade of guest stars playing themselves — sometimes faithfully, often not. (Among the many highlights was David Duchovny, a dedicated romantic pursuer of Sanders.) Every foible would be forgiven for a good show. "You're like one of those goddamn creatures out of Greek mythology," Artie tells his host. "Half-man, half-desk."

"Larry Sanders" was home to countless talents who would become better known stars, including Bob Odenkirk, Janeane Garofalo and Judd Apatow, who made his directorial debut on "The Larry Sanders Show." Apatow, one of many who looked up to Shandling as a guru of not just comedy but self-inspection, considered "Freaks and Geeks" a version of "The Larry Sanders Show," only set in high school.

When the HBO series eventually came to a close, the finale was startlingly like a real late-show send-off, with a parade of guests and genuine tears: the line between fake show and real show was obliterated.

Sanders often said the show was ultimately "about love." That's not how many would think to describe such a cringe-inducing comedy. But people adore "The Larry Sanders Show" not for its parody, but for its lonely, flawed people trying to make something worth watching.

## A-Rod 75 home runs from matching Bonds' career record

**RONALD BLUM, AP Baseball Writer**

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Alex Rodriguez plants his right foot in the batter's box, takes a swing, steps in and taps the plate. His name is announced, and fans respond with 7 seconds of applause.

After two years as a scoundrel, he's once again a star in the minds' of many New York Yankees fans.

One year after his return from a drug suspension, A-Rod is approaching the home run marks of Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron and Barry Bonds. He hit 33 last year, his most since 2010, and enters this season with 687, just 75 from matching Bonds' record.

"I know he gets there in three years," Yankees great Reggie Jackson said. "I think it would be shocking if he got there in two."

A-Rod says he plans to retire after the 2017 season. But he also says he could change his mind. Surpassing Bonds could be too alluring.

Last spring, Rodriguez's name was absent from items in the Yankees' gift shops as the team prepared to fight over a \$6 million marketing payment triggered by his 660th home run — matching Willie Mays' total. This March, blue Rodriguez batting practice jerseys that cost \$129.95 sold out at Steinbrenner Field, and team doesn't appear to anticipate a dispute if A-Rod reaches the next payment level for matching Ruth at 714.

Rodriguez turns 41 this July and in the post-steroids era already is at an age where feet and bats slow, where balls that once soared over walls are caught on the warning track. His hairline has started to recede and he keeps his locks trimmed, limiting hints of gray to a minimum.

As much as he tries to concentrate on the next game, the next at-bat and the next pitch, the big picture infiltrates his thoughts, like water starting to trickle through cracks in a dam.

"There are things you just can't help to think about. Obviously, they're there. They're big numbers," he said. "But the goal for me this year is exactly what it was last year: come out, work really hard, be in good shape, better be productive in the middle of the lineup and try to help us win games. And whatever the numbers add up to, they add up to."

History suggests he might fall short of Bonds' 762.

Bonds holds the record for most home runs after turning 40 with 79 — Rodriguez already has 10 since the big birthday last July 27. The mark for most in a season who already was 40 on opening day is 29, shared by Ted Williams and Raul Ibanez.

"Of course, I'm sure it's in his head," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "You hope that it doesn't weigh heavily, and that he's able just to go out and relax and play."

Rest and relaxation.

Shifted from third base to designated hitter, Rodriguez spent just 11 innings in the field last season. He played in 151 games, his highest total since 2007. Before the suspension, he had gone on the disabled list six times in six years for a string of ailments that included operations on both hips, one knee surgery, a strained calf and a broken hand.

Still, Rodriguez tailed off in the last two months of the season, like a leaf shriveling in the summer heat and falling to ground at the first hint of autumn cool. After homering off the Texas Rangers' Matt Harrison for his sixth birthday homer, he ended his first night as a 40-year-old with a .276 batting average, 24 homers and 59 RBIs. A-Rod hit .208 with nine homers and 27 RBIs the rest of the season.

"I think it's easier this year, just because we both kind of know the rigors of his job and what he needs," Girardi said. "When he gets out of his legs, you know it's maybe a time to give him one day off or two days off."

Rodriguez got to heal while sitting out the 2014 season, an enforced absence inflicted by then-Commissioner Bud Selig for violations of baseball's drug agreement and labor contract. When A-Rod returned last spring training, he went out of his way to act humbly and speak contritely, offering milquetoast responses that sounded as if refined in focus groups to remove any trace of ego or controversy.

He became an elder statesman on a middling Yankees team that limped into the playoffs and was

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eliminated by Houston in the AL wild-card game. Young players seeking advice gravitated to him in the clubhouse, inquiring in both English and Spanish.

"He's been talking to everybody," Yankees teammate Carlos Beltran said. "The two years that I've had a chance to play with him, he's been great."

Rodriguez was affable as a guest analyst on Fox during last year's playoffs. But whether on television or not, A-Rod won't say whether he thinks Aaron's 755 or Bonds' 762 are within reach. When he responds to questions, Rodriguez delays before starting his reply, as if to filter out many of his thoughts.

"I don't allow myself to think that far ahead," he said. "Literally, when you're 40, you're day to day, so you can't get too excited."

## 1st teams to reach Elite 8 using painful memories as lessons

TERESA M. WALKER, AP Sports Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Losing in the NCAA Tournament is downright painful. Several teams still in the hunt for the title are using the unpleasant memories of the past as good lessons that have helped them move into the Elite Eight.

The Villanova Wildcats know the misery well. They lost their second game each of the past two tournaments, while their seniors were around for an opening loss in 2013.

Rather than letting those memories haunt them, the Wildcats adjusted and reached the Elite Eight for the first time since 2009.

"What you're seeing is a team that's learned a lot from those games and that is experience," Villanova coach Jay Wright said Thursday night after a 92-69 rout of No. 3 seed Miami in the South Region semifinal.

"They've been there twice. They've lost. They don't fear it. They don't fear losing in the second round, they don't fear losing in the Sweet 16. They just are driven to advance," he said. "And I think having no fear is what we're seeing."

Other teams are making a similar play:

Oklahoma also is in the Elite Eight for the first time since 2009 after early exits each of the past three seasons, while Kansas hadn't gotten to a regional final since 2012.

Oregon hasn't played past the opening weekend since 2013, and now the Ducks are a game away from their first Final Four since 1939.

"We went through those early exits," Villanova junior guard Josh Hart said. "We went through that heartache, and it was tough. But we learned from it. ... We're just using that as momentum, using that experience to get us through these games."

All four advanced Thursday night with pretty impressive performances, too.

**NOVA SHOOTING:** The Wildcats lost to North Carolina State in 2015 and Connecticut in 2014 in their second NCAA games. In 2013, it was an opening loss to North Carolina. Villanova came into this tournament having spent three weeks as the nation's top-ranked team for the first time in program history. Now the Wildcats are showing just how good they might be, shooting better in each of their first three games.

Villanova never trailed against Miami, scoring the first eight points. The Hurricanes got within one at 31-30 before Villanova finished the game hitting 62.7 percent of its shots and a season-high 66.7 percent (10 of 15) beyond the arc. They even hit their first 15 free throws before finishing 18 of 19 at the line to earn their third regional final under Wright and seventh all-time.

"If they go 10 of 15 and 18 of 19, you know nobody's going to beat them," Kansas coach Bill Self said.

**CHALK IT UP JAYHAWK:** As the top of the No. 1 seeds, Kansas was expected to reach Saturday night's South Region final. The Jayhawks know only too well expectations and seedings mean little in this tournament after losing to Wichita State in their second game last year and to Stanford in 2014. Reaching the Sweet 16 proved no help in 2013 with a loss to Michigan.

Maryland stuck around long enough in the first half to give fans a few jitters. Kansas took a 36-34 half-time lead and opened the second half hitting its first six shots to seize the lead. The Jayhawks turned in what Self called a "superb" performance in the second half in pushing that lead to as much as 16 for a

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79-63 win and first Elite Eight since 2012.

SOONER TIME: No. 2 seed Oklahoma romped over third-seeded Texas A&M 77-63 in the West Regional semifinal with five Sooners in double figures. They now are in the Elite Eight for the first time since 2009 after losing in a regional semifinal a year ago with opening losses to North Dakota State in 2014 and San Diego State in 2013.

Having Buddy Hield helps. Oklahoma blew open a close game with a 19-4 run to close the first half, not letting the Aggies closer than 14 in the second half. Memories of that loss to Michigan State a year ago did, too. "Got asked a lot of questions about how we felt last year, so we just wanted to make sure we had a greater focus this game and make it to our ultimate goal," Jordan Woodward said.

ORE-NOT GONE YET: So much has been made of Oregon's No. 1 seed in the West, and the Ducks lost to Wisconsin each of the past two tournaments. They lost to Louisville in their last regional semifinal in 2013. Not even playing the defending national champions could shake Oregon this time around as the Ducks took a double-digit lead early in the second half and never flinched in downing Duke 82-68 for the first time in school history.

Oregon now is in the Elite Eight for the first time since 2007.

## Sanders doesn't need much explaining in liberal Seattle

**PHUONG LE, Associated Press**

SEATTLE (AP) — Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders' brand of democratic socialism may take some explaining in some parts of the United States, but not in Seattle.

This city elected a socialist, Kshama Sawant, to the City Council in 2013 and was among the first to phase in a \$15 minimum wage, mandate sick leave for most companies and offer paid parental leave for city workers — issues that mirror Sanders' platform.

So it's not surprising the U.S. senator from Vermont has found enthusiastic support here. Seattle is among the top cities that have donated to Sanders' campaign, and twice as many Seattle individual donors have given to Sanders than to Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton, according to federal campaign data through the end of February.

The senator returns to Seattle's Safeco Field on Friday — his second large rally here in less than a week — hoping to energize voters a day before Washington's Democratic caucuses. Sanders has drawn big crowds in liberal cities like Seattle nationally, but in Washington he has also held events in more conservative areas like Spokane, Vancouver and Yakima.

Saturday's nominating contest is expected to draw tens of thousands of voters who will determine how 101 of the state's Democratic delegates will be awarded.

So far Sanders has performed better in states with caucuses than primaries, which tend to have larger populations of liberal whites, and "the fact that his supporters are more energized is a huge factor," said Geoffrey Skelley, a political analyst at the University of Virginia Center for Politics. "The real problem is the math," he added.

Clinton has a comfortable lead over Sanders in the delegate count. Based on primaries and caucuses to date, the former secretary of state leads Sanders 1,223 to 920.

During a Tuesday campaign stop in Everett, about 30 miles north of Seattle, Clinton noted she has gotten 2.6 million more votes than Sanders and more votes than anyone else, including Republican front-runner Donald Trump.

"The senator has made clear that we're taking this all the way to the convention in July," said Sanders' Washington state director Dulce Saenz. "We have an uphill battle, absolutely. There's no denying the math, but the second half of the primary calendar is much more favorable to Bernie."

Most of the state's Democratic leadership has endorsed Clinton, including Gov. Jay Inslee and Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell. But Sanders has raised more in individual contributions from this state than any other presidential candidate.

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Seattle leads the way among large cities in per-capita individual contributions to Sanders, with about \$145 for every 100 people, according to an analysis of federal campaign data. In terms of dollars, Seattle trails only New York and San Francisco in total individual contributions from cities, with \$884,000 given through the end of February. That does not include individual contributions under \$200, which makes up the majority of Sanders' support.

"Nobody is very surprised that Bernie Sanders has so much support because the city elected a much more radical socialist a few years ago," said James Gregory, a history professor at the University of Washington.

"Seattle turned liberal in 1969 and has never looked back," Gregory added, noting the city's last seven mayors have been progressive. Seattle periodically gains a lot of attention for some labor left-wing event, such as the WTO demonstrations of 1999, which helps persuade others to come to the city, he said.

Sanders is popular among his party's younger people and the party's most liberal voters.

"Bernie's very humane approach to politics really resonates with what Seattleites believe in," said Basilia Brownwell, 64, a retired public school teacher who has been hosting phone banks and events to get supporters to caucus. "It taps into Seattleites' feeling that the world they're seeing around them is not part of their dream. Bernie speaks their dream."

Lura Ulloa Bradford, 29, said Sanders' message about income inequality resonates with her. "He has the middle class in mind," she said.

"It's all grassroots, and it's really what Seattle is all about, building something from the ground up," said Bradford, who runs an arts and event space on Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, blocks from Sanders' campaign office.

## US economy likely struggled last quarter; mild rebound seen

**MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — After struggling in the final three months of 2015, the U.S. economy is thought to be rebounding in the current quarter, though not as strongly as most analysts had once expected.

On Friday, when the Commerce Department issues its third and final estimate of growth for the October-December quarter, it's expected to say the economy expanded at a 1 percent annual rate. That would be the same estimate it made a month ago and would amount to just half the 2 percent annual growth in the July-September period.

For the current January-March quarter, many economists foresee growth as measured by the gross domestic product — the total U.S. output of goods and services — accelerating to a 2 percent rate. But some analysts have been downgrading their estimates of late, reflecting some weaker-than-expected economic data.

Analysts at forecasting firm Macroeconomic Advisers, for example, on Thursday reduced their forecast of first-quarter GDP growth to a 1.5 percent annual rate after the release of a weak report on new orders for long-lasting manufactured goods. Those orders dropped 2.8 percent in February.

That decline was seen as a sign that the nation's manufacturing sector is still struggling with weakness overseas and a strong dollar, which has made American-made products more expensive in foreign markets.

This year, continued strong gains in hiring could boost household incomes and support solid increases in consumer spending, which accounts for about 70 percent of economic activity.

This month, the Federal Reserve left its key policy rate unchanged after having raised it from a record low in December. Fed officials also scaled back their expectations for the number of rate hikes this year from four to two.

The officials said they thought the global economy and financial markets still pose risks even though financial markets have stabilized since the year began. Stocks had nosedived after investors worried about how steep the slowdown would be in China, the world's second-largest economy.

Analysts have forecast that for 2016 as a whole, the economy will grow around 2 percent. That would be down from last year's 2.4 percent growth.

## Raining money to spur the economy? Not as crazy as it sounds

DAVID McHUGH, AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Helicopters dropping money in the streets: it's a vivid metaphor for a drastic form of central bank stimulus that is gaining attention as a possible way to help the global economy out of its malaise.

The idea of "helicopter money" is straightforward: central banks would create new cash and give it to people, like an air drop of supplies. As people spend or invest it, economic growth and inflation would rise.

The potential efficacy is tempting in a world where central banks are struggling to nudge up low inflation and growth with their current tools: repeated interest rate cuts — often below zero — and extraordinary stimulus programs like bond purchases.

As the world economy faces the threat of deflation, a long-term weakness in prices and wages that kills off growth for years on end, the sound of choppers bearing bank bags is being heard more and more in discussion among economists.

"Helicopter money may be the next big thing, as policymakers reach the limits of standard unconventional practices," says Andrew Kenningham, senior global economist at Capital Economics in London.

European Central Bank head Mario Draghi was asked this month about the possibility of using "helicopter money" after the bank announced a further round of stimulus measures, including negative interest rates and more massive bond purchases aimed at pushing up inflation and growth.

"We haven't really thought or talked about it," he said. "It's a very interesting concept that is now being discussed by academic economists and in various environments."

Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman first proposed the idea almost 50 years ago. It is close to — but not quite the same — as quantitative easing, the method central banks such as the U.S. Federal Reserve, Bank of Japan, Bank of England, and ECB have used since the financial crisis and Great Recession of 2007-2009.

Under quantitative easing, central banks buy government bonds from commercial banks. Central banks pay for the bonds by electronically increasing the amounts of money in the accounts that the commercial banks are required to hold at the central bank. When the account balance goes up, new money is created.

There's just one problem. The money is sitting in a reserve account. If the bank itself is shaky, or has become cautious about lending, the central bank can print all it wants, but the new money won't reach people.

Helicopter money gets around that dependence on banks. It aims to put the money directly into circulation.

And helicopter money is supposed to be accompanied with a guarantee that it is a permanent addition to the money supply — unlike quantitative easing, which central banks say they eventually intend to unwind.

As Friedman put it in a 1969 paper, "let us suppose now that one day a helicopter flies over this community and drops an additional \$1,000 in bills from the sky, which is, of course, hastily collected by members of the community." They then spend it, increasing economic activity and pushing up inflation.

Other top economists have put forward versions of the same idea. British economist John Maynard Keynes said the government should bury bottles of banknotes in old coal mines, and let people dig them up to increase the supply of money. In 2002, Ben Bernanke, at the time a member of the Federal Reserve's board of governors and later its head, proposed a helicopter drop as a way for Japan to get out of its deflationary quagmire.

Money-printing can be a disaster, if governments come to depend on it or central banks lose the courage to withhold it when it's not needed. It can result in hyperinflation, as it did in Germany in the 1920s and more recently in Zimbabwe.

The time to do it, backers of the idea say, is when the economy is so slack that inflation is not a worry.

In theory, central banks could just print banknotes and hand them out. But most current discussion focuses on Bernanke's specific version of how helicopter money could best be delivered. The government delivers a tax cut, and then issues more bonds, which the central bank promises to buy, in effect financing the tax cut with new money.

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Bernanke said such a step would “almost certainly be an effective stimulant to consumption and hence to prices.”

There are a few obstacles. Unlike quantitative easing, Bernanke’s version of helicopter money adds more government debt that could undermine confidence.

To fix that, the central bank could commit to keep buying bonds, so the government could be certain it could roll that debt over.

Alternatively, the central bank could simply forego repayment on the government’s debts. But that would then put a large accounting loss on the central bank’s accounts, which might undermine public confidence.

In Draghi’s case, the European Union treaty forbids the European Central Bank from financing governments. Legal and political opposition could be insurmountable. Jens Weidmann, one of two German members of the ECB council, has rejected the idea, pointing to its impact on the ECB’s own finances.

Moreover, many governments have resisted spending more. Germany’s finance minister, Wolfgang Schaeuble, has proposed a 2017 budget with a slight surplus. Congressional Republicans in the United States say they want less government spending and debt, not more. Britain’s Conservative government has stressed deficit reduction, not stimulus.

Japan, where deflation has lasted longer and where the government has huge debts, might be a more likely candidate, thinks economist Kenningham.

“For the ECB, it’s very hard to make any radical changes,” he said. “I think Japan might be the place where it’s most likely to be tried, because they have bigger fiscal problems and less of a problem coordinating fiscal and monetary authorities, since it’s one country.”

“I don’t think it’s going to happen any time soon, but if we are stuck in a very, very low inflation environment, and a very high public-debt environment, for another five years, then things that now seem improbable may end up getting implemented.”

## Asian stocks mixed in quiet holiday trading

**YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The few Asian stock markets that were trading Friday were mixed, with Tokyo shares up and stocks in Seoul and Shanghai nearly flat. Financial markets in Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia and India were closed for the Good Friday holiday.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan’s Nikkei 225 rose 0.5 percent to 16,971.83. South Korea’s Kospi was flat at 1,985.46. China’s Shanghai Composite Index traded 0.1 percent higher at 2,963.26.

CHINA GROWTH: Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said on Thursday at an annual forum in China that the country will maintain medium-high growth and it has many tools to turn the economy around. Chinese leaders have set an economic growth target of 6.5 to 7 percent for this year.

THE QUOTE: “Although by most standards the market is running quiet, a recent shift in global investor sentiment has been beneficial for China,” Stephen Innes, senior foreign exchange trader at OANDA Asia Pacific, said in a daily commentary. “The long-term prospects are still muddled however. Capital outflows will be a concern along with China’s struggling economy.”

WALL STREET: The U.S. stock market closed nearly unchanged on Thursday in very light trading ahead of the Easter holiday weekend. The Dow rose 0.1 percent to 17,515.73. The S&P 500 index slipped 0.04 percent to 2,035.94. The Nasdaq added 0.1 percent to 4,773.50.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose after some Fed bank presidents earlier this week made public comments that suggested the pace of rate hikes might not be slowed after all. The dollar strengthened to 113.11 yen from 112.79 yen. The euro fell to \$1.1161 from \$1.1180.

OIL: Due to the Good Friday holiday, there were no settlements for crude oil futures. On Thursday, benchmark U.S. crude fell 33 cents, or 0.8 percent, to close at \$39.46 a barrel in New York. Oil prices closed lower again as concerns over excess supplies returned following the latest U.S. stockpiles data. Brent crude, the benchmark for international oils, added 1 cent to \$40.45 a barrel in London.